THE IMPLICATION OF LIBRARY USERS' PARTICIPATION IN COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT OF HYBRID ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Consultation with institution academic staff is regarded as a crucial component of collection development because it provides a room for the exchange of thoughts between the academic community and the library. Good relationships between library information professionals and the academic community add value to the collection development. Collection development in an academic library is practiced by librarians and library services staff with inputs from different stakeholders, including the academic and non-academic staff, administrators, and students. It was observed that library users lack information literacy skills and they are rarely involved in selection, evaluation and weeding of library information resources. Based on this ground, this study was undertaken, and it was recommended that academic libraries should establish an academia forum within a library website for sharing information with the academic departments and information users in general in respect to library collection development. Additionally, users should be provided with annual evaluation and weeding forms to comment on quality and usefulness of the resources and data sources available in their respective areas of study, with amendments made where necessary.
Key words: *Hybrid academic library, collection development, library users, Information literary skills, library professionals*

INTRODUCTION

The fields of involvement of academic and research libraries in providing research data services cover the full data lifecycle, including planning, duration, and metadata creation and conversion. Hybrid academic libraries reflects the higher learning institution from which the information resources for supporting teaching, learning, consultations and research works are provided in a mixed format of traditional print and modern electronic-based materials. According to Rushbridge (1998), collection development in any academic library is an ongoing process undertaken by librarians and library services staff. It takes some of its inputs from different stakeholders including the academic and non-academic staff, administrators, and students. However, the question of inclusion of library stakeholders in collection development to some other academic libraries is not adequately realized because of the traditional principles applied in the collection development (Sasikala, 2014).

Ifidon (1990) asserts that the information personnel of the academic libraries are also urged to equip themselves with the best collection development techniques, tools, procedures and practices. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the advanced technological development in information over the world was invented in academic institutions; the academic communities were basically recognized in terms of the kind of information they

wanted. It is through this development that the trend and principles of library collection development processes and services were influenced (Jalal and Mohan, 2011).

Kovac and Elkorby (2000) opined that hybrid collection development practices in academic libraries are guided by policy. The latter incorporates all guidelines for the development and management of library information resources of both paper and electronic-based format; it provides a set of procedures for revising the content of the collection. The policy organizes and monitors the process of acquiring and providing access to resources and information sources; integrates them into comprehensive collections, managing their development and conservation, and making decisions about ownership, subscription from the global databases, preservation, withdrawal and cancellation; cooperative acquisitions through library consortium and resource sharing. Collection development policy rationalizes collection development and administration practices, aid financial planning and facilitate responsibility and professional development trainings. It also provides the foundation for integrating other policies, such as Information and Communication Technology (ICT) policy, employees' development policies, promotion strategies and consortium agreements (Singh, 2004). Moreover, the Mwilongo (2003) policy comprehends the obligation and involvement of all potential library users to the extent possible; to ensure their recommendation on collection development and information literacy programmes are enhanced towards development of a dynamic collection, meeting their desire and quality services.

Statement of the Problem

The academic community and library users in particular are usually unfamiliar with the collection development policy, selection policy and criteria for selection of library resources. However, they can be very familiar with the collection and thus be involved in the selection process as it is of paramount imperative. Library users are needed to develop a balanced hybrid collection that meet and satisfy their needs. It is difficult to have a strong and balanced collection without users' involvement. The low level of library stakeholders' participation in collection development, lack of comprehensive and written collection development policy, and the poor selection and acquisition policies and procedures in academic libraries have affected the collection development in most of the developing countries' academic libraries.

The Role of Academic and Research Libraries

According to Stuart (2011), in the same way as the library has traditionally facilitated access to documents, today information professionals could facilitate access to data, even though data do not necessarily fit into the same, document formats that libraries used to offer. Tenopir (2012) emphasized that libraries have an opportunity to create a new profile on campus as a partner in knowledge creation because there is a convergence between data-intensive science, technological advances, and the expertise of librarians, which can make them more visible in the knowledge creation process. Accordingly, librarians should be placed at all stages in the research planning process and provide expertise in developing data management plans, identifying appropriate data description, and creating preservation strategies.

The Association of Research Libraries (ARL) declared that academic libraries are in a favourable position to help researchers meet the challenges of a data-intensive research paradigm because they are increasingly providing data consultation services and have experience and skills in fostering cross-departmental, cross-campus, etc. communication and collaboration, needed for effective research data management. It is underlined that librarians

are familiar with the research data needs of researchers and have been among the supporters of innovative publishing models, including open access publishing. They are already involved in acquiring necessary abilities to manage data (Howe and Holt, 2012).

Marcum (2015) pointed out that there is a need for attention to data duration in research library settings. She also underlined that professionals who can assist scholars with their research are in great demand. It could be said that scientific data duration service has become a new embedded information service (Li et al., 2013). According to Pryor (2012), there are conflicting opinions about the readiness of libraries for data management roles. While stating their growing acceptance that they play a major role, the RECODE (2015) project found that there is an apparent lack of current practices, especially in digital preservation strategies, as well as in terms of meeting the demands of researchers and users in the provision of data management and support services. On the other hand, Soehner (2010) expressed the opinion that the expertise of librarians in collection development, information organization, resource discovery, repository management, and digital preservation is extremely useful. These provide the foundation for being able to help researchers in the creation of better outputs in the form of more useful data and thus libraries can participate in the phase of research that precedes publication (Federer, 2013). Besides this, libraries have been historically attached to providing quality information. This predestines them to the critical role of being data quality hubs, by providing data quality auditing and verification services for the research communities (Giarlo, 2013). Seadle (2012) identified a different point of argument. Libraries collect and preserve textual material. This fact did not mean in the past that librarians would have been involved in teaching people to read. However, data is different, because reading data requires skills that librarians may need to teach to users in order to help them seek and acquire meaning from it.

Academic library Users Participation in Hybrid Collection Development

According to Munro and Philips (2008), hybrid academic libraries require a combination of skills ranging from subject specialist or librarian to information technology (IT) experts. Part of the responsibilities of subject specialist is to select library information resources in both print and electronic formats. Subject librarians need to have a broader knowledge on current publications, data source and library information dealers and be able to approve the plans for collection development. The plan should balance the needs with the library budget and it should be communicable to academic staff and other library stakeholders. There are various advantages to subject librarians being fundamentally accountable for the collection development. Although, academic staff members have a long experience in their subject areas, a total reliance on them for collection development can ultimately narrow attention in collection development leading to gaps in the library collection.

In today's' practices, members of academic staff, other library users and students are crucial in making recommendation for the kind of information resources required to be included in the list as opposed to the 19th century where selection of information resources in any academic library was on the hands of library information professionals. Prior to the processes, a close consultation with the academic teaching staff was essential. Selection is not always a purely academic practice; it also needs the insight of the information professionals. For example, in the study of collection management in Australian University Libraries by Leonard (1994), it was observed that the involvement of academic librarians in the selection of monographic information resources was limited. He observed that the selection process was left with teaching staff because they were considered to have enough knowledge and experience on their specific areas of specializations. On the other hand, students' demands

were being disregarded, given that there were various information resources based on new technologies. The study concluded that library information professionals should have the fundamental function in selection within an environment of cooperation between the library and the academic community at large. Flatley and Prock (2009) conducted a study on eighteen hybrid academic libraries which are members of Pennsylvania Academic Library Consortium, Inc. (PALCI) in Kutztown University of Pennsylvania. The findings showed that librarians used inputs from diverse groups of people within the community. The groups included academics, librarians, library users, reviews from academic advisors, and past experience with a company or product, which other hybrid libraries had or subscribed to that particular resource to appraise library collection. Agyei (2012) in his study found that librarians at Tshwane University of Technology in Pretoria, South Africa, used the same strategy to withdraw replicates, damaged and outdated information resources from the collection.

Similarly, Ogbonna et al. (2014) conducted a study in Nigerian hybrid academic libraries and revealed that librarians closely consulted the academic library staff, computer analysts, academics and educational development staff in selection of library resources. In addition, Msonge (2013) advocates that, the role of selection of library resources should be on the hand of librarians and should usually incorporate library users because their inputs are counted in enriching the collection. Moreover, Benny (2015) in his study on selection and acquisition of e-resources at Mumbai University revealed that the selection of e-resources mainly depended on the recommendations made by academicians specialized on the subject. Dependence on library staff or subject specialists and collaboration with potential stakeholders in selection of library information resources ensure a balanced range of information resources. Optimal selection is obvious when professional skills are merged with subject librarians (Munro and Philps, 2008).

Relationship of academic libraries and its users in collection development

The American Library Association (ALA) (2000), defines information literacy as 'an understanding and set of abilities enabling individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the capacity to locate, select, evaluate, discard and use effectively the needed information.' Library users meet different and plentiful information choices in their various disciplines and at different levels of skills that would help them to appraise, understand and use information resources from any academic library collection reasonably and correctly (Baro and Keboh, 2012). Information literacy is therefore regarded as a transformational course of action in which the information user searches, asseses, uses, develops and generates information resources in many forms for private, local or universal purposes. The generated materials can be shared among the academic libraries and thus establishing an academic relationship between library professionals and clients.

According to Baro and Keboh (2012), the relationship between academic libraries and its users can be determined based on the services offered, including current awareness services, selective dissemination of information, marketing, referencing services and information literacy programmes. The concept of information literacy primary was first seen in the literature during the 1970s. Its background emanates from the introduction of the information society that is branded by rapid expansion in the prevailing information resources and related disparities in technology used to generate, publicize, access and manage that information (Lwoga, Sife, Busagala and Chilimo, 2016). These expansions have thus resulted in challenges and difficulties of searching, selection, evaluation and using information resources.

Owusu-Ansah (2004) indicates that the academic relationship between library professionals and customers regarding information literacy, receives a great attention as a

result of its implication in the teaching and learning processes, consultations and research aspirations. In addition, this relationship improves the academic library collection development because library users' participation in selection, evaluation and de-selection enables the librarians to acquire the resources based on user demand. It also, challenges academic libraries in withdrawing information resources which are absolutely out-of-date and of less need. The academic community is the best evaluator of the library collection. It has an opportunity to visualize of what is available in the library collection and what is missing. The academic community can be in a position to decide whether the library collection is absolutely satisfying its information demands or not. Similarly, the academic community of an institution can prominently recommend on the quality of the library collection, as they are well informed of the whole range of literature, stack, services and database in a given subject area. They may therefore, usefully recommend on what could be acquired in order to strengthen the stack, database and also fill in the gaps in the present collection (Patel, 2016). Studies by Dulle (2010) and Msonge (2013) observed that, library users in academic libraries in Nigeria complained of poor access to current library resources and difficulties for subscription to online scholarly content. This affected negatively teaching and learning process, research and consultation services.

Conclusion

Availability of Internet and open access based information resources which are presumed to be a solution to the reduced library budget for acquisition and management of hybrid academic library collection have to some extent contributed to inefficient collection development practices.

The role and involvement of library users as stakeholders in collection development processes is becoming less important following the in-practical processes for hybrid collection development. Generally, involvement in collection development process in hybrid library by library stakeholders, particularly the teaching staff, IT expertise, researchers and students is significant as they are the main users of information resources, services and systems.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of this study it is recommended that:

1. There should be a close relationship between library staff and users as it is imperatively a basis for corporative efforts toward building a sound hybrid collection development. Libraries should establish an academia forum within a library website for sharing information with the academic departments and information users in general regarding library collection development.

2. A webmail for library staff and heads of academic departments should be developed for the purpose of sharing various kinds of information related to collection development, such as sharing course outlines, current awareness services, personal academic work and marketing of library information resources.

3. Representatives of the students should be provided with soft and/or hard copies of selection forms from which they can fill in with the potential reading resources for consideration into the acquisition bid.

4. Library users should be provided with annual evaluation and weeding forms to recommend on quality and usefulness of the resources and data sources available in their respective areas of specialization, and suggest for supplements, updates, archives and/or discards.

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