

Information Resource Sharing in Traditional Libraries in a Changing World

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Abstract

In an era where no single library can meet the information needs of divers users, cooperation among libraries become imperative. Libraries as access points to vast information resources are leveraging technology to collaborate and share resources. This is because resources sharing has transformed from traditional practices into dynamic system and technologies enabling delivery of information resources through platforms such as email, WhatsApp or any other social media Apps using mobile phones or computers connected to internet and facilitating access to information resources. This paper examined information resource sharing in traditional libraries in a changing world and discussed the concept of information resources sharing, the needs for resources sharing; forms of resources sharing before the era of network connection or in traditional libraries, resources sharing in a changing world; benefits of resource sharing and challenges of resource sharing. The paper stresses the need for libraries to cooperate and participate in library networking for resource sharing.

Keywords: Information, Resource Sharing, Library Cooperation, Library Collaboration, Changing World.

Introduction

In the age of information explosion, no library however big or rich is able to satisfy all the needs of its users due to tremendous number of documents as well as information published every moment and limited budget allocation. The demands and needs of library users also change from time to time, so library find it difficult to meet their users' information resources needs. To solve these problems, the concept of resource sharing was developed by libraries. To materialize the concept, libraries are required to come together for the mutual benefits of the respective users in the form of library cooperation. For libraries to meet the growing needs of users in provision of quality education, efforts should be made towards the provision of the right information to the library users by acquiring information resources through various forms of resource sharing (Mubofu, 2019). Resource Sharing is nothing but the sharing of library resources with other participating libraries that need them. It is a type of library cooperation, where all participating libraries share their unused and sometimes their valuable library resources with other libraries.

Manu-Kumar, (2013) stated that Library cooperation is a process where different libraries come together to agree to cooperate to achieve a certain goal, it involves the act of sharing

information materials with other libraries to have easy access to the available materials. A researcher might not be able to get all the needed resources in a single library. For the library to remain relevant and deliver content that library users find useful, it is important to engage in information resource-sharing techniques that would at least help to address the information needs of library patrons. Omoike and Ikegune (2023) in a study, reported that for libraries to maintain the status of being educational resource for all categories of library users such as undergraduates, postgraduates, lecturers, researchers, business community, and school kids they must provide relevant information resources to meet the needs of various library users. Onwuchekwa (2015) agrees with other researchers in this research that with the invention of the Internet, information kept in different locations has become an asset to the world community. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is an indispensable part of modern information systems development for resource sharing, libraries now explore each other's common strengths and limitations as they realize that, together things could be done better and greater resources can be made available. Igwela and Nsirim (2019) noted that through collaborative technologies information sharing can enable libraries to enhance collections and provide access to vast amount of resources to users, noting that this can be done through networking. Thus, librarians saw the utilization of electronic networks as the means to expand access for research, and study purposes, and to meet more of the information needs of their clientele. Therefore, information resource sharing aims to maximize the availability and utilization of library materials and services at the minimum expense.

Forms of Resources Sharing in Traditional Libraries

The following are forms of resource sharing in traditional libraries:

Inter-library lending has been described as one of the foremost and oldest forms of resource sharing between libraries. It is a system whereby users of one library or information system may request their service points to borrow from other library systems, materials not held in their library system. This is possible in a traditional library because most of the resources were in print form. Cooperative acquisition is the coming together of two or more libraries to purchase or acquire their materials. This is collaborative collection development, whereby subject specializations are intended to be distributed among libraries within a clearly defined geographic region so that individual libraries need not attempt to collect resources in all fields; but can concentrate on a particular field. This is essential to ensure adequate coverage of library materials. Exchange of information materials involves an arrangement whereby a library exchanges its duplicate or specially purchased items for those of another library. (Clarke, 2001 in Obaro, 2013) opined that these can be in form of inaugural lectures, guest lectures, Almanac, Scholarly and house journals in exchange for those of other libraries

Furthermore, interlibrary study facilities allow the students, to use the facilities of a library on recommendation. This can take the shape of in-service training or allowing staff and students of one educational institution to use the facilities available in other institutions. This is also an

arrangement where cooperative libraries agree to share their study facilities. (Obaro, 2013). It allows the use of study facilities of member libraries by registered users of other member libraries to study and conduct research. Registered users or members present letters of introduction from the librarian or designated staff of the library are allowed using the facilities of other member libraries to carry out their research.

According to Raubenheimer and John (2002), inter-library study facility is document delivery. Document delivery services allow library users to access materials in electronic form from other libraries. This service is particularly useful for researchers who need access to articles and other materials that are not available in their own library's collection. Joint publications connote a situation where two or more libraries are responsible for the existence of a publication. In this system, such works may center on aspects of the holdings or the entire holdings of libraries jointly undertaking the venture. A good example is the British Union Catalogue of Periodicals. Also interchange of the professional and sometimes non - professional staff under specific arrangements worked out by cooperating libraries. This takes place in different ways, for instance through internship or attachment where a member library sends staff that are on training to another library to work and thereby gain more experience. The staff may also be sent on a short-term training course to another library that is bigger and richer in wealth of experience and probably resources as well. According to Usanga (2004) and Obaro (2008), professional exchange can also take the form of sabbatical leave whereby long-standing and experienced librarians in the very senior cadre, who have worked for seven uninterrupted years in their library, can share their working experience with another library for a year or two before returning to their place of work. A cooperative storage scheme is a storage arrangement made for the resources to be conveniently stored for easy access by contributing members. The members have to agree on building a separate area that helps in this direction.

The traditional forms of resource sharing tend to give way to resource sharing in the changing world of the internet. However, Posner (2017) declares that far from becoming less relevant in an increasingly digital information landscape, traditional Inter Library Loan (ILL) services still deliver millions of filled requests for information every year. Therefore, traditional forms of resource sharing are still useful in librarianship in computer age because they help library to deliver content in the users.

A Changing World

A changing world can be described as the evolving world, a shifting world, the internet or digital world. According to Internet Society (2021), the world is shifting. The stakes are too high to leave anyone behind. The internet helps us keep our footing while the world changes. The internet has given us resources and connected us with other tribal communities to solve our problems ourselves. The changing world has brought the introduction of information technology to all sphere of Life and businesses. Libraries are not left out. Libraries all over the world are incorporating Information Communication Technology (ICT) delivery so as to remain relevant in

the changing world. The changing world in library is a shift from analogue to digital. According to International Federation of Library Associations IFLA (2013) libraries are not piles of books anymore; the general library environment has changed from analogue to digital. Library automation systems have helped libraries to provide easy access to their collections through the use of computerized library catalogues (On-line Public Access Catalog – OPAC) which more recently led to digital libraries. Most of the resources in the libraries are now digitized and can be accessed through the web.

In a changing world, the mode of communication changes. Library patrons can stay in the comfort of their homes to access the resources of another library with the aid of computers or Mobile phones. (Shehu & Gabasa, 2019) stated that the pattern of communication today is changing - new technologies constantly emerge thereby changing the ways people communicate and organize information. Mobile devices revolutionized communication and changed the pattern in which information is been accessed, information can be accessed using Mobile phones anywhere, anytime in a convenient and timely manner. In a changing world, information is stored electronically. The use of e-resources became prominent in the libraries. According to Ibegwam and Agboke (2022), the advent of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in libraries paved the way for the university libraries to move from conventional to digital libraries. This period can be regarded as the ‘age of e-books.’ The age of e-books is the age at which information is stored electronically and can be accessed through online networks. E-books include e-dictionaries, e-journals, e-reports, e-magazines, e-newspapers are electronic books that are up loaded in websites, accessed by computers and and other devices, connected to internet and used either by printing the resources or reading online directly for various activities such as teaching, learning, and research for community development. Therefore, a changing world can be regarded to as a revolutionized world, where library resources are no longer made up of only traditional prints resources, where libraries have developed from analogue to digital and the use of internet skills are now necessary.

Forms of Information Resources Sharing in a Changing World.

Electronic Information Resources Sharing: The forms of resource sharing in library have revolutionized in a changing world, as every other aspect of library practice. There is a shift from the traditional forms of resource sharing to the networking of information resource sharing, library users now share information via email, WhatsApp, or any other social media Apps using mobile phones or computers connected to the internet. Information and communication technology (ICT) brought about the use of electronic resources. Electronic information resources (EIR) are materials that are provided online that can be accessed and used electronically. According to Olosore and Adekunmisi (2015), electronic information resources are readable with the aid of the Internet and the Internet has made the entire world a global information village, it has great potential for educational research, users can access information anywhere, anytime and users have access to a wide range of information.

Soffar (2021) stated that e-books are text, images, and audio-video packaged into a single electronic file. If you type a document in MS Word or Open Office Writer, and then save that document, it is already an e-book. Digital books can contain multi-media elements not available with traditional books, Audio and video can be embedded to make reading a fully immersive experience. E-books allow you to mark passages, save pages, and search texts. The electronic book is also a book in electronic format. It is downloaded to personal Computers, Macs, laptops, Smartphones, or any other kind of computerized device. E-books can be read on the screen and read anywhere. It comes with many pages, tables of contents, pictures, and graphics, exactly like a printed book, and it is very easy to purchase and download through the Internet. E-readers can hold hundreds of books at once, and e-books are usually cheaper than paperbacks, and e-readers are lightweight and easy to hold, With the technology change, information users have shifted from print media to digital media to use a variety of information resources like online databases, CD-ROM databases, OPACs, internet, digital libraries (Bansode & Pereira, 2012).

Information and Communication Technology has become a powerful catalyst for sharing resources among libraries because libraries now subscribe to various online databases and can access this information remotely with the aid of the internet. Libraries now exchange information electronically. According to Ghosh, (2011), there is much evidence of the formation of library cooperatives and consortia in Africa. EBESCO host includes freely accessible Library, Information Science & Technology Abstract (LISTA) indexes more than 600 periodicals, plus books, research reports and proceedings and subject coverage includes librarianship, classification, cataloging, bibliometrics, online information retrieval, information management, and more. Aliyu, (2015) averred that Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA). Using a countrywide license of EBSCOhost databases, libraries in Nigeria had enhanced access to over 8,000 scholarly, mostly full-text articles in various disciplines.

Digital preservation and consortia: Theses and Dissertations are now digitalized and made available online for information sharing. A collaborative effort to construct a statewide Institutional Repository Theses and Dissertations digital libraries consortia namely NDLTD (Networked Digital Library for Thesis and Dissertations) which is an initiative for the creation of international consortiums which includes organizations or other ETD consortia in various countries. They further stated “All ETD consortia have a common goal: to make ETDs available through digital libraries connected to a network (Internet). (Ghosh, 2011).

Traditional Union Catalogue has been upgraded to a library Server and Mobile online Public Access Catalog – (OPAC): The resource sharing has upgraded from the use of keeping a common traditional union catalogue cabinet to online databases, participating libraries can access the resources of other libraries or share the existing information through common servers. According to Panjab Digital Library PDL (2021), as internet services increase and more and more libraries become digital, P2P technology will come to be a primary source of information sharing among libraries. Under this technology, each digital library will have a server that will store its complete database and will be interconnected to the servers of other member libraries of the Panjab Inter-

Library Cooperation (PILC) sharing system. In case a library server is unable to meet the demand for a particular source, it will pass it on to the server of another member library, which may be able to supply the required information. In this way, the user will finally get the required information electronically through the servers of these libraries, at a certain cost and within a certain period.

Also, the library networking system helps libraries to provide easy access to their collections through the use of computerized library catalogues (OPAC). Most of the resources in the libraries are now digitized and can be accessed through the Web which is Library 2.0. Communication technology is a way and means of library cooperation to fulfill the needs of information users via social networking. Social networking sites are mobile- or Internet-based social platforms created and designed to enable users to communicate, collaborate and share content across contacts and communities. (Thurairaj et al., 2015). This is supported by (Shehu & Gabasa, 2019). New mobile-based OPACs are being developed for mobile users in various academic libraries, Baze university library Abuja in Nigeria, collaborated with software vendors to create mobile-compatible vendors where students, researchers, and lecturers can access the collection of the library using a specific IP address both within and outside the campus, other services are library virtual instructional tours, Wi-Fi internet access to mobile devices.

Internet search engines: This is an online means of searching for online database. Internet search engines, particularly Google have become a very important centralized information service. Google initiatives to expand the public internet content have received a great deal of attention. These include the Google Scholar Scholarly materials search engine and Google's partnership with prominent libraries to digitize library collections. Google is partnering with a large number of e-content vendors and indexing projects to make the growing volume of journals available via public web search. The Online Computer Library Centre [OCLC] Open Worldcat project is an important centralized service that is now making library holdings information accessible worldwide via internet search engines like Google, and Yahoo (Webstar, 2006).

Open-source software: Open-source software is another example of collaboration at work in libraries. Thousands of libraries around the world rely on common applications developed through the open-source process, such as the Linux operating system, the Apache web-server software, or MySQL and PHP, web-database tools. These open-source applications have become the informal standard in many libraries around the world. The Koha Integrated Library System is an excellent example of open-source library software (Webster, 2006). However, the common aim of information resource sharing be it traditional form or electronic forms is to make information resources available to all the cooperating libraries and the library users.

Benefits of Resources Sharing

The participating libraries benefited from resource sharing in various ways amongst these are:

1. It is cost effective: Resource sharing either digital sharing or traditional enables the users of libraries to have access to varieties of information resources even when the host libraries

could not afford them because the cost of all those resources might be beyond their financial allocation. Mubofu, and Chaula (2020) in a study observed that libraries are facing financial constraints thus, having an excellent way of sharing information resources would enable libraries to allocate limited funds to other important issues.

2. Resource sharing made libraries avoid unnecessary duplication of materials thus; encouraging a wider patronage. According to OCLC (2021), resource sharing among libraries through networks and consortia, allows institutions to share their collections and provide broader access to their patron.
3. It helps to improve library services to the users by broadening the base of information availability. Onwuchekwa (2015) asserted that the traditional concept of ownership in collection development is gradually being replaced by access to information and knowledge without regard to location and format. This has made accessibility of information resources easy for library users.
4. Resources sharing increases the subscription power and minimizes storage requirements for libraries. Similarly, Posner (2017) stated that interlibrary loan activities are shaping library collections by helping to identify material that librarians should acquire for local use and making use of the long tail of information that is otherwise just sitting unused in libraries. Resource sharing also helps to advocate for open-access publishing and help develop institutional repositories because library leaders are aware of the fact that academic authors want their work to be read and do not want either readers or librarians to have to pay exorbitant fees to do so.
5. It helps libraries to keep up with the pace of information generation. Resource sharing enables libraries to have current and recent information through digital networking. According to Ramadas, (2024), modern library users expect seamless access to information and services through digital platforms. Resource sharing in a changing world through ICT integration meets these expectations by providing user-friendly interfaces and online services.

Challenges of Resources Sharing

Funding: Libraries typically have limited budgets, and investing in cooperative efforts can be costly. Libraries may struggle to justify the cost of infrastructure, staffing, and technology needed for cooperation. Internet connectivity is very expensive in Africa considering her economic condition. According to Ramadas (2024), limited financial resources can hinder the acquisition and maintenance of ICT infrastructure and tools.

Unstable internet connectivity: This can be an obstacle to resource sharing in a changing world because cooperating libraries might not be able to connect on time. Babarinde and Onifiade, (2019) observed that inadequate access to the internet is a problem in Nigeria and other regions of Africa because Libraries providing electronic resources need sufficient bandwidth to reach beyond the borders of their campus or community. Also, (Ndzabandzaba, 2015) opined that without networks there will not be data available for dissemination. Therefore, networks are a necessity for data

sharing. In most developing including less developed countries, these networks still provide insufficient data and information.

Cultural differences: Different libraries may have different organizational structures, traditions, and values, which can create tension or misunderstandings that can impede cooperation. Unwillingness to share due to a lack of understanding of the value of data as well as information, and lack of understanding of the importance of sharing is another major reason for not sharing. Commercial competitions, political issues, protection of reputation, no adherence to International protocols and lack of research activities focusing on resource assessment are some other reasons for the lack of information as well as withholding information (Ndzabandzaba, 2015).

Coordination: Coordination among different libraries can also be a significant challenge. Each library may have its priorities, schedules, and ways of doing things, which can create confusion and delays when trying to work together on a project (Kumar, 2014).

Inability of staff to adapt to the technological changes ((Ramadas, 2024) and power outage are also impediment to digital information sharing in a changing world (Aina, 2013, Rabi, 2012)

Conclusion

Library cooperation, networking, and resource sharing are synonymous with cooperation and collaborative activities of the library and Information Centre. Resource sharing has evolved from interlibrary loans to library networks in a changing world through the use of the internet, and library users can now connect themselves and access information sources that their libraries could not afford by networking with other libraries that have such holdings. This has saved the time of the users and libraries can now operate effectively with merger financial allocation. Library networking has some shortfalls because some of the cooperating libraries may not be loyal to themselves, it may also be difficult to access one another databases due to poor internet connectivity; cultural differences might also be an obstacle to effective library cooperation. However, Libraries should cooperate with themselves and be participating in library networking and resource sharing because no library is self-sufficiency to meet the needs of its users due to insufficient funding and information explosion.

Way Forward

1. Libraries should make policies that will encourage information resource sharing.
2. Libraries management should invest in suitable internet connectivity to aid resource sharing in a changing world.
3. More print information resources should be digitalized to support the sharing of information resources in a changing.
4. Library staff should upskill themselves in the use of modern technological equipment so that they can fit into resource sharing in a changing world.
5. Provision of uninterrupted power supply, constant power supply should be made available in the library to aid resource sharing in a changing world.

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