

GLOBALIZING UNIVERSITIES THROUGH AUTOMATED DIGITAL LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on the relevance of university libraries to the functions of a typical University setting and the need for Nigerian universities to be of world standard especially in this era of globalization. The problems associated with globalizing Nigerian University libraries were identified and solutions proffered. It concludes that university libraries and indeed other libraries need to be online and must have a very good web connectivity which will go a long way to positively aid the processes of teaching, learning and research for which universities stand for.

KEYWORDS

Globalization

Automated Digital Libraries

Automated Libraries

Globalization of Nigerian Universities

INTRODUCTION

The major functions of a typical university setting are teaching, learning and research. These functions are easily carried out through the provision of quality staff, qualified students and conducive atmosphere for conducive research, teaching and learning, which requires conducive atmosphere comprised of well equipped classrooms, laboratories and well stocked libraries.

The position of library in the scheme of teaching, learning and research for a proper functioning of a typical university, stands clear among the other facilities required for a university to meet up to expectation. Thus the information resource centres should be a place where all the members of the university community (staff, students and

researchers) have and rely upon for information in their areas of need and interest for their academic and overall development and advancement. The university libraries by their nature and characteristics have to acquire and organize all relevant information resources and sources irrespective of their types and format for easy access and use by their community members. Also, they have to provide all types and forms of library and information services that will facilitate easy linkage between the relevant information resource and sources with the right patrons/users.

The information resources and sources found in a typical university library include print and electronic documents as well as visual collections such as, CD-ROMS, databases. Also inclusive are textbooks ,periodicals, research reports, and audio-visuals. However, the library and information services provided include reference service, circulation, database search, inter-library loan, etc.

THE NEED FOR GLOBALIZATION OF UNIVERSITIES

Globalization can be conceived as synergizing with others in related areas of interest to take the advantage of economy of scale towards achieving the desired objective and goals. As a seat of learning and research the university community. Hence the need to offer variety of academic programmes and researches leading the award of certificates in different subject areas of specialization at bachelors, master and Ph. D levels. The need to globalize the Universities therefore stems from the fact

that no one university is self sufficient both in terms of staff and teaching and learning facilities. This is also evident in conducting research where a number of specialist in different areas or needed. Such researches are common in the science and humanities.

The establishment of minimum academic standard for each programme offered in a university has also necessitated universities to collaborate with other within and outside the country especially through academic linkages so as to have a common ground of operation and assurance of quality in staffing; students, information resources, teaching and learning infrastructure, curriculum content and certification. The inadequacy of quality teaching and research staff to be hired especially on tenure basis also provides basis for collaboration with other universities in the areas of teaching and research other factors responsible for collaboration among universities include:

- Inadequacy of funds
- The share size and location of the students
- The poor financial position of the student especially to access relevant information resources elsewhere including internet and on-line database use.
- Inadequacy of teaching and learning facilities particularly laboratory facilities
- Inadequacy of library facilities and updated collections, etc.

These shortcomings presuppose that for any university to cope with the exigencies of the 21st century in the areas of academics and research breakthrough the shortest cut towards meeting up to expectation is to globalize its frontiers of academic and research activities.

GLOBALIZATION OF UNIVERSITIES AND AUTOMATED DIGITAL LIBRARIES

Universities can conveniently globalised or get globalised within the framework of digitized library system and services. Library and information services provision is made faster, efficient, effective and convenient when its systems and services are automated and the information resources are digitized. It allows for ease of accessed and use without limitation to the location of the user and time of access.

The impact of library and services delivery on the university community is much felt when the library operation are fully automated and the collection and services are accessed especially online. This also provides a better opportunity for collaboration with other libraries within and outside the country especially in such areas as cooperative acquisitions and processing; information resource sharing and access; database access construction, use and management; and staff training and development; etc by implication therefore, the universities get datablised when their libraries are automated, digitized and are internet connected so

that they can easily be accessed globally while they also can access other in the same vein.

STRATEGIES FOR GLOBALIZING LIBRARIES

It is generally agreed that an internet ready library in a way provides a good platform for globalizing the parent institution especially when it has its webpage/site where all its operations and services are uploaded there in for public and global access and use. The globalization of universities through automated digital libraries can be achieved through the following strategies.

AUTOMATION OF LIBRARY OPERATIONS

This is the process of transforming the manual systems of library operation into automated one through the application of choice computer softwares and hardwares. With automation, all library operations such as acquisition, cataloguing, circulations, e.tc. would be done electronically. This reduces the time and energy of the staff in the overall management of the library operations systems and services on one hand and that of users for accessing and utilizing the systems and services on the other hand at their convenience regardless of location and time of use.

A survey conducted on the status ICTs in Nigeria libraries by Mohammed (2002) discovered that much still needs to be done in the automation of library operations especially in public, school, and non-academic libraries.

DIGITIZATION OF LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

The application of ICTs to library operations, systems and services has made it possible to acquire and access not only printed information resources, but electronic copies too. Available in the market of recent, are hard and electronic copies of information resources for acquisition and use. In terms of safety, security, preservation, ease of access and use as well as space saving, electronic documents are in the forefront. The 21st century university libraries too have no choice but to acquire electronic documents and at the same time digitize their collection especially the research reports such as theses and dissertations as well as periodical publications especially journals and research/news bulletins. Collaborative ventures among libraries for acquisitions and processing, and resources sharing are made easier using electronic documents.

DIGITAL INFORMATION RESOURCES REPOSITORY

The current dispensation in the progressive 21st Century Libraries is the development/ establishment of Digitised information Resources Repository Containing mostly the electronic copies of the research reports of the institutions' researchers and students, whether it is commissioned or academic research. This serves as a veritable source of accessing the reports for and wide especially when hosted on the institutions websites /page. It also serves as alternative method of securing and preserving the

reports as they would be accessed all the time over a very long period of time.

Digital materials can be comprised of texts, databases, still and motion images, audio-visuals, graphics, software, webpages/sites, e.t.c. It is observed that resources of human knowledge or expression, whether cultural, educational, scientific and administrative or embracing technical, legal, medical treated digitally, or converted into digital form from existing analogue resources (UNESCO: 2003)

Gbaje (2009) observed that preserving digital heritage is achieved by finding ways to re-present what was originally presented to users by a combination of software and hardware tools acting on data.

CONSORTIUM BUILDING

The major objective of consortium building among libraries is to increase their efficiency and capacity to acquire large collection of information resources at least cost within the context of economy of scale. This is a fact that libraries especially in the developing nations are suffering from inadequacy of funds to the extent that a lot of them could only pay for staff salaries leaving their collections out of date. A lot of them could hardly subscribe to journal publications which are much needed in academic environment. The best option therefore is for the libraries to

belong to a consortium especially for the acquisition of database which are by nature costly to acquire by on library.

ONLINE DATABASE SUBSCRIPTIONS

University Libraries cannot afford to rely on printed documents which party or wholly may be overtake by event at publication. This reduces their level of currency the way forward to having and maintaining current collection is through the outline database subscriptions.

The typical database could contain about 80,000 or more scholarly journal publications cutting across several areas. Acquisition of databases could be done singularly or collaboratively due to costs through consortium. The Nigeria university libraries already in the threshold of forming and utilizing the benefits of consortium through the Nigeria university library consortium (NULIB) project

ESTABLISHMENT OF ELECTRONIC LIBRARIES

Electronic Library simply implies a library without printed document but electronic documents accessed by computer technology using internet, CD-ROM Collection or hardisk collection.

One emerging and interesting episode aimed at salvaging the image of the university libraries in Nigeria in the establishment of Nethilibrary (University connect) project undertaken by the MTN Foundation in collaboration with the respective and fortunate universities where and electronic of libraries were established. The libraries are equipped with

networked computer, V-sat and subscribed on-line databases for the use of the university community. The Nethibrary (electronic library) provides opportunity for accessing all the publications in the databases subscribed to online. Essentially, it serves to augment greatly the library collections which in some cases may not be actively current.

A majority of the libraries in Nigeria are yet to come to terms with electronic library establishment perhaps due to their poor financial stand and inadequacy of requisite staff to man them-Much is still required of the Nigerian libraries in the area of improving their financial position. Staff capacity building and ICTs facilities acquisition and applications for them to benefit from the advantages of electronic library potential

DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF LIBRARY WEBSITE/PAGE

The modern and fastest channel of communication and information transfer is the internet. With internet connectivity there is no boundary as to when and where to access and use library systems, services and resources. The library website/page serve as the main gate/gateway to library system. Operations and services. By implication, it serves as the bedrock for the globalization of libraries and by extension, their respective institutions. With internet connectivity, all forms of collaborative ventures among libraries is possible and so also access and use of databases, other forms of electronic resources and other interesting sites needed by their customers. Some university libraries such as Ahmadu Bello University,

Zaria, University of Jos, Jos, university of Ibadan, Ibadan and Bayero University, Kano have already developed their website/page as the case might be to facilitate the globalization of their systems and services and by extension, their respective university.

CONCLUSION

The major function of typical university teaching, learning and research. This is better performed with the availability of up-to-date information resources and sources mostly housed in the Library. Economic and other factors have affected negatively the University librarian's capacity and ability to provide the state -of- the -art library and information services, provide current information resources and sources and serve as veritable source of accessing and using information resources in other domains regardless of location and time of access.

University libraries have to globalize through automating their system and operations, get connected to the internet, subscribe to online databases and other electronic documents, and engage in collaborative initiatives with libraries within and outside the country so that they can effectively cope with the increasing demand of their patrons. The globalization of university libraries is indeed the globalization of the respective universities as they would be seen as centres of excellence and loved and cherished by all across the globe due to the possibility to access

and use of them outline and remotely without limitation to the location of the user and time of access and.

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