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A Ten-Year Descriptive Review of Book Acquisitions Trends, Challenges, and Current Issues in a Nigerian Medical School Library

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Introduction

Collection development refers to the process of systematically building library collections (which used to be mainly print materials) to enhance learning, study, teaching, research, recreational, and other needs of library users. In Africa and in particular Nigeria, collection development is probably the most challenging as well as frustrating aspect of university librarianship.

Many changes have occurred in the process of collection development in the recent past, through the introduction of electronic resources such as electronic books/ journals and networked databases. This has made librarians to have more than the print formats to consider when making purchasing decisions for their libraries.

It is incontrovertible that every good collection is an expression of adequate and sound financial backing, and no collection development can achieve this objective if it is financially handicapped. (Alemna 1994)

In Nigeria, the long-standing issue of inadequate funding coupled with little hope for improvement; still make the practice of collection development to mean; trying to do more with less.

The issue of underfunding the Nigerian university libraries had caused negative ripples since the 1980s, bringing about many changes in the basic tradition of book acquisitions in affected libraries.

This paper intends looking into the challenges/ issues, trends and plausible solutions to the challenges affecting book acquisitions in Nigeria's premiere medical school library.

In Nigeria, most medical school libraries have multifaceted functions of an academic, hospital and special libraries, all rolled into one.

The E. Latunde Odeku Medical Library (ELOML)

The E. Latunde Odeku Medical Library (ELOML) was established in 1967, and it is Nigeria's first medical school library, servicing the information needs of the premiere College of Medicine, University of Ibadan, founded in 1948.

The College of Medicine, University of Ibadan and its medical school library are on the hospital premises of the University College Hospital (UCH), which is equally the oldest federal medical institution for tertiary health care, teaching and research activities.

The ELOML handles the academic health information needs of both the students and staff of the College of Medicine, University of Ibadan as well as the clinical information needs of UCH. It is also a World Health Organization (WHO) focal point in Nigeria, as well as a designated 'central node' for National Health Information Services and Information network by the Federal Ministry of Health in Nigeria. Until the early 1990s the ELOML was regarded within and outside the country as the National Medical Library of Nigeria, because of the richness of its vast medical book collections (College of Medicine Brochure 2006), spanning all areas of clinical medicine, housed in conducive and serene hospital environment. Up to this period in the history of the library, it had external grants to support book acquisition especially in neurosurgery.

ELOML is an integral part of the University of Ibadan library system though an off-campus site of about 10 kilometers away from the main campus. Administratively, it is accountable to the Provost, College of Medicine for its day-to-day running, and in matters of decision-making; like budgeting, acquisitions and professional staff recruitment, it reverts to the University Library management.

The ELOML is like any special library; created for the specific purpose of providing accurate and current information for a particular set of patrons and, therefore, it must contain materials considered to be of quality for those it was designed.

Funding University Libraries in Nigeria

In Nigeria, there are three categories of universities, namely; federal, state and private: their libraries affiliated to their parent institutions.

The National University Commission (NUC) manages and regulates all the universities, while the government through the same organ funds the federal universities. In addition, the NUC acts as a buffer between the federal government and the universities. It is also responsible for funding of federal universities and issuance of guidelines for the running of the universities (Agboola 2000).

According to Nwafor (1990) government provides about 90% of the total revenue of each university, while it was mandatory that these universities earmark ten percent (10%) of such grants for library development, but Ifidon (2000) noted that most libraries receive far less funding than the percentage earmarked for them. Again, in a situation where university libraries have fixed funding from the NUC, it is best to bear in mind that, a fixed budget in inflationary times diminishes in real terms.

The University of Ibadan Library system in turn sets aside five percent (5%) of the remitted library development fund for the running of the ELOML.

Many a time, parent institutions divert all of the remitted government grants to other university projects except the library. Ogunsola (2004) observes that because the federal university libraries depend heavily on their parent institutions, they might not be completely isolated from effects of their financial problems

Economic Issues Affecting Book Acquisitions in Nigeria

Economic problems in Nigeria have persisted for long while the economic problems of the early 80s due to oil glut and poor management of resources persisted until this moment. This has led to a drastic devaluation of the local currency, the Naira, to the extent that, from the parity of exchange it enjoyed with the US dollar in the 80's (1Naira exchanged for a US dollar then), it now exchanges for over a hundred naira (N180.00) to the US dollar. With more than 80% of book needs of Nigerian Universities imported from Europe and America, high exchange rate drastically affected the growth of library collections in terms of quality and quantity (Tamuno 1994).

A recent study sponsored by the MacArthur Foundation (2005) on the state of Nigerian university libraries, also have reports claiming that, most of the print collections in Nigerian academic libraries, stopped growing substantially in the mid-1970s and the print materials are not in good condition due to inadequate funding. Apparently, 'funding is a key element in determining the direction of an organization, and its future success or failure' (Linn 2007) topical

ICT is becoming a topical issue in Nigerian librarianship as 'its widespread acceptance brings clear benefits, such as the automation of traditional activities, resulting in time saving and better services through access to electronic information resources' (Porumbeanu 2009). Despite the ICT values in librarianship, its adoption and implementation remains a big problem to Nigerian university libraries, as they still grapple to purchase relevant and appropriate print materials, thus leaving little consideration to provision of information in digital/electronic formats. In addition, digitization is capital intensive; dabbling into it could remain a tall dream, unless the government reorganizes its political and economic policies, by making them more education sector friendly, through adequate funding. And, on the other hand, libraries might have to find

alternative sources of funding instead of sole dependence on the government all the time.

However, this study would not be paying excessive attention to budgeting and funding of the ELOML book acquisitions; the parent university library, also called Kenneth Dike Library; (KDL) handles purchases of books and journals centrally for its branch libraries, although, major book selections come from the branch libraries.

Methodology

The author reviewed the past acquisition records extracted manually from the library's annual reports of 1999 to 2008 and this paper is descriptive, reviewing the acquisitions trends at the ELOML from 1999-2008 with consideration to titles, volumes statistics; and currency (ages) of the books acquired only.

The retrieved annual reports did not include factors like broad subject area of acquisitions, to help determine what types of books were acquired during the 10-year period in question, hence the limitation to titles, volumes and age(s) of the collection. (Inclusion of subject area book acquisitions in subsequent reports would be recommended to the library management) Ages of the books acquired through gifts/donations did not reflect in the retrieved annual reports. Without ages of received donation, age comparison between both purchased and donated books would be stalled. This necessitated a manual check through the library accession register to determine ages of received book donations during the period under study. This was possible, because, the library's accession register has columns for authors; title/ volumes; year of acquisition; place and year of publication only.

Statistical tables generated indicate number of titles/volumes purchased annually, gifts and donations received annually; the figures generated were compared using simple addition and percentages.

Study Limitations

Incomprehensive annual reports

The reviewed annual reports of 1998-2007, focused more on increase/ decrease values of book titles/volumes acquired every year while , statistics on broad subject classes of books acquired as well as the ages of received donations were left out. The inclusion of broad subject book acquisitions would have shed more light on subject classes that enjoyed more acquisitions than others and probably highlight reasons for paying more attention to some subject classes than the others.

Findings

Inadequate funding

A corresponding fact that emerged was that books acquired in the ELOML were through two broad channels: purchases through the university library, and gifts/donations from friends of the library. All throughout the period under review, there was a recurrent reportage of inadequate book acquisitions; the need for digitization of library services, access to the internet, electronic networked publishers' databases and non-accomplishment was attributed to insufficient funding from the federal government.

Non-adherence to collection development policy

The period reviewed, revealed an inconsistent book acquisition and non-adherence to the collection development policy, guiding book acquisitions for the ELOML and the library never met up with the library's book acquisition policy of annual addition of at least a thousand volumes of books and about six hundred titles of books.

In year 2007, library record indicates 249 purchased titles, the highest during the studied period, a remarkable feat when compared to the 21 titles purchased in 2001. The ELOML's annual report claimed this was realizable through financial support from Educational Trust Fund (ETF). The ETF was a Nigerian government initiative 'established under the Education Tax Act No.7 of 1993 and amended by Act No. 40 of 1998 with the objective of using the fund for project management to improve the quality of education in Nigeria. It is to deliver competent and forward looking intervention programs, through funding to all levels of the Nigerian Education System.' (ETF webpage)

In 1999 and 2001 the library had very poor book purchase of 23 and 21 titles respectively which was attributed to labor unrests in the country. Federal university workers, supported by the Nigerian Labor Congress (NLC) went on industrial

strike for more than four months on each occasion, demanding adequate funding of the federal universities especially the university libraries and laboratories. All federal universities were shut during the industrial strike actions; they reopened when the government promised assisting them with additional grants to salvage university education.

The promised aid from the government positively affected book acquisitions in years like 2000, when ELOML purchased 208 titles. In 2004 two hundred titles (200) were purchased; one hundred and fifteen (115) titles in 2005; one hundred and twenty one (121) titles in 2006; two hundred and forty nine (249) titles in 2007, thus, revealing an inconsistent book acquisitions propensity due to irregular fund disbursement by both the government and ETF. (See *Table 1*)

Overdependence on gifts and donations

Gifts /donations received from the period studied varied a great deal, ranging from 16.2% in 2000, the lowest, to 69% in 1999, the highest. Most of the received donations in ELOML were old with their ages ranging from 1949-2007 and not in conformity with the NUC 1997 book acquisitions regulation. (See *table 2*)

Inadequate access to electronic resources

From 1999 -2008, ELOML's collection development annual report recommended digitization of resources and online electronic resource acquisitions. Library records showed that, neither was any electronic resource(s) purchased nor donated through subscription.

Incomprehensive annual reports

ELOML's annual reports for the studied period concentrated on increase and decrease values of annual book acquisitions, leaving out acquisitions vis-à-vis broad subject areas.

Analysis of Findings

Inadequate book purchase in the ELOML is at variance to the rapidly expanding student enrolment in the College of Medicine of University of Ibadan which was about 600 in 1998, stood at 1350 in year 2009, regardless of the non-accomplishment of the library's book acquisitions policy which recommended addition of at least six hundred titles and a thousand volumes to its collections annually.

The Nigerian medical education stakeholders such as the Academic Staff Association of Universities (ASUU), National Parents and Teachers Association (NPTA), Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) and National Association of Nigerian (NAN) have endlessly advocated for university-education -friendly policies, such as university autonomy and an independent funding system for the Nigerian universities/libraries. The advocacies led to a number of nationwide industrial actions, considering the nature of medical profession that precinct on issues of life and death. More so, there are constant advances in medical and health sciences which lead to rapid changes in clinical and health knowledge, thus making medical science collections rather dated quickly. The Nigerian University Commission (NUC) out of concern came up with a regulation in 1997 for academic libraries, (with particular reference to medical libraries). Federal medical school libraries were directed not to display clinical books older than five years on open shelves of their libraries. The NUC directive was a wake-up call to universities to place premium on providing current resources, especially books, (The regulation excludes books pertaining to medical history, reference materials and preclinical books which would continuously be useful to readers irrespective of their ages) The directive was a welcome development to stakeholders and librarians found it practicable if backed up with funds for the acquisition of new materials as weeding of older titles would improve the library collection currency, and this would also 'help determine the median age of a library collection, probably to a point at which half of the items in a collection are newer and the other half are older'(Li 2007)

However, *table 3*-shows the years of publication of purchased books between 1999 and 2008; the average age for purchased books stands at 5.1, barely meeting the NUC regulation.

Complete adherence to NUC's regulation would mean the government's consideration for upward review of funds released to the universities, and failure to improve university funding could lead to continuous disregard for the regulation.

The unwritten management policy of some Nigerian universities is 'books have to be on the shelves, irrespective of their ages', this attitude was practically displayed, in the manner of ages of received donations by ELOML in 1999-2008, which ranged from 1949 to 2007(See *table 4*)

Undoubtedly, gifts and donations boosted ELOML's annual book acquisition value, with contributed percentages to yearly book acquisitions as high as 69% in 1999; 62% in 2001 when the library purchased few new titles. Book donations would have been more valuable if they were current irrespective of the percentage contribution to the annual book collection of a library, as the literature did not indicate a universal standardization percentage contribution of donations to annual collections of an academic.

Attracting current book donations would entail encouraging donors to 'enquire about the general areas of needs from recipients and liaise with recipient university libraries for list of needed publications'. (Osinaike, Bankole and Oyelude (2008) and sequentially the libraries should endeavor to have a suitably designed and active donations and gifts policy, guiding types and ages of books acceptable to them.

Technology can no longer be dissociated from librarianship; it has impacted several facets of librarianship, collection development inclusive. 1999-2007 annual reports from ELOML reveals a persistent yearning for digitization and acquisition of e-resources, an indication of ICT awareness and preparedness of librarians in the ELOML.

ICT exploration is not a misplaced priority, though funding is a recurrent set back. To augment the library's deficits in current book acquisitions and non-acquisitions of electronic resources, the library claimed organizing periodic training workshops for patrons on the basic information seeking and retrieval skills, as well as guide them to awareness; to utilize the vast free medical sites and databases on the Internet. Libraries in developing countries should not shy away from introducing their library patrons to these free online sites, while lobbying the appropriate authority for digitization and acquisition of desired e-resources.

Current issues, trends, and challenges

Current issues and trends were discussed fully as findings and analysis of findings, except for the reported desire for digitization of resources by ELOML.

The emergence of the Internet has definitely introduced new ways for users to access library resources and users now expect instant and constant access to information, 'often from distant locations, and as a result, remote access to online library resources has become an increasingly significant part of library service'. (Foust et al. 2007)

Library services digitization entails 'spending more money on computer hardware and software, licensing, training of librarians in new technologies especially in the area of texts selection, scanning, verification and indexing of the materials to be digitized as well as employment of experts with web technologies skills to support and manage them'(Fabunmi 2009) Despite the preparedness of libraries and librarians, most government funded university libraries in Nigeria are neither fully automated nor acquiring electronic resources. In consequence, casting 'doubts in the minds of many librarians as to how seriously the Nigerian university library systems will pursue digitization of their library services (Fowowe2004).

Proactively handling some of the library's problems, especially inadequate funding, might bring expected solutions not, necessarily immediately, as change is never easily accepted.

Practical approach to some of the under-listed, would meet with bureaucratic delays or obstacles, but worthy of consideration.

Probable Solutions

Possible areas to explore for independent fund generation for the library, are consultancy services, soliciting money or current book donations through friends of the library, pricing some hitherto free information services and health information repackaging, sharing resources through interlibrary loans or consortium with other (medical) libraries in order to expand dependable services. By now, academic libraries in Africa should 'have been sharing resources, to make up for the individual institutional deficiencies in their stocks' (Akorful 2007)

- Commercialization of some library services is usually an uncomfortable zone for most library managers and professionals.

According to Adedoyin (2006), libraries that are constrained in terms of resources should consider commercialization of some library services. A hitherto free library service such as training workshops on themes as 'Information searching and retrieval techniques', 'E-resources management and promotion'; usually conducted about four times a year by ELOML, depending on the number of registrants, could be explored for commercialization. The targeted audience and participation had always been beyond the students' scope. To support the library, deliberate concentration could be on workers in the university, as records of previous workshops indicated remarkable non-

student participation. However, the success of commercializing any library hitherto free services would depend on meticulous planning, vision, justification, and cooperation from library patrons as well as the patrons' satisfaction in return for their investment.

- Librarianship, in a developing country like Nigeria has assumed a multidimensional facet.

In Nigeria, librarians equipped with vast ICT knowledge are getting actively involved in national and international workshops or seminars, as resource persons. Medical libraries with such seasoned personnel could conveniently organize national or regional training workshops and seminars with probable themes on ICT application to health information management (informatics), administrative or general knowledge management (KM), administrative/management issues, new developments in ICT and the like, for a fee; earmarking a decided percentage of the fee for the library's purse is practicable.

- Attracting more current book donation is achievable through targeting friends of the library or publishers, and making available gifts and donation policy, as a guide to intending donors at the point of soliciting.

This approach would make 'collection development through donations, gifts and exchange a worthwhile venture' (Osinaike, Bankole and Oyelude 2008)

- Repackaging topical health issues for non-medical patrons or health information seekers, in an inexpensive and easy-to-read formats, would attract patronage.

This author observed this encouraging practice at the University of Pennsylvania Hospital library in year 2004. On display, at the library's reception were easy- to-read pamphlets on various cancers, diabetes, HIV/AIDS and the like, though these pamphlets bore no price tag, donations for continuity of the publications were acceptable. This approach could be adapted to suit Nigeria's various health campaigns in areas such as child immunization, polio, maternal health care, malaria, hypertension, HIV/AIDS and others.

The University of Pennsylvania hospital library could afford not to put a price tag on the repackaged health publications, because the library was well stocked, possibly never in the same precarious situation as most Nigerian medical libraries, but no Nigerian medical library needs the disguise. Making such publications available at affordable prices to would not be out of place to enhance the library's purse.

- Library consortia or inter-library cooperation has not been fully explored in Nigeria, though it has long been a librarianship precept.

The location logistics of other medical federal (medical) and discrimination among libraries had hindered exploration. In recent past, the NUC and Nigerian Library Association (NLA) plays down on disparity between federal, state and private universities as inconsequential, by collectively addressing challenges faced by Nigerian university libraries, thus creating a cordial working environment for library consortium.

The NLA went a step further by giving permission for the creation of sub-associations like the Nigerian Medical Libraries Association (NMLA) which had its inaugural meeting in July 2009, during the national conference of the NLA. The core discussion revolved round consortium. After a long aspiration, the time is now ripe for full adventure into consortia by Nigerian (medical) libraries, in order to serve their clientele better. Library consortia encourage participating libraries to digitize collections, create online catalogues, and improve information technology. For this to happen, technical services must be up-to-date in skills, equipment, and technology. (Oyelude and Ola 2008) However, funding is the bane and solution to all the challenges Nigerian university libraries encounter.

Conclusion

No library, however big is able to satisfy all the information needs of its entire user community due to various constraints. More often than not, insufficient funding translates to inability of libraries to meet the information needs of their users, and this is not peculiar to ELOML or Nigeria but the magnitude only differs from one library to the other.

Nonetheless, there must be written policies; achievable short and long-term proposals by academic libraries that share similar experiences and goals with this medical library.

Proactive planning to resolve problems of book acquisitions might not yield immediate results, but every positive step taken by the library moves it closer to the set out goals.

Appendices

Table1. Books/Monographs Acquired in the ELOML 1998-2007

Period	Additional Volumes	Additional Titles
1998	231	142
1999	115	75
2000	335	250
2001	90	55
2002	173	115
2003	156	114
2004	442	353
2005	233	175
2006	226	168
2007	515	316
Total	2516	1763

Table 2. Statistics of purchased and donated books acquired in ELOML 1998-2007

Period	Annual additional Titles	No. of Purchased Titles	Annual % of purchased titles	No. of additional titles in Gifts & Donations	Annual % of gifts & donations
1998	142	80	56%	62	44%
1999	75	23	31%	52	69%
2000	250	208	84%	42	16%
2001	55	21	38%	34	62%
2002	115	69	60%	48	40%
2003	114	83	73%	31	27%
2004	353	200	57%	153	43%

2005	175	115	66%	60	40%
2006	168	121	72%	47	28%
2007	316	249	78%	67	22%

Table 3. Publication years of purchased titles at ELOML 1998-2007

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	
1998	12	10	10	15	17	16										80
1999					8	4	11									23
2000				25	25	40	60	58								208
2001									21							21
2002							5	17	19	28						69
2003								20	15	20	28					83
2004							10	22	36	39	42	51				200
2005								18	13	14	27	17	26			115
2006								7	12	17	22	17	12	34		121
2007									25	25	32	38	35	40	54	249
Total	12	10	10	40	50	60	86	142	141	143	151	123	73	74	54	1169

Table 4 Publication years for gifts and donations

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
1949							1			
1952							4			
1953							2			
1955						4				
1959			1							
1960							7			
1963							4			

1969		4								
1970				2						
1971					2	2				
1973								2		
1974					1					
1977					3					
1978							3			
1979			3		2	3		1		
1980		6			6			2		
1982				6					3	
1984					5			2		
1985				4						
1987	5		2			6				
1988								30		
1989	10	4	9		12				5	
1990	15	10	11			2	27	5		
1991	1	5		9					7	
1992		4	7		7		11			
1993		12	6	7				1	4	
1994	14	7		1				6		
1995	17			5						
1996						9				5
1997			3					5		
1998							12	12	5	6

1999					13			5		
2000							11		8	4
2001						4	7		4	
2002							32	3		12
2003										40
2004										
2005								16	7	
2006									34	
2007										
Total	62	52	42	34	48	31	153	60	47	67

Abbreviations

ELOML E. Latunde Odeku Medical Library

ICT Information Communication Technology

KDL Kenneth Dike Library

KM Knowledge Management

NLA Nigerian Library Association

NLC Nigerian Labor Association

NMA Nigerian Medical association

NANS National Association of Nigerian Students

NUC Nigerian University Commission

UCH University College Hospital

W H O World Health Organization

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