

FUNDING OF SELECTED RESEARCH LIBRARIES IN SOUTH WEST NIGERIA

Ngozi ODILI

Library Department, Baze University Abuja

Ngozi.odili@bazeuniversity.edu.ng

Abstract

Purpose: The study investigated the interrelationship between library collection and financial strength of the library to determine the impact of financial constraints on the acquisition of library materials and how research libraries are providing needed services to users.

Methodology: The study adopted the case study approach to gain extensive insight into the financial state of research libraries, their acquisition strength, and the nature of information services delivered to library users. The research instruments used are questionnaires and interviews.

Findings: Findings from the study revealed that both research libraries were operating at a level of mediocrity due to poor funding which has impacted negatively on their collection growth and the nature of information services delivered to users. The libraries rely heavily on old collections and local journals and have witnessed a decline in users' patronage. Also, it was discovered that, the factors responsible for libraries underfunding in Nigeria have persisted for decades; there have been additional causes in recent times such as the world economic recession and the plummet in prices of crude oil.

Implication: While conducting the study, it was inferred that the authorities' perceptions about the library are key to generating adequate financial support required for their sustainability and effective operation. The management of research institutes, responsible for allocating funds to the different sectors in their organization needs to recognize their libraries as equal partners in achieving the institutions' goals of advancing knowledge and information through research.

Originality/Value: The study recommended that to gain the attention of the administrative authority, librarians need to master the skills of advocacy as well as the ability to quantify in analytical terms the library's accomplishments and how they align with the goals and objectives of their parent organization.

Keywords: Library funding, Acquisition, Research libraries

Introduction

Efforts required to sustain the significance of the library to its organization are to a large extent determined by the ability to develop and maintain the growth of its collections. This invariable makes the process of acquisition a crucial segment of the library's operations. As air sustains human life, so too does the library resources sustain its operations in terms of services, relevance, and use.

Currently, there is an increase in demand for access to information which consequently

attracts the issue of finance needed to provide the substantial library resources that are required to meet these demands. As a result, adequate funding and good management of the library by the parent body or institute is required; without this, it will be impossible for the library to provide any services of significance to its users. (Ogunjimi et al. 2018; Ahmed & Nwalo, 2013; Ubogu & Okiy, 2011; Anafulu, 1997). This acknowledgment then calls for the need to allocate large sums to be expanded on equipment, acquisition of materials, ICT facilities, as well as other miscellaneous to boost library resources.

Unfortunately, with hardly any funds, the library is being put under pressure to justify its existence; provide a range of information and communication technologies necessary for retrieving information from remote locations, and provide improved and extended services to its patrons that are becoming advanced and knowledgeable in avenues to access information. (Okiy, 2005 cited in Awa & Kalu 2017; Rosenberg, 1998) In Nigeria, libraries are experiencing crises imposed by financial constraints and unmanageable growth of publications and these are issues that can be traced back to the mid-'80s. The endemic economic crisis coupled with the dwindling funds offered to libraries can have an enormously damaging effect on the growth of library collections. For instance, Ehikamenor 1983 and Ifidon, 2006 observed that the collections development of most libraries in Nigeria have long been adversely affected by foreign exchange restriction, over-dependence on overseas sources for the supply of reading materials, and more recently, inadequate funds coupled with the steeply rising cost of information resources. Consequently, the library has seen the need to adopt several measures to boost user access to information sources, however, these have been unsustainable because most of them still require certain measures of expenses without which they would not become feasible. Examples are 'partnership or resource sharing agreements, which require adequate funding for administration, and infrastructures such as modern information technology services among many others which are not free (Awa & Kalu, 2017). Although the situation of funding African libraries has been severely reviewed and solutions have been proffered in the past decades, some libraries still struggle to develop their resources. Therefore, this study aims to assess the current financial situation of research libraries and its effect on their acquisition process. This study is set within the context of two research institutes situated in the south-western region of Nigeria: Forest Research Institute of Nigeria (FRIN) and National Horticultural Research Institute (NIHORT). Both institutes are establishments of the federal government mandated to conduct research and training in agricultural-

related fields particularly forestry and horticulture. The central research libraries of the two institutes operate on similar objectives which are to provide information support for the research and academic programs of the institutions through the provision of relevant collections and services to their patrons (FRIN, 1996; NIHORT, n.d.). To achieve its aims the study will identify the following objectives:

- the libraries' current financial situation
- the effects of the libraries' financial strength on collection growth

Literature Review

This section looks into the acquisition process as an essential element of library activity that empowers it to achieve its goal of providing effective services to its patrons. Also, discussed is a brief historical background of the financial struggles of Nigerian libraries and how libraries are perceived in Africa by their parent bodies.

Library Acquisition and Financial Challenges

The ALA world encyclopaedia of library and information services (1993) refers to the library acquisition process as the term commonly used to designate several facets of the library work that focus on the techniques of acquiring library resources. These resources are responsible for offering services that are tailored to satisfying users' information needs (Gregory, 2019). Therefore, in all libraries whether public, academic, or research libraries, acquisition involves certain basic elements which include: coordinating the selection of materials to avoid poor quality and irrelevant materials, administration of funds for buying them, gathering of operational statistics, aligning of acquisition procedures with related procedures of other units within the library, and liaison with the publishers, donors and other sources of materials for the library collections (ALA, 1993; Gregory, 2019).

Providing services of high standards and appropriate resources that will be heavily used should be a normal scenario in which a functional library operates (Nhemas 2001,

Doust 2002; Gregory, 2019) According to Doust (2002), the way to successful library service in Africa, is to provide a combination of good and relevant books and innovative services. However, he further puts it that libraries in Africa are known to be stocked with outdated, worn-out, and inappropriate materials as a result they will never be used effectively because the libraries have nothing useful to offer readers. Similarly, Rosenberg (1994) commented on the inadequacies of the collections in African libraries and observed that the only thing they have in abundance are readers that are not using the stocks and services of the library, but reading their materials, copying notes, and so on.

Giving the historical background of the financial situation of Nigerian libraries, Ojoade and Ochaj (2000) stated that in the mid- 1970s Nigeria witnessed an unprecedented growth of libraries, especially those in academic institutions, followed by others. According to the co-authors, this was a period of "oil boom". However, by the 1980s the economic fortunes of the country began to turn around with some detrimental effects on libraries in Nigeria and their services to the extent that university libraries became shadows of their former state. They became not more than just reading rooms and recreational centres rather than facilities for serious academic and research activities. Research libraries (Fatuyi, Yusuf and Ibrahim 1997) also encountered similar challenges in their quest to make available to their patrons the most current information resources. The deterioration grew increasingly worse despite avenues embarked upon by the government to restructure the economy through IMF conditionalities such as the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). However, by the mid-1990s, the above situation reached a catastrophic point to the extent that many university libraries were recording a near-zero percent growth rate except for a few gifts received once in a while. Finally, the continuous increase in the prices of books and journals crushed all hopes of most libraries ever getting out of their financial predicaments (Ojoade and Ochaj 2000).

Studies carried out within the last decade (Ahmed & Nwalo, 2013; Inyang & Igwechi,

2015; Jain & Akakandelwa, 2016; Okere & Olorunfemi, 2018) shows that causes and effects of the financial situation and the standards of libraries persist albeit with the emergence of new issues: for instance, while the Nigeria economy continues to suffer devaluation of the Naira and souring inflation as witnessed in the 1980s, it was also affected by the economic recession and the downward spiral in the prices of crude oil witnessed by other countries around the world.

Perceptions about the Library and its Financial Situation

On the Contrary view, Ojoade and Ochaj (2000) pointed out that, the health of the economy does not necessarily determine how much funding a library gets from the government or its funding body, but also on the views of how the library is regarded and the priority the government attaches to its services. For instance, the Nigeria University Commission (NUC) recommended that certain percentages of a university's total budget be allocated to the institution's library; this process was tagged the Library Development Fund (LDF). In 1992 the NUC upgraded the LDF from 5% to 10%, however, this operation ceased in 2001 and since then, university libraries have to rely on the discretion of the university management to allocate funds for the running and development of the library (Salisu, 2001; Ifidon and Okoli, 2002). According to Ojoade and Ochaj (2000), the importance of organising donations at the national level has been stressed, but none of these initiatives has been sustained because the parent bodies of libraries whether government or institutions such as universities are not willing to allocate portions of their expenditure for the procurement of library materials or equipment. In the same respect, Fatuyi, Yusuf, and Ibrahim (1997) stated that, ironically, the federal government whose responsibility is to fund research institutes is yet to recognise libraries or the information they provide as an essential and important commodity, not just for day-to-day living but for industry and commerce. Although, lack of finance appears important in the process of the deterioration of African University libraries, "this is a symptom rather than a cause, only the tip of the iceberg" according to Rosenberg (1998).

The author further stated that regardless of the strength of the African economy securing adequate financing for libraries will remain bleak. This is as a result of libraries not being grounded in Africa's culture and not developing as a response to different civic, cultural, or educational challenges as they did in the West; in Africa, libraries have always been seen as less significant.

Libraries in Africa Need a Drastic Overhaul of Set Priorities

What may give libraries in Africa a chance for future sustainability is the need to reconsider their roles and purpose within the context or realities of the African social, cultural, and economic structure rather than what is universally accepted (Rosenberg, 1998). If libraries' operations and services are designed to provide solutions to societal issues and for instance, are perceived by institutional administrators, academics, and [researchers] as equal partners in advancing the scholarly process, then libraries will be seen as significant and gain the needed support to sustain them, although considerably within the financial limits of their funding bodies (Rosenberg, 1998). The solution, therefore, lies in the ability to take considerable measures in restrategizing set priorities, being flexible and responsive to change to remain relevant within the constantly evolving scholarly communication process and increasingly technology-savvy clienteles (Rosenberg, 1998; Jain & Akakandelwa, 2016; Odili, 2017).

Methodology

The research methodology adopted to achieve the objectives of this study was the case study method because it makes possible the gathering of extensive data about the unit studied (Aina, 2002). The research instruments used for collecting data were questionnaires and interviews. The interview was an advantage to the research because it made possible the collection of in-depth responses from the respondents. The questionnaire, on the other hand, was designed to identify the nature of the libraries' financial state and how the nature of

their services during financial constraints. The study was limited by the number of library staff employed in both research institutes, therefore, the sampling technique adopted for this study was the census or total enumeration. The population of the study totalled 20 and they comprised the entire professionals and para-professional workforce of the central research libraries of the Forest Research Institute of Nigeria (FRIN) and the National Horticultural Research Institute (NIHORT). The data collected were discussed, analysed, and interpreted. Of the 20 questionnaires distributed, the respondents of the National Horticultural Research Institute library (NIHORT) completed and returned 5, while the respondents of the Forest Research Institute of Nigeria library (FRIN) completed and returned 11 making it a total of 16 questionnaires. This constituted a total response rate of 80%. The interview conducted was restricted to only the professionals of which there were a total of 2 respondents from both libraries.

Findings and Discussions

In this section, tabular presentations were used to present the data gathered through the research instruments.

Staff Composition of the Research Libraries

The study revealed that a large proportion of the workforce in FRIN library was mostly paraprofessionals with one professional librarian, while the level of staff professionalism hired at the NIHORT library is balanced. However, the information presented in table1 shows that the majority of the respondents who participated in this study are those in the rank of Library officers 12(75%).

Although, the respondents indicated positions such as Higher library officer, Senior library officer, Library officer 1, Assistant library officer, Librarian 1, Librarian 2, and the likes. For the sake of being precise, the status designation has been reduced to three as shown in the table below.

Table1: Respondents Professional Status (n= 16)

Roles	NIHORT	FRIN	Total
Chief Librarian	1	1	2 (12.5%)
Librarian	2	0	2 (12.5%)
Library officer	2	10	12 (75.0%)

Table 2 shows the working experience of the respondents divided according to years. According to the table, a significant proportion of the respondents have more than ten years of library experience. For instance, of the five representatives from NIHORT three (42.86%) indicated having between twenty-one to thirty years experience while four (57.14%) of the seven

respondents from FRIN indicated the same, making it a total of seven of the sixteen individuals who participated in the study. These data show that both libraries have an experienced workforce, therefore the two libraries were quite stable in terms of the levels of professionals running both libraries with the size of the institutes.

Table2: Years of Working Experience of the Respondents (n=16)

Years of Experience	NIHORT	FRIN	Total
1-10	1 (20.00%)	4 (80.00%)	5
11-20	1(33.33%)	2 (66.67%)	3
21-30	3 (42.86%)	4 (57.14%)	7
Above 30	0	1 (100.00%)	1

The Libraries' Financial Situation

Table 3 below, explains the response rate given by individual respondents of both NIHORT and FRIN libraries regarding libraries' source of funds. Most of the respondents attributed the Federal government as their major source of income with a total response rate of 7(43.75%). Few of the respondents with a total rate of 5(31.25%) indicated both the income generated at the institution and the federal

government, although, the majority of respondents who indicated this are the librarians at the FRIN library. The information provided by the respondents is justified as both institutions, that is NIHORT and FRIN are establishments of the Federal government of Nigeria and their central libraries are appendages of both institutions to support their mandate and to help in achieving their goals as research institutes.

Table3: The Libraries Source of Funds (n=16)

Source of funds Libraries	NIHORT	FRIN	Total
Institution	0	2	2 (12.5%)
Federal Government	4	3	7 (43.75%)
Donations	0	0	0 (0.00%)
Income generation	0	1	1 (6.25%)
Federal Government and income generation at the institution	1	4	5 (31.25%)
Institution and income generation	0	1	1 (6.25%)

To determine the level of funding received by both libraries, on the questionnaire, the financial strength was categorised as "sustainable", "underfunded", and "negligible". The information obtained from the questionnaires was varied, while the responses gotten through the interviews were consistent and gave more insight into the libraries' financial state. Table 4 below, indicates that both libraries are facing some form of financial instability. Although

5(31.25%) of the respondents indicated their library was sustainable, it is important to note here that just one of the responses in this category was a participant from NIHORT, while the remaining four were FRIN staff. A slightly higher proportion of the respondents 7(43.75%) pointed out that they are underfunded, while 3(1.17%) all from FRIN indicated the amount of funding received by their library was negligible.

From the interview conducted, the representative at the NIHORT library revealed that the source of the income for the library's budget comes from the institution. However, the capital allocation received from the federal government for the upkeep of the institution, from which the library also benefits, is oftentimes delayed. As a result, only income for recurrent allocation was being disbursed to the institution for the payment of salaries. The respondent from FRIN revealed that the entire institution operates at the mercy of the leadership of the institution. Funds do not come to the library except by request, and so far, no request has ever been turned down. In this case, the factor that would count most in securing an

adequate allocation is the availability of funds, in other words, the parent body will only make allocations based on the availability of funds and the persuasiveness or the amount of pressure the librarian can exert in presenting the libraries needs. The information obtained from the interviews corresponds with the view of Olalokun and Adekunle(2005), who on the same note stated that financing university libraries rely on the discretion of their vice-chancellors who distribute funds at their discretion, but it is usually unfortunate in situations whereby the university management does not give priority to the library, as the quality of services offered to its users is often negatively affected.

Table 4: The Libraries' Financial Strength (n=16)

Level of funding	NIHORT	FRIN	Total
Sustainable	1	4	5 (31.25%)
Underfunded	4	3	7 (43.75%)
Negligible	0	3	3 (1.17%)
No response	0	1	1 (6.25%)
Total	5	11	16 (100.00%)

Table 5 reveals the response rate of the respondents from the two research libraries on the issue of shortage of funds. A significant proportion of the representatives from the NIHORT 4 (80%) and FRIN 8 (72.72%) library indicated that the library's shortage of funds was mostly as a result of low funds received from the Federal government and the economic state of the country.

A respondent from the NIHORT library specifically stated that the cause of the library's low funding was a result of managerial negligence. While the respondent interviewed at the FRIN library indicated that

the 10% funding policy by the federal government in which the institution was obliged to grant to the library was never allocated to them during the period it was active. Findings from Ahmed and Nnwalo's (2013) study, similarly revealed that faculty libraries are inadequately funded due to the low level of financial support received from the university management. Based on these revelations, the poor allocation of funds to these libraries could be a reflection of the parent body's low perception concerning the library and not necessarily as a result of the institutes' lack of financial resources.

Table 5: Reasons for the Libraries Shortage of Funds (n=16)

Reasons for the shortage	NIHORT	FRIN	Total
The economic state of the country	1 (20.00%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (6.25%)
Increase in the cost of publication	0 (0.00%)	3 (27.27%)	3 (18.75%)
Low funds from the Federal government	3 (60%)	0 (0.00%)	5 (31.25%)
The economic state of the country and low funds from the Federal government	0 (0.00%)	8 (72.72%)	6 (37.5%)
Others	1 (20.00%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (6.25%)
Total	5	11	16 (100.00%)

The Effects of Financial State on Acquisition

Respondents from both libraries reported that the frequency in which their library

makes acquisition is random. Also, table 6 below reveals that the largest percentage of the most neglected aspects of the libraries' resources is computer hardware/software followed by journals and periodicals at a total

frequency rate of 13(31.7%) and 11(26.8%) with minute differences between the books 10(24.4%) and newspapers 7(17.1%).

The information given by the table below is quite alarming because the resources which are crucial to the survival of both research libraries are the ones that are predominantly neglected. Both libraries are domiciled in research institutions, therefore, it is necessary to have in their stock, the most

recent journals and periodicals including access to online resources or data to keep the researchers of the institutes abreast with the latest development in their field of concern, however, such resources are either lacking or inadequate. These findings confirm the Ifidon (2006) report which states that the effect of poor funding of libraries in third world countries is particularly felt in the area of collection development.

Table 6: Most aspects of Acquisitions Neglected (n=16)

Most neglected resources	NIHORT	FRIN	Total
Books	3	7	10 (24.39%)
Journals/periodicals	4	7	11 (26.83%)
Newspapers	0	7	7 (17.07%)
Computer hardware/software	5	8	13 (31.71%)
	12	29	41 (100.00)

Avenues through which the Library could Operate Despite their Financial Stress

In response to the questions on ways the library could be sustained, despite the financial stringency, respondents from the FRIN library indicated, selling of the institution's publications and other income-generating activities, while respondents from NIHORT suggested, the installation of internet facilities and getting assistance from foreign institutions that have the same mandate as theirs. Most avenues libraries embark on to generate funds including those mentioned by the respondents are charging users for email, use of electronic databases, photocopy, fines for late returns among others, unfortunately, studies show these efforts yield nothing substantial and cannot be a substitute to government funding (Ojoade and Ochaj 2000; Rosenberg 1998).

Nature of Services Offered to Library Users as the Financial Problem Persists

Findings from the study revealed that the financial distress experienced by both libraries affects their acquisition strength. This can be expected as already revealed in table 4 that both libraries were underfunded. From the interviews conducted, the respondent at NIHORT revealed that the library continues to witness some level of patronage despite the impact of the financial situation on their services. Although, it was not confirmed if the users consult library books and other available resources or go

into the facility with their materials for private study.

The respondent at the FRIN library, on the other hand, revealed that "the income spent on the collections was negligible thus, affecting the services of the library tremendously. Also, the library was understaffed; and the modern technology and materials required to boost the services of the library are insufficient. Journal intake did not come in as frequently as possible and the old journals were the ones users had to rely on including publications from both locals and foreign donors". The respondent also confirmed that the library uses local subscriptions to make up for foreign subscriptions. This is owed to the fact (as indicated by the respondent) of high exchange rate for foreign materials, therefore, the libraries had no choice but to rely on local publications. The respondents at FRIN, further testified to the underutilization of the library resources, especially by the researchers of the institute. This is a devastating acknowledgment because the objective of the library is to assist the researchers who are part of the institution through literature and other information conveying media for them to achieve the objectives of the institution and to proliferate extensive research publications in their field of study. The respondent opined that "Nigerians read for achievement, but not to develop themselves. Individuals from outside the institution such as students, workers, and

international visitors are those who patronize the library, while the researchers from the institute do not publish anything for years". The respondent further added that, "the researchers, all together cannot be blamed, as the institutions do not offer allocations for carrying out research; consequently, the only way by which the library can exist in a crucial situation such as this, is at a level of mediocrity". The Information provided by the respondent from FRIN give credence to Ifidon and Ifidon (2007) who stated that the provision of information resources of study and research, competent workforce, conducive environment, furniture, and equipment are required for library services to operate effectively, but without adequate financial support, it will be difficult for the library to provide any service of significance. Unfortunately, comments made by both participants interviewed concerning the level of support they have received so far indicates that the federal government and most importantly the institutions are yet to show evidence of being aware of the fact that research institutions as instruments for advanced learning, may to a great extent be measured by their library and the policy established for their maintenance and development.

Conclusion

The study was conducted at two research libraries which were the National Horticultural Research Institute (NIHORT) and the Forest Research Institute of Nigeria (FRIN) central libraries. Findings from the study showed that both libraries were not receiving adequate financial support from either the government or their parent body. The poor funding of both libraries was heavily reflected upon both libraries' acquisition strength and services: the frequent need to purchase journals/periodicals including the acquisition of non-print information media was tremendously affected. The situation means both libraries operate at a level of mediocrity, consequently, the FRIN central library, in particular, has witnessed low patronage because of the inadequacies in their collections while that of NIHORT was inconclusive. The library is the core of both research institutes as it serves all the primary functions of the institutions which are

research, creation, and the transmission of the knowledge and findings of the present and the past to the future generations. The support for the libraries in times of financial stringency should be a priority for the government as well as their parent bodies' belief in their educational value. In addition to being recognised by their major sponsors, there is a need for the librarian to create awareness for the library as a place where information is collated, organised, managed, and preserved, and the role of this in the development of Nigerian society. Also, to gain the respect and support of the administrative authorities responsible for allocating funds to the library, librarians need to master the skills of advocacy, as well as the ability to quantify in analytical terms the library accomplishments and how its operations and information services, aid in achieving the goals and objectives of their parent organization. That said, further research needs to be conducted to discover the cost-effect of library and information services in connection to the realities of the Nigerian society so that they can compete with other social services for government and citizens' patronage.

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