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3-2-2010

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Ajegbomogun, Fredrick Olatunji, "Exploiting Computer Facilities for Internal Income Generation: A Comparison of Two Nigerian Libraries" (2010). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. Paper 327.
http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/327

Library Philosophy and Practice 2010

ISSN 1522-0222

Exploiting Computer Facilities for Internal Income Generation: A Comparison of Two Nigerian Libraries

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Introduction

The library is a non-profit organisation and its mission is to provide services to users. The environment in which Nigerian libraries operate, however, presents challenges to accomplishing this mission. Ojoade and Ochai (2000) observe that the emptiness of the library shelves and dilapidated structures, coupled with obsolete materials and the disappearance of valuable materials from the shelved have reduce the quality of library services. It has been suggested by many scholars that libraries should start generating funds in order to provide adequate services to users. The decline in library services includes lack of funds and partial withdrawal of federal government funding for Nigerian universities. An information explosion and the influx of new technology have changed the information-seeking behaviours of users. Networked computers, an exponential growth in knowledge, availability of the Internet and the World Wide Web challenge libraries to provide access to information by applying Information Communication Technology (ICT) to facilitate access.

The inconsistency in the funding of Nigerian university libraries shows that the government is not sensitive to the information needs of society. The alternative to this problem of under-funding is to explore other means of providing quality information. This article reports on research that explores whether computerization of library services will increase internal revenue generation.

Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library,Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife

The university library is a central academic services. Since its inception in 1966, the new university administration, headed by Prof. Oluwasanmi, viewed the library as “a very unique importance as a repository of knowledge” whose main function was to “acquire, process, organize for use, and preserve such recorded communications as could serve the teaching, research, cultural, and service needs of the entire university community.”

The Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library's book collection has more than 650,000 volumes (Ajayi, 2005). Each year the library acquires thousands of new books. Efforts to computerize the operations of the library began in the 1970s and 1980s, attempting to use the University's Computer Centre mainframe facilities. The efforts that yielded the present results began in 1995 with the purchase through the National University Commission (NUC) of ICL 386 personal computers with a detached CD-ROM drive and OKI Microline printer. TINLIB software was later supplied and installed. This formed the nucleus of the library's computerization, and the creation of the library database began in September 1995. The NUC initiative posed a challenge to the library and brought pressure for a quick completion of the university library computerization project (Ajayi, 2005).

Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan

The University of Ibadan was established as the University College of Ibadan in 1948, and has a library system whose center is the Kenneth Dike Library (KDL), with a mission to support teaching and research activities by making information available to users. Ekpenyong (2003) reports that KDL serves a student population of about 20,000 (full and part time) and an academic community of 5,800 staff (teaching and non-teaching). The library has approximately 542,888 volumes, and receives about 200 current journals, as well as a large number of audiovisual resources. The university library started its automation in 1993 (Ekpenyong, 2003) and presently has a Local Area Network (LAN)/ Intranet of about thirty computers, on which the library resources are hosted. In the library, users have access to CD-ROM databases and online resources like the eGranary library. The eGranary library from the WiderNet project, Iowa, and is a collection of over one and a half million documents (full text journals), books with audio and graphics that have been downloaded from the Web, with copyright permissions obtained (Akintunde, 2004). The library is able to provide a few computers for Internet access for users.

Literature Review

In the colonial days, there was a need for scientific information to support research, development, and to promote economic self-sufficiency. This prompted the development of public libraries. This initiative was short-lived due to lack of funds. A survey of university libraries by Rosenberg (1997) reveals that the amount spent on books and journals to be low and decreasing. Salisu (2000) believes that funding of Nigerian universities and their libraries was better before the Nigerian economy ran into problems in the early 80s as a result of the oil glut and poor internal management of resources. This led to a drastic devaluation of local currency and affected the growth of library collections in both quality and quantity. In today's economic environment, with costs rising and profit dwindling, it has become imperative for many organizations to look for means of funding their organizations. Commenting further,, Madhusudhan (2008) observes that things like budget cuts, rising costs, and complexity in information requirements are forcing professionals to adopt marketing to improve the management of library and information centres. Some scholars believe that internal revenue generation could ameliorate this longstanding non-availability of funds. Libraries have learned that an important competitive weapon is an efficient and effective way of operating. The application of Information Technology (IT) can facilitate routine operations and reduce costs. It can also be a means to generate funds. Any deviation from traditional free library services will need proper orientation on marketing strategies. Kanaujia (2004) suggests the 4Ps of marketing:

- Products and services: libraries should periodically review the products and services they will be offering. This is supported by Reddy and Varalakshmi (1988).
- Place: this is the extent to which the library services are made available, methods of delivery of services, and communication.
- Pricing: this involves decisions regarding pricing for library services, and is done on the basis of quality of information and customer acceptances.
- Promotion: this entails publicity and reaching out to users. Libraries should regularly participate in trade fairs and advertising in newspapers, library bulletins, and information centers.

Jestin and Parameswari (2002) identify a barrier to operating a profitable information business as lack of business expertise among librarians and information scientists. They believe that marketing of information products and services is an integral part of administration, especially as a means for improving user satisfaction and promoting the use of services by current and potential users.

In the same vein, Weingand (1995) stresses that the rate of technological development is accelerating so rapidly that new ideas are continually entering the marketplace. She concludes that to remain part of the information mainstream, librarians must be active in the distribution of information and

receptive to change. This view is supported by Rowley (1985) concludes that computer-based information systems offer more convenient, flexible, and comprehensive retrieval.

These developments have stepped up the demand for automation in the library. Computer applications are expensive; however, what is more important is that they have the ability to deliver. The advantage the IT is worthy of investment. Librarians are accorded the opportunity to render better services to users. Obasuyi (1997) identifies six major tasks for which the computer could be applied: cataloguing, acquisition, circulation, serials control, indexing, and administrative duties.

Ojedokun and Ola (1994) contend that library administrators must not shrink from the idea of fee-based services, at the risk of damage to the university and library system. The prevailing economic condition in Nigeria has driven many public establishments to review their operations and re-examine their services. Government is compelling agencies to fund themselves or at least generate some funds to support their operations and services (Ikhizama and Oduwole 2000). Advances in IT have greatly enhanced library services. Information seekers are intensifying their efforts to track down information in every available avenue. This is an opportunity for information professionals to sell their products to end-users.

Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the usefulness of library computerization in internal income generation.

2. To investigate source of library income and their ability to sustain library operating systems.

3. To examine the types of internal income generation services available in the libraries before the introduction of computer and after.

4. To explore whether income generated through computerization is able to sustain library operating systems.

Methodology

Data for this study were gathered through the use of a questionnaire and structured interviews conducted in 2006. Information was sought on whether the exploitation of computer facilities has any effect on internal revenue generation in academic libraries. The questionnaires and interviews were administered to head of the library and those directly involved with internal income generation such as circulation, reference, automation, and bindery. The questionnaire/interview sought information on the source of income, usefulness of computerization for daily routines, and examines internal income generation in the library before and after computerization. The questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive analysis.

Findings

Data were obtained on computerization as marketing strategies for internal income generation: a comparative study of two Nigerian academic libraries. (KDL, Ibadan & HOL, Ile-Ife) The results of the findings are analyzed below.

Questions were asked about the level of computerization in the library, cost of acquisition, maintenance, and user accessibility. Responses indicate that computers and related technology are costly but not out of reach, while in both libraries users have access to Internet. In an interview conducted in KDL, however, the respondent indicated that previously most undergraduate students had not been allowed direct access, but had to be assisted by library staff, and that now they have direct

access. That shows that computerization is embraced and relevant to the library and the institutions as a whole, which affords them much patronage and consequently additional income, since users have to pay for such facilities.

The two libraries surveyed are not well-funded. Respondents rated their sources of income before computerization (budgetary allocation, voluntary organizations, gift and exchange, and internal revenue generated) as inadequate. This finding corroborates what a University Librarian once said: “we will get the same vote we used to get ten years ago. It is unrealistic when you consider that the cost of books is rising every day and the value of naira has fallen in the last ten years” (Nwafor, 1989). Money generated through fines, user registration, and donations from voluntary organizations was inadequate. The interviews established that resources from voluntary organizations and budget allocations have been continually decreasing. It is clear that grants from funding authorities are no longer sufficient for library services. Lack of adequate budgets, coupled with insufficient income generation in libraries and information centers in recent years have inhibited the growth of these libraries. It is necessary that libraries must be involved in fee-based services to supplement any shortfall from the government and other funding agencies.

Table 3: Ranked order of internal revenue generation services provided in the library before computerization.

Sources	KDL (Amount charged)	HOL (Amount charged)
Binding	Only repair library books	#400:00 for student project (for few that patronized)
Consultancy	Not available	Not available
Selective Dissemination of Information	Not available	Not available
Photocopying	#2.50 per page	#2.50 per page
Sales of institutional publications	Not available	Not available
Overdue fines	#10:00 per day	#10:00 per day
Library guide	Free	Free
Interlibrary loans	Occasionally	Not available
Registration of users	#100:00	#50:00

Only six services of the nine listed as internal income generators were offered in the library. One of the six, a library guide, was given out free, while interlibrary loans were occasionally offered in KDL but not available in HOL. This shows that these libraries are not adequately exploring avenues for income generation. The respondents emphasized that money generated from these services is not sufficient to run the library. HOL found that such money was put back into the maintenance of equipment while a respondent at KDL said that money generated was paid back into the university account.

Table 4: Computerized services offered in KDL and HOL

Computerized services offered	KDL (Amount charged)	HOL (Amount charged)
Coded card for registration	#500:00 per session	Not available, but manual registration at #200:00 per session
Internet search	#50:00 per hr.	#50:00 per hr
CD-ROM database search and printing.	Search is free; printing is #25:00 per page	Search is free; printing is #20:00 per page.
E-classroom services for seminars and workshops	#1,500:00-#2,000:00	Not available
Electro-copying	Available amount not specified	Not available

In the above table, only KDL enjoys the use of computer to register its users with a charge of #500:00 per session, while HOL still depends on the manual registration that attracts a sum of #200:00 per user. The two libraries in question offer Internet search. The sum of #50:00 is charged by both KDL and HOL. The e-classroom exists in KDL for electronic conferences, seminars etc this attracts a sum of #1,500-#2,000 per use but such services are not available in HOL.

In terms of comparison, it appears that KDL fares better than HOL as far as internal income generation is concerned. This difference may be attributed to the age and experience of KDL.

KDL enjoys the use of computer to register its users with a charge of #500:00 per session, while HOL still depends on the manual registration that attracts a sum of #200:00 per user. Both libraries offer Internet search, with each charging #50:00.. The e-classroom exists in KDL for electronic conferences, seminars, etc. This attracts a sum of #1,500-#2,000 per use, but such services are not available in HOL. KDL fares better than HOL in internal income generation. This difference may be attributed to the age and experience of KDL. In answering the question of whether the income generated through computerization is enough to sustain efficient library services, both respondents replied in that the income generated so far has not adequately sustained library services but have improved them. This implies that income generated through computerization of library services is not capable of solving libraries' financial problems but does reduce them. Libraries must look for other means of income generation and fundraising.

Conclusion

The findings from the research can be summarized as follows:

- The two libraries are fully equipped to support services through electronic format for the development of information acquisition and dissemination.
- Computerization of library services exists in both libraries but money realized from them is varied.
- Neither library has direct access to the income generated from fee-based services offered in their libraries.
- Income generated through computer services is not adequate to sustain the two libraries.
- Use of computers promotes access to information, improved services, communication, and, in the long run, improved productivity.
- There has been a decrease in fund allocation in both libraries.
- There were some fee-based services in both libraries before the application of computers, but income generated by such services were not substantial.

Recommendations

- University policies need to be reviewed so that each library will reap from where they sow. Librarians must work with university administration to enable the library benefit substantially from income generated internally.
- Librarians in KDL and HOL must understand marketing and apply it to their daily routine, which will automatically increase their level of performance, as each library will aspire to meet the information needs of their users while costs are maximised. Use of marketing principles can help libraries to survive the challenges of increasing technology and declining budgets.
- There should be adequate provision of IT in other sections of the library where income can be generated.
- The library should provide aggressive consultancy services and charge fees for specific services, to alleviate the effect of lack of funds in Nigerian university libraries. Information managers should anticipate user needs and fill their requests efficiently and profitably.
- The library is a gateway for information development: it must be sufficiently equipped to facilitate information retrieval for end users.

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