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Budgeting for Library Technical Services in an Electronic Age

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Introduction

Library technical services include selection, acquisition, cataloguing, classification, typing, binding, conservation, and related services (Nwalo, 2003:117). They can be classed as the “behind the scenes” services that are done before users can make use of library services. This paper focuses on technical services in an electronic or computer-based library system and the need for budgeting in libraries, including requirements or considerations when budgeting, technical services in a consortium, and best practices in budgeting. Budgeting standards for automated technical services are recommended.

The Need for Budgeting in Libraries

A budget is a guide or directive for fiscal management. Libraries need funds for services, and these services must be budgeted for. Fletcher (1990) gives two definitions of a budget, calling it “the overall picture of ... allocations (for expenditure) and ... income,” as well as “the financial allocation for specific purpose or purposes during a given period.” Although libraries are service-oriented and have little or no revenue-generating motives or objectives, they still obviously require a budget. Technical services is not a significant source of income in the library system. Very small amounts of income are made from reprography and binding, but the amount is infinitesimal compared to the funds expended on technical services.

The need for budgets in libraries is increasingly important. In public institutions, government funding continues to dwindle. The literature (books and journals) that must be managed continues to grow. There is an increasing demand for online resources and services. Libraries must effectively divide funds between staff and materials, which include acquisitions, services, and equipment. Library fiscal management is becoming more decentralized. Current trends give a measure of financial control to divisional, sectional, and unit librarians.

It is within this framework that budgeting for library technical services is approached.

Technical Services Budget Considerations

A number of studies have been carried out on budgets and financing of library services (Rosenberg & Raseroka, 2000; Ubogu, 2003; Smallen and McCredie, 2003; Emojorho, 2004); however,

budgeting for technical services has received little attention. Most discussions of budgeting for technical services use a line-item budget as a focus. A line budget itemizes elements of the budget, which add up to the totality of what the library hopes to spend in any fiscal year. Perhaps the most important item to budget for in technical services is personnel. Personnel, for these services can be broken into three: Professional staff, technical staff, and auxiliaries. Tools, equipment, and supplies are also important, and services and functions are also included in the technical services budget, as is equipment maintenance. Those include cataloguing and catalogue maintenance, labeling, binding, serials control, and reprography, as well as others, depending on the type of library and its goals.

Especially when libraries are automated, there should be guaranteed sources of funding. Automation is more expensive than manual systems. When libraries are planning for automation, not enough may be allocated and some costs are either underestimated or overlooked. Smallen and McCredie (2003) prescribe solutions that go beyond "budget dust," i.e., using funds that come as windfalls, that come occasionally, and that cannot be relied on to be available on an ongoing basis.

Technical Services within Consortia

Consortia are a form of cooperation or resource sharing among groups of libraries and information centers. In technical services, cooperative acquisition, joint cataloguing and classification, and shared union catalogues are aspects that are shared. Library consortia encourage participating libraries to digitize collections, create online catalogues, and improve information technology (Sam, 2005). For this to happen, technical services must be up-to-date in skills, equipment, and technology. Ekpenyong (2005) calls for renewed consortial efforts among university libraries while identifying constraints that can militate against such projects, including funds, infrastructure for networking, uninterrupted power supply, and training for technical services personnel.

Budgeting is most necessary in an emerging ICT environment. The cost of ICT hardware and software is also very high (Adeyemi, 2002; Akintunde, 2006). There are automated tools and databases for ordering and cataloging, including OCLC's WorldCat, the public catalogs of the Library of Congress, and vendor databases such as Blackwell's Online. The use of these tools has led to the creation of union catalogues. At the University of Botswana Library (UBL) for example, the selection, ordering, receipt, cataloging and routing of materials are done online. UBL is a member of SABINET, a library consortium in South Africa, and any materials not available in UBL are obtained from other members of SABINET or other document delivery services through the Inter-Library Loan Service. Generally, consortia eliminate replicating processing of the same materials over and over again, thereby cutting costs, time and energy among consortia members.

The Present Study: Survey of Nigerian Libraries

The researchers surveyed a group of Nigerian libraries about their technical services budget. Twenty academic, research, and public libraries were chosen for the survey.

Methodology

A questionnaire was used to elicit responses from technical services librarians in the libraries. An Internet search was also conducted, to examine the websites of the university and research libraries. This was to compare them with libraries abroad that were used as models in this research.

The research was carried out over a period of three months by research assistants who traveled to the libraries in different parts of Nigeria. One hundred questionnaires were prepared and some were posted to the respondents with self-addressed envelopes for the responses to be mailed back. The mailing method was not quite successful as many did not respond. Thirty-two University libraries, ten

Research libraries, and ten public libraries were eventually surveyed, totaling fifty-two in all, giving a 52percent response.

The questionnaires were administered to the technical services librarians or the chief librarian as applicable. The questions concerned the date of establishment, size of the collection, and budget for the current year. It also asked if they budgeted for technical services, and, if so, how much. Those who did not have budgets were asked if they planned to create one. Their general opinion on budgeting for technical services was also sought.

Findings

The response rate shows that budgeting is not given much priority in Nigerian libraries. In many libraries, expenditures are controlled by the chief librarian. Of those questioned, 45 (86.5%) technical services librarians had little or nothing to do with the budget; they simply took what was given them. For 39 (75%), their interpersonal relationship with the chief librarian determined whether they got what they needed for their departments. Almost all, 51 (98%) said their libraries had no budget for technical services. In the one library (2%) that claimed to have a separate budget had it contained within the general library budget and it was not clearly demarcated. Twenty one (40.38%) of the technical services librarians surveyed have plans to draw up budgets, 18 (34.6%) have no intention of doing so as it is not part of their responsibilities, and 13 (25%) are undecided.

The Internet search was carried out from May 20 th to June 20 th 2007. It took this long due to electrical power problems. Searches had to be abandoned and resumed when there were power outages since there is no alternative power supply for the facility used. Twenty-one websites were searched using google. Results showed that some Nigerian University libraries (70% of the 21 studied) do not have links on their websites to the library, because the websites are still under construction. None of the websites examined included information on the funding of their libraries. This may be due to the fact that libraries in this part of the world are not run like those in the West, where libraries are given priority and publicity. The public library system in Nigeria also is quite different in terms of administration and financing.

Best Practices

Libraries are storehouses of knowledge. It is unfortunate, however, that “libraries rarely feature in the top ten priorities of institutional administrators” (Houbeck 2002). This is one of the reasons why even library administrators sometimes treat budgets for libraries lightly. Whether out of frustration or a lack of grounding in fiscal management, budgets are often ignored in libraries. This is not a good trend, as pointed out by Oyelude (2004), in discussing the state of the art in academic libraries. This nonchalant attitude may also be due to the “invisibility” of libraries in the community. A library must be highly visible to get adequate funding and recognition. User support is very important in this regard. If the users feel the library's impact, they will make demands on the library's behalf (Web, 2002).

Ubogu (2003) asserts that university librarians should be signatories to their library's account(s). He also recommends that the libraries should budget adequately for personnel, so that trained staff do not migrate to greener pastures; budget for maintenance with a fixed percentage. He further advises that software vendors should have a concrete budget and agreement with the library they are serving and funds for staff development should be part of the technical services budget.

It is also good practice for librarians in technical services to become “lobbyists” to get their budgets approved and implemented. In a situation where so many things are competing for limited resources, one cannot afford to be politically lethargic. Library administrators should lobby for funds maintaining high standards, compiling statistics, and using the statistics to advantage. By implication, the technical services librarian should lobby the chief librarian who should in turn lobby the head of the institution.

Library friends and the community are good tools in advocacy. Understanding the workplace climate and politics involved are also important. It is also best to set priorities in asking for what is reasonable. It is essential to establish a good relationship with the chief librarian, the library accountant, members of the library committee, and others who may be involved with the technical services budget. The best method is to get other people to argue your case with little or no prompting from you. For example, certain services that should be included in the budget should be asked for directly by library users.

Technical services should be showcased at every opportunity, including when the library creates exhibits. Technical services should see itself as part of an integrated system and should speak up for other areas of the library when necessary. This will bring about reciprocity when issues concerning technical services are discussed. Most importantly, funds should be judiciously used and wisely disbursed.

Hypothetical Budget Strategy

Determine amount to be spent - Cost XYZ

Allot items to be expended on –

1. Cost ABC
2. Cost DEF
3. Cost GHI

Etc.

- Nth item

+ Maintenance -

+ Contingency -

Total = - Cost XYZ

Any deficit? Plan to make provision for in next year's budget.

Any surplus? Find a way to add on to general library budget, or add on for next year's. budget.

Models of Library Budgets

There are a number of useful models for library budgeting. The Sno-Isle Libraries are a large public library system that provides library service to residents of Island and Snohomish counties in Washington State. Each annual budget includes an increase over the previous year, basing the figures on percentages. For example, technical services had 25.2% of the total budget in 2005, which was increased to 25.6% in 2006. The technical services budget has an appropriate prominence, receiving a quarter of the total library budget. (<http://www.sno-isle.org/page/?ID=2036>)

The University of Alberta Library budgets by committing itself to digital collection research, content creation, and access services. They identify staffing for the digital environment as critical for the

next few years. They have also planned extensively for technology replacement through “lifecycle budgeting.” (<http://www.library.ualberta.ca/aboutus/budget/index.cfm>)

The University of Witwatersrand, Zimbabwe also has a budgeting system that caters to technology. The budget can be accessed at <http://www.ac.za/library/about/annreport2004.pdf>

These budgets can serve as models for Nigerian libraries who are trailing behind in the electronic age.

Recommendations and Conclusions

In an electronic age, budgeting for libraries and for technical services are of utmost importance. The technical services budget is the framework for running core library activities. No matter how small the resources, a plan must be made and or implemented.

Libraries should cultivate the culture of budgeting. Libraries are complex entities with enormous resources that require planning. It is foolhardy to depend absolutely on the chief/head librarian for all library financial transactions and administration. Some form of financial management system should be used.

Librarians should embrace the principle of decentralized budgeting. Divisional, sectional and unit heads, and subject librarians would then be involved in preparing and managing library budgets. This will enhance managerial skills and democratize fiscal management resulting in more transparency and accountability in the library's financial dealings.

Finally, budgeting in library technical services should necessarily include personnel, tools, equipment, and supplies, among other things. In an electronic age where most things have ceased to be done manually, provision for adequate technical services infrastructure is a priority.

Summary of Principles

- Budgeting is essential.
- Use funds judiciously for their original purpose
- Chief librarians should be signatories to their library's account(s)
- Software vendors must have concrete budgets and agreements.
- Technical services budgets should include funds for staff development
- TS librarians must "lobby."
- Compile statistics and use to advantage.
- Get other people (e.g., users), to argue your case for you.
- Technical services should be showcased at every opportunity.
- Start your budget late rather than not at all.

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Appendix I: List of libraries surveyed

University libraries

1. University of Ibadan, Ibadan
2. Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
3. Usman Dan Fodio University, Sokoto
4. Abia State University,
5. University of Uyo, Uyo
6. University of Ilorin, Ilorin
7. University of Calabar, Calabar
8. Michael Okpara University of Agriculture,
9. Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife
10. Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria
11. University of Benin, Benin City
12. Lagos State University, Ojo
13. Bayero University, Kano
14. Covenant University, Ota
15. University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt
16. University of Jos, Jos
17. FSI Library, University of Agriculture, Markurdi
18. Pan African University, Lagos
19. University of Agriculture, Abeokuta
20. Federal University of Technology, Akure
21. University of Nigeria, Nsukka
22. University of Agric., Ado-Ekiti
23. Rivers State University of Science & Technology,
24. Benson Idahosa University
25. Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye
26. Igbinedion University, Okada
27. Abia State University, Uturu
28. Federal University of Technology, Owerri
29. University of Lagos, Lagos
30. Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma
31. Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State
32. Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki

Research libraries

1. Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria, Idi-Ayunre
2. International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Ibadan
3. National Institute for Nigerian Languages, Aba
4. Petroleum Training Institute, Effurun
5. Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), Topo, Badagry
6. I. A. R. & T, Moor Plantation, Ibadan
7. Raw Materials Research & Development Council, Abuja
8. Kaduna Refinery and Petrochemical Library, Kaduna
9. Metallurgical Training Institute, Onitsha.
10. National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru

Public libraries

1. Oyo State Library Board, Ibadan
2. Nigerian Society for Information and Culture, Ibadan

3. Delta State Library Board, Asaba
4. National Library of Nigeria, Lagos
5. Zamfara State Library Board, Gusau
6. Osun State Library Board, Oshogbo
7. Imo State Library Board, Owerri
8. Ogun State Library Services, Abeokuta
9. Lagos State Library Board, Lagos
10. Enugu State Library Board, Enugu