

Planning for Library Resources Provision in University Libraries in North Central Zone of Nigeria

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of this paper is to identify the critical factors in planning for library resources provision in university libraries in North Central zone of Nigeria.

Design/Methodology/Approach: the exploratory approach was adopted for this study. The paper first conceptualized planning as a management variable or function and went further to identify the issues that needed to be resolved in planning for library resources provision as consisting of information planning, infrastructural planning, financial planning and human resource planning.

Findings: The findings of this study showed that funding alone cannot solve all the problems of the library rather there are certain managerial variables that inhibit the effective provision of library resources in universities, these are planning, organisation and evaluation.

Practical Implications: From the findings it was noted that managerial variables such as planning, organisation and evaluation should not be overlooked as it could lead to a precarious library resource situation in university libraries.

Originality/Value: The value of this paper lie in the fact that university libraries should as a matter of necessity, partner with the teaching faculty so that the resources provided would be needed by both staff and students.

Keywords: planning, library resources, information planning, infrastructural planning, financial planning, human resources planning and university libraries.

Paper Type: Conceptual.

Introduction

Planning is a process of setting goals for the university library. It also involves the determination of the activities to be performed within a specified period and the funding implications of each. In the view of Hartzell (2006), planning is a systematic effort to organize the future performance of human beings, money or goods and services within some identified constraints of time span. Planning has some parts that constitute it and there are five major component parts: formulation of vision; mission statements; goals and objectives; environmental scanning strategy, and policy statements (Aina, 2004).

Once the planning function is completed the next major function is organization which follows logically from it and involves the provision of the activities that have to be performed towards achieving the goals and objectives articulated in the plan. In libraries, the activities are usually arranged into departments or units that complement one another by their operation, while the structures of authority, power, accountability and responsibility within the

library are clearly defined. This enables each staff to know his schedules of duty, superiors, colleagues and subordinates and how to relate to each one in the performance of his duties; in terms of collaboration, reporting or supervision. Evaluation, another element of management, operationally means appraisal or assessment of functions or outputs, based on the library's goals. Evaluation is aimed at assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of a library in reaching its goals and objectives. Hartzell (2006) identified three major types of evaluation: outcome (impact); process (performance), and input (administrative). Evaluation helps to determine the quality of outputs, extent of attainment of set goals and any factors hampering performance.

Planning in the organizational context is a process that involves a step-by-step determination of an organization's actions and the resources required to achieve them (Carlisle, 1976). It is a systematic effort to organize the future performance of a library, including its collections, physical facilities, funds and services within some identified constraints of time span. Planning is one of the major

management functions. It is in fact the most fundamental management function which every library needs to get right to avoid derailing the

coordinate the actions. Planning is the most fundamental function because every other function of management rests upon a plan. It thus sets the stage for all the other functions. (Nwachukwu, 2007).

Concept of Planning

Methods of Planning for Library resources provision

Planning for library resources provision is multi-dimensional which includes information planning, infrastructural planning, financial planning and human resources planning.

Information Planning

Information resource is a library resource requiring effective planning. The prevalent unavailability of library resources, particularly in developing countries, which Ochogwu (2007) decried and attributed largely to the failure of the library and information professionals, is basically connected to information planning inadequacies. Information needs to be planned for in a manner similar to the planning for human resources. A library that has a carefully articulated systematic information planning process stands to benefit more than one that has not. Bryson (1999) enumerated the essential objectives of the information planning processes which include: provision of appropriate range of information to meet the objectives of the organization, and the information needs of its employees, clientele and stakeholders; identification, documentation and securing of all information relevant to the organization irrespective of the source and format of the information; and ensuring that the information content, flow and delivery mechanisms are compatible with the processes, decision-making and information needs of the staff, information user community of the university and users outside the parent university.

There is imperative for all the stakeholders to work collaboratively through proper consultations in order to justify the costs invested and achieve effective information planning for the organization. This position was amplified by Pollack (2010) who having examined research on the convergence of information system planning and organizational

system because it involves defining the library's goals, establishing strategies for attaining the goals and mapping out actions to integrate and

planning noted that because information systems serve as drivers of organizational change, there was increased pressure on organizations to raise their investments in technology and that organizational planning successes resulted when people with technical skills, information systems group and functional managers of the organization all worked collaboratively in the planning process.

Information planning includes technology planning, which relates to the manner in which technology is used to deliver services and the integration of systems that operate within the parent organization and other organization (Bryson, 1999). As figure 01 below illustrates, information planning is done at macro and micro levels, and includes the creation of information architecture to support the mission and objective of the institution. This can be achieved by analyzing the strategies, functions and processes of the organization. The micro level planning processes focus on managing and maintaining the standard and quality of information so that the information can be easily used. The information planning processes help to make the information consistent, concise, relevant, accessible and accurate.

There is no gainsaying that information is an important resource required by people in all works of life. In universities, for example, information of various types is needed by students, lectures, non-teaching staff, the University Council and other stakeholders from within and outside the parent university. The university library exists as a response to the imperative to meet these diverse needs, and should be sufficiently innovative, efficient and responsive in its information planning. This is why a university library which has well thought out information management planning processes will bring value to its target information user community than one that has not. Access to quality, relevant and timely information is among the obvious benefits of a well-planned information service (Bryson, 1999). An information planning process thus sets out to achieve the provision of appropriate range of information that meets the objectives of the organization and the information needs of its employees, stakeholders, and information user

community; the effective information identification, documentation, preservation and storage; efficient management of information regardless of its source and format of presentation; and information content, flows and delivery mechanisms which are compatible with the business processes, decision-making and information needs of the university management, faculty, library staff, other staff, student users, and other stakeholders within and outside the parent university.

An important step in information planning is environmental analysis (Bryson, 1999). This is made up of the information needs of the organization's internal members such as the university's employees, members of Council, and students. Also reflected are the needs of other organizations, and users external to the university who may be resident within the local community, within the same country or in another country. The information service should plan and deliver relevant, timely information to both groups but will differ according to the needs of the particular client. For instance, information planning in a particular university should take into account the programmes run currently and the level of each, the programmes anticipated, the needs of the student populations, the staffs and their subject spread, the local community, etc.

Infrastructural Planning

Proper planning of infrastructural resources is also an essential requirement for a library. It enhances the library in its efforts to maintain an optimal level of organization for effective service delivery, especially in times of inflation and decreased budget. According to Hemphill (1987), proper planning of infrastructural resources enables libraries in such lean situations to articulate cost saving activities which include the postulation of alternatives to the construction of a new library building: rearrangement, conversion, addition, and portable or prefab structure. The imperative for infrastructural planning is further strengthened in the face of changing technology. This was the context in which Thompson (1974) emphasized the importance of a programme to the construction of a library building. It is expected that before the architect can draw up any plans for a library, he must know the details of what is required about the library building such as the type of library service to be provided, types and qualities of materials to be stocked, number of

readers expected, library staff population and their office requirements, and probability of future changes to the building. It is reasoned that working out the full details regarding the book capacity, and spaces for processing, shelving, readers etc., help the librarian and library staff to clarify the needs of the library, and to cost out the space needs to enable the university grasp the full import of the needs in university terms. In this way, the final approval of the building plan is based on the university's funding capacity and reduces the chances of construction delays and failures related to funding inadequacies. Since nearly ten years before, Metcalf's (1962) justification for a program for a library building had been that such a program represents the best way found for the librarian, library staff and university administration to determine the essential needs of the library and make all concerned tackle them; affords the librarian the opportunity to point out to the university and faculty all the requirements of the library and to secure their approval and how to confront them; and provides a framework for the architect to plan a satisfactory building. A programme by definition is a preliminary and reasonably complete statement of the requirement of the library (Lodewyck, 1961). In terms of the specific details of its content the aspect as captured by Gelfand (1968) include the institutional objectives and their implication for library service, and a description of the plan of library service along with details of the spatial and technical requirement. Accordingly, the procedures for planning a library building fall into three stages: preparation of a programme; development and approval of a preliminary plan, and approval of final plans and specifications.

Good ventilation is one aspect of library building that calls for meticulous planning. Fifoot (1974) asserted that providing a library building without provision for air conditioning is a waste of public money and that it is a national economy to air-condition all university libraries. Lighting is yet another crucial area requiring careful planning. Most library planners warn that while it is advisable to harness natural lighting, daylight must not be relied upon and that the aim should be to provide uniform distribution, avoiding sharp contrast (Thompson, 1974).

The basic aim of a modern university library building is to achieve flexibility; in contrast with neo-Gothic library buildings which were fixed function: that is, each area was designed to meet one specific functional or operational need and

there was no possibility of interchange. A reading room could only be a reading room permanently, and a cataloging area only a cataloging area. Brophy (2005) acknowledged this much when he outlined ten fundamental principles of library buildings, namely: accessibility, flexibility, compactness, serviceability and, health and safety. The others are environment, comfort, maintainability, security and use of natural light. According to Fifoot (1968), flexibility of a library building means interchangeability of all major stock areas and staff areas. This implies a building which will bear stack loads throughout, which will light and ventilate a large number of readers anywhere, no interior load bearing walls, grouping the services and other fixed elements so as to free the largest area on each floor for changing library use. Flexibility is best achieved by building the library according to the modular system whereby the building is supported by columns placed at regular intervals. In this case nothing within the building is weight-bearing except the columns; nothing within the building is fixed or immovable except the columns, though it is practically impossible to change the location of the stairways, elevators, heating facilities, ducts and plumbing.

A modular building is made up of identical bays, any of which may be furnished as part of a reading area filled with ranges of shelving or divided by partitions into offices or combination of two or even three of these may be used. No difficult structural alternatives are required when a bay that has been serving one purpose is assigned another purpose. This saves money and prevents complications which often arise as space requirements change. Complete flexibility in a library building requires uniform standards of lighting, ventilation and flooring for the purpose of achieving absolute interchangeability (Thompson, 1974).

Efficient infrastructural planning in libraries is one that is guided by factors of quality with regard to all the library's purposes (Faulkner-Brown, 1997). Such purposes concern space needs for protection of information resources; storage of information resources; housing of library catalogues; space for readers; space for library staff; space for library management; space for auxiliary functions; space for study, research and writing; space to publicise resources, and structure to serve as memorial. Ten qualitative factors were suggested together with some British space standards in an outline

of some ecological library buildings and architectural options. The qualitative factors fondly regarded as Faulkner-Brown's Ten Commandments are: flexible, compact, accessible, extendible, varied, organized, comfortable, consistent environment; secure, and economic.

Financial Planning

Financial planning is an important management function requiring priority management attention. The imperative for this line of action is better appreciated in the light of the fact that lack of funds for implementation appears to account for the failures of many information services (Edoka, 1992; Sharma, 2006; and Ngalla, 2007). The apparent root causes of such failures include: lack of funds to meet optimum staff requirements; lack of funds to provide modern buildings; lack of funds to achieve adequate collections, new technology, enhanced access, and so on. Various reasons have been adduced for inadequate funding situations in libraries. In developing countries, for example, some of the funding problems have been attributed to huge debt burden, devaluation and deregulation of the national currency and inflation. According to Hicks (1980) and Ola (1990), such funding predicaments, if not corrected in the face of the rising demands of a modern society, are bound to result in the narrowing of roles and scopes of library service. Efforts to ameliorate the funding predicaments led to different proposals. The various funding proposals made (Tamuno, 1988; Edoka, 1992), controversial as most of them have been, remain incontrovertible pointers to the reality that continuous focus on funding is thus a matter of strategic importance to libraries and deserves high quality planning.

According to Jo Bryson (1999), financial planning concerns the process of identifying, costing and allocating expenditure and revenue to the resources and activities that enhance the attainment of the organization's objectives. Within the context of a university library, this process enables the university library management to cost and allocate expenditure and revenue to library resources and activities in pursuance of the objectives of the university and its library.

Financial planning can be carried out at the macro level and also at the micro level. The budget process is the means of executing

financial planning at the macro level. All information service activities are subject to revenues and expenditures which must be accounted for in a budget. Budgets are financial statements prepared and approved for specific periods of time and provide details of the proposed revenues and expenditures. At the micro level, however, the optimum use of library staff and other resources can be determined by means of micro economic analysis in order to effectively cost the library activities and, where necessary, pass this cost over to the library users. The analysis of the external and internal environments marks the beginning of financial planning as it does for the planning of other library resources. This includes analysis of available financial resources, relevant laws, users' ability to pay for services, and economic trends. The analysis also covers the size, culture and type of the university, financial regulations, information resources, infrastructural (includes technology) resources, personnel, and prospects of the library. What emerges from the environmental analysis is a financial management process which includes the operation of the budget of the university. Budget preparation is done prior to expenditure and receipt of income. The budget forms the basis for monitoring and control of income and expenditure as allocated to different sub-heads. This functional financial planning inevitably produces desirable outcomes in form of well-managed financial resources. The scenario is characterized by performance monitoring that take place throughout the organization. What consequently accrue to the organization, in this case the university library, are: high financial performance and an effective budget control system that is sustained by a dynamic process of review, evaluation and revision.

Human Resource Planning

Human resource connotes staff, which is, arguably, an organization's most valuable resource. Indeed, people are the greatest asset in any organization because it is the people in the organization that frame the organization's objectives as well as employ the organization's funds and material resources to achieve its objectives. This is why Brandt (2011) declared that it is always necessary to develop a systematic approach that aligns and attunes the organization's objectives with its human resource practice. For the library to perform optimally, its staff must be managed appropriately. Proper management in this regard

implies successful planning of the human resource, which is critical for organizational effectiveness. According to Vetter (1967) human resource planning is the process by which management determines how the organization should move from its current position to its desired position, with the ultimate end of having the right quantity of personnel and the right caliber of persons at the right places at the right time, doing things which result in both the organization and the individual receiving maximum benefits. The most essential ingredients of staffing include: recruitment, training, career prospect and evaluation (Ifidon, 1999).

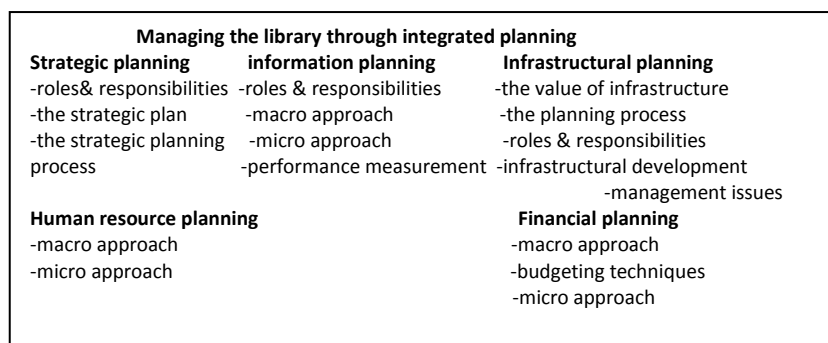
Human resource planning, like planning for every other library resource, takes place in the context of the broad spectrum of organizational and strategic business planning (Jackson and Schuler, 1990). It concerns forecasting the organization's future human resource needs and planning for ways by which to meet them. This includes fashioning objectives and then developing and implementing programs of staffing, appraisal, compensation and training to ensure that people of required skills and characteristics are available when and where the organization needs them. According to Mills (1985) human resource planning may also involve developing training programs that enhance staff competence and staff motivation, to boost organizational productivity, quality and innovation. The planning of a library's human resources should therefore adequately consider the different categories of staff which, as Edwards (1975) categorized, consists of professionals, sub-professionals and non-professionals, with clear duties and responsibilities for each group. This underscores the importance of each personnel category and the imperative to make for each category adequate arrangement for the recruitment, training, career prospect and evaluation.

Exit from the organization is the ultimate final thing for every employee. Various reasons may be responsible for such exit in every case but essentially separation may be voluntary or involuntary. An exit interview with such staff provides valuable information on employee perceptions about the organization and how well it is being managed. This helps the management to strive better toward improvement, especially in identified areas of weakness.

Bryson (1999) discussed human resource planning, in conjunction with the planning for other types of resources in library and information science perspectives, and using an integrated approach model, he demonstrated how the library's resources can be planned efficiently and effectively. One important lesson that emerged from this is that the library should do its planning for human, information, infrastructural and financial resources together as part of the strategic planning process. The

university librarian should take part in setting the direction for the parent organization, which should also include the direction for the university library. As shown in the model at figure 01 below, several steps are involved in the strategic planning process, from analysis to developing objectives and programmes. They include defining the mission, conducting situation audit or environmental scanning, and needs.

Figure 01: Managing the Library through integrated planning



Source: Adapted from: Bryson, Jo. (1999). *Effective Library and Information Centre Management*, 2nd ed. Hants: Ashgate Publishing, p.38

The integrated approach which covers macro and micro approaches provides for specific planning strategies for information, financial, infrastructural and human resources of the library. The macro approaches are the approaches from the perspectives of the parent organization while the micro approach is the approach from the perspectives of the particular library. For instance the micro approach to human resource planning will concern the interface of individuals with their jobs. It deals with the development of the job description, job specification and job analysis. Also covered are various processes for staff recruitment, selection, induction and staff turnover and separation. Job analysis is the process of gathering information relating to a particular job and forms the basis for preparation of job description and job specification. The details of the contents of a job analysis include: task and nature of activities; working conditions; personnel requirements; key competency requirements, and nature and degree of supervision. Unlike job analysis, job description is simply a statement of fact that describes the activities and responsibilities of a particular job, such as: job identification; job summary; organizational relationship; activities performed; attainable results; reporting/supervisory relationship; combination tasks/relationship to other jobs; specialized tools used,

and working conditions. Job descriptions are useful in several ways. For example, they form the foundation for human resource planning, recruitment and position management. Furthermore, job description provides the required outcomes of a specific job position, thus constituting the foundation for measuring staff performance on the job as well as serving as a baseline for staff appraisal. Job specification on the other hand describes the required attributes of the person effectively performing the job. It is a clear statement of the minimum human qualities and capabilities required for effective performance of the specific job: academic and professional qualification; experience; skills; knowledge; and specific abilities, etc.

The recruitment process follows logically from job description and job specification, and lays out the various recruitment alternatives available. Such alternatives include: internal promotion, internal transfer, redeployment, media advert, etc. A successful recruitment exercise leads to selection, which may be by interview, aptitude test and/or reference checks. Induction is given to new staff that require series of orientation activities designed to acquaint them with the organization's human and material environment. This includes the culture, procedures and goals of the organization.

Conclusion

The influences behind the precarious library resource situation are often attributed to funding inadequacies (Ifidon, 1990; Akintunde, 2006; Ochogwu, 2007, and Sharma, 2009) given that a library's funds can determine the scope and grade of its facilities, books and journals, and staff; yet common sense clearly shows that merely throwing money at a problem does not always solve the problem. There could be other problems, and so funding cannot constitute a sufficient reason for this precarious situation. Indeed, studies like that by Ngalla (2007), coupled with preliminary observations by the researcher, the researcher's library work experience and pre-research discussions with fellow librarians, suggest that there are certain managerial variables that are inhibiting the effective provision of library resources in the universities; these are planning, organisation and evaluation. However, the suggestions lack empirical evidence. This fact prompted the researcher to embark upon an investigation into the Influence of Managerial Variables on the Provision of Library Resources in Universities in the North Central Zone of Nigeria.

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