Challenges Facing the Formation of Library Cooperation and Resource Sharing: Lessons from Moshi Co-operative University and Mwenge Catholic University in Tanzania.

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Abstract

Academic libraries in Tanzania play the pivotal role especially in teaching, learning and research activities. They are especially important in collecting, processing, organizing and making information available to users. However, academic libraries face several challenges which include among others information explosion, budget deficit, shortage of library materials, and lack of support from the institutional top management, this paper addresses these challenges. Objectives of this study was to Identify benefits offered by library cooperation and resource sharing, to examine factors for successful library cooperation and resource sharing and finally to identify challenges facing the formation of library cooperation and resource sharing among Universities. The study predominantly adopted a desk study whose source of data was secondary. This was derived from books, various websites, periodicals, journals and newspapers. Findings of the study shows that library cooperation and resource sharing offer a number of benefits to staff students and researchers including exchange of documents through interlibrary loan and document delivery service, access to information at a right time by users and achievement of better academic performance among students. Study also found that in order to form sustainable cooperation among Universities library there should be commitment in membership among the cooperating institutions and clear guidelines on the management of the cooperation. Challenges facing the formation of library cooperation and resources sharing were also identified, these include budget constraints among the institutions, absence of library cooperation policy, lack of current materials in Universities library's collections and shortage of professional librarians to work in a networked environment. Study recommended that, there is a need to prepare a memorandum of understanding among the two institutions which will provide legal framework on how cooperation will be implemented, formulation of library cooperation policy to guide the daily operations of the cooperation, employment of professional library staff who can work in a networked environment, libraries should adopt and use computerized library services and finally the institutional top management should support the whole process which will result to the formation of library cooperation and resources sharing between MoCU and MWECAU.

INTRODUCTION

The link between education and libraries is well defined and logically rooted in the fact that both educational institutions and libraries work with knowledge. The former spread knowledge, values, and beliefs through a system of schools, whereas the latter provide individuals with access to information resources in publicly accessible archives of knowledge. Today in Europe and Slovakia as elsewhere in the world both are undergoing transformative change (Susol, 2009).

Cooperation between academic libraries has always been at the basis of library activities.

Bostick (2000) report how this concept is strongly rooted in the US tradition. Many cooperative programs were developed during the past century (Weber 1976); cultural reasons and traditions caused its development particularly in the US area, where many cooperative activities were linked to the Library of Congress (distribution of bibliographic card catalogues; publication of LC subject headings).

The changing culture of higher education demands a high degree of accountability and productivity from faculty, so it is inevitable that they challenge our libraries to support their research and teaching needs in more effective ways. Increased research productivity and quality as a major goal of universities requires that faculty have access to research materials as quickly as possible in an environment of limited resources (Shumaker, 2003).

Virkus & Metsar (2004) supports that the academic library has traditionally been seen as the 'heart of the university' serving the academic community of its parent institution. As a results of a number of challenges which face many academic libraries, Brown & Swan (2007) points out that in some cases, researchers have to purchase themselves books they need for research because their library cannot justify purchase through the library budget. Indeed, teaching itself may suffer from some libraries' relatively tight rules on purchasing research texts, Brown & Swan (2007) further pointed out that teaching degree-level courses is impossible without buying 'decent research texts', yet this aim is often difficult to achieve. This spills over into the use of inter-library loan, which is in some cases discouraged for research-based materials, with priority given to obtaining teaching-related articles. In order to curb the identified challenges which faces most of libraries in Africa and Tanzania respectively Ogunsola & Okusaga (2008) affirm that there should be a formation of virtual library which may help library to share the information resources, Ogunsola & Okusaga (2008) further adds that the mission of virtual library in African universities should be to provide, in an equitable, cooperative and cost effective manner, enhanced access to national and international library and information resources with libraries all over the world using digital technology.

Statement of Problem

The aim of forming library consortia in Tanzania was to enable researchers, Academicians, students and other information users to have access to the right information in a very timely manner. Through library consortia researchers, academicians, and students have been able to access diverse number of e-resources subscribed from different online publisher's databases. As a result of financial constraints the consortia management has not been able to subscribe to all online publishers databases; hence this has denied some library and information users to access information of their needs. Mwenge Catholic University (MWECAU) and Moshi Co-operative University (MoCU) are members of the Consortium of Tanzania Universities and Research Libraries (COTUL). Like other members of the consortia these Universities have been experiencing the same problem of limited subscription to multiple online publishers' databases. Since the two Universities are located in Kilimanjaro region and offer related courses, the question is why they have failed to utilize the opportunity offered by library cooperation and resources sharing which include sharing of both print and e-resources through interlibrary loan and document delivery services. This paper will examine challenges facing the formation of library cooperation among the two Universities and suggest the way forward.

General objectives:

The general objective of this study is to examine challenges facing the formation of library cooperation and resource sharing among MoCU and MWECAU

Specific objectives

Specifically the study will:

(i) Identify benefits offered by library cooperation and resource sharing among Universities

(ii) Examine factors for successful library cooperation and resource sharing among Universities

(iii) Identify challenges facing the formation of library cooperation and resource sharing among Universities

Research questions

(i) What are the benefits offered by library cooperation and resource sharing?

(ii) What are the factors for successful library cooperation and resource sharing among Universities?

(iii)What are the challenges facing the formation of library cooperation and resources sharing among Universities?

LITERATURE UNDERPINNINGS
Library Cooperation

Library Cooperation is the creation and operation of equitable, that is mutually 'fair', collaborative arrangements between libraries and information providers which enhance the common good through making information available to all potential users (without obstacle to access by reason of cost) which is more extensive or more valuable to the user and/or is of lower cost to the collaborating providers (Verzosa, 2004).

Zeuli & Cropp (2004) agreed that persons compelled to act contrary to their wishes are not truly cooperating. True cooperation with others arises from a belief in mutual help; it can't be dictated. Cooperating with others has often

proven to be a satisfactory way of achieving one's own objectives while at the same time assisting others in achieving theirs.

Davis (2007) identifies that a network is a co-operative library organization that usually consists of a formal arrangement whereby materials, information, and services provided by a variety of types of libraries and other organizations are made available to all members. Member libraries may be in different jurisdictions but agree to serve one another on the same basis as each serves its own constituents.

Manjunatha & Shivalingaiah (2003) hold a view that the networked environment has enabled the use of libraries that is increasingly free of time and locations constraints. The rise of remote access to information increases an academic library's obligation to realign its resources and services to meet the needs of its customers wherever they are located. Library catalogues and reference tools were the first to move online, and full-text documents and multimedia resources followed the soon on institutional intranets or the internet. Of late, one can clearly see the increased user preferences to access computer based information resources; library use of networks and dependency on CD based information. Manjunatha & Shivalingaiah (2003) further states that Librarians have talked a great deal about resource sharing. It is a mode of operation whereby many libraries share their resources and services.

Sharif (2006) view library cooperation as the way libraries are making use of information and communication technology (ICT) to further enhance resource sharing initiatives. The advent of electronic formats has increased both the ease and efficiency of finding and producing virtual scholarly documents. This equips libraries to share their information sources to greater extent.

Library Cooperation and Resources Sharing

Libraries have been cooperating and collaborating on collection building for many years. The main objective of library cooperation and resource sharing is to maximize the availability of and access to information and services at a minimum cost. Library cooperation, networking and resource sharing are synonymous with cooperation and collaborative activities of library and information centre (Mannan, 1998).

According to Mohd & Islam (2013) they articulated that resource sharing is typically composed of two activities. The first is collaborative collection development, whereby subject specializations are intended to be distributed among libraries within a clearly defined geographic region, so that individual libraries need not attempt to collect resources in all fields; but can concentrate on a particular field.

Sridhar (1995) declare that resource sharing assumes that resources are not uniformly distributed and there is wide disparity between resources available to individuals by reasons of geographic location or socio-economic position. Resource sharing stresses on equality and caring for under privileged and underserved users who often suffer from resource constraints. As regards intellectual resource is concerned, it is divide up work and share results is the motto. Resource constraints include in them inflation,

budgetary cuts and reduction in buying power (cost saving appears to be the main factor). In supporting this Geronimo & Aragon (2005) states that Information technology has extended the availability of information. Due to this reality, libraries are rethinking old practices related to acquisition, storage, organization, and dissemination of this growing quantity of information and knowledge. The organization of libraries into resource sharing consortia and networks are alternatives to address the former problems.

Adam & Usman (2013) was of the view that although the concept of resource sharing has been traced back as far as the library collection development impulse toward cooperative collection development, in the sense of actual coordinated and collaborative activities, had emerged comparatively recently among libraries of all types in Nigeria. Academic libraries in Nigeria believed in principle that sharing is a sound practice.

Ibrahim (2006) noted that the need for resource sharing stems from three underlying trends of modern society, the growth of all forms of literature, the increasing reliance on information to enable society function effectively, inflation in the cost of materials. Song (2000) further emphasized that we are living in a time where the level of utilization of information resources has become the yardstick to determine a country's economic advancement and strength.

The objectives of resource sharing as seen by Kaula (1986) are to maximize the availability of material and services and to minimize expenses. In other words, the principle behind resource sharing has been the availability of maximum

service at the minimum cost or the maximum service at the same cost. The objectives of resource sharing are to create an environment in which libraries can offer better services and more materials for the same cost. It aims to make the resources of one library available to users of other library and vice-versa.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A descriptive research design is one that describes the situation as it is (Mugenda, 2008). This was a case study as the research study was conducted at the Moshi Co-operative University, and Mwenge Catholic University. Researcher decided to select MoCU and MWECAU as the area of study because the two Universities offer related courses and are located in Kilimanjaro region. The study predominantly adopted a desk study whose source of data was secondary. This was derived from books, various websites, periodicals, journals and newspapers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSSION

Benefits offered by library Cooperation in Universities

Zaucer (1996) hold a view that libraries can cooperate in exchanging cataloging records, in building complementary collections, in exchanging library materials by interlibrary loan and document delivery services, in joint purchasing of library materials or automated systems, in providing services to each others' readers, etc. It is essential that the participant libraries be willing to work together toward common goals. The purpose of cooperation among libraries is for better availability of materials and/or services to users and offering

those and additional services at the same or lower costs. In line to this, Tanvir (2009) identify that explosion in published output, increase in bibliographic access of literature through Internet and off-line databases on CDs, static, and in many cases decreasing library budgets along with high cost of published output had made it virtually impossible for libraries and documentation/information centres to fulfill information needs of their primary clientele. Under such squeezing situation the best option left with the libraries is to optimize their resources through extensive sharing.

Mohd (2013) states that as a result of forming library cooperation in Bangladesh at present there is no local hosting of resources. They are accessible from publisher's web-sites. All the participating libraries have access to on-line journals. Around five thousand titles of journal of different disciplines are available for the users. To run the activities of the consortium more effectively and democratically, the members of the consortium drafted a constitution for the consortium incorporating inputs from the stakeholders of spread across the country.

Lugya (2010) identify that the most important values of a consortium to its member libraries are: sharing the full range of academic library resources effectively and economically; cooperation among academic and research libraries of all types, sizes and missions; and cost-effectiveness in the delivery of programs, services, and products. These three values are a reflection of the most important factors that influence libraries to join and continue to subscribe to a consortium

According to Sivathaasan & Velnampy (2013) they states that academic performance is the outcome of education the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their educational goals. Further, it refers to how students deal with their studies and how they cope with or accomplish different tasks given to them by their teachers. It is the ability to study and remember facts and being able to communicate knowledge verbally or down on paper.

Academic libraries provide myriad services, resources, and programs; librarians gather use data to assess value; and users are surveyed about their satisfaction with a service; but little is written about what value or recognition students put on particular services for their own academic success and daily efficiency to accomplish their work (Zhong & Alexander, 2007).

Nicholas & Rowland (2010) supports that academic libraries have demonstrated their ability to lead and to adapt their roles in response to changing circumstances. They play a crucial role in supporting the teaching, learning and research missions of their universities. The quality of libraries and their services is an especially important part of the student experience, and students are increasingly vocal about any perceived shortcomings.

The application of information and communication technologies have enabled libraries to cooperate and share the information resources which have direct impact to better students academic performance, in view of this Soleyman (2014) states that The considerable

growth of information and communication technology and its excessive influence on different aspects of life have affected many activities, especially educational activities such as changing students' educational requirements, students and teachers' essential skills, teaching methods, and the application of information and communications technology in the process of teaching. The ability to accommodate oneself with the changes, competitiveness, and lifelong learning are the means of success in the contemporary society.

Factors for the success of Library Cooperation and Resource Sharing among Universities

Account for performance management

All cooperating libraries ought to agree at the outset regarding how they are to measure their success and how they are to incorporate the measurements into the best value requirements for continuous improvement. This measurement process must include arrangements for monitoring and reviewing how effectively the cooperation itself is working. Additionally, you will want to consider and resolve outstanding accountability and governance issues.

Membership

Membership in cooperation is a serious commitment for a library. It may involve a significant payment in membership dues and other necessary fees, in addition to basic financial commitments, libraries may be required to put a considerable amount of staff time towards consortia activities, such as committee work and increased interlibrary loan volume. The amount of staff time required

varies by type of consortium and type of activity, but staff participation is essential to most successful consortia (Bostick, 2001).

Management of the Cooperation

The libraries which have decided to cooperate in resources sharing has to agree on the leadership or management structure of the cooperation so as to enable the smooth flow of its operation, there should be agreement on the number of leaders each partner is supposing to have in the managerial positions so that decision making are made in favor of all cooperating libraries.

Sharing Skills from Professional library staff

Today many libraries are faced by a challenge of shortage of man power including professional library staff which is caused by a number of reasons one of it being budget constraints. Forming library cooperation will help the collaborating libraries to share the skills of available professional library staff and minimize the problem of shortage of library staff. Sharing of the professional library staff can be in terms of cataloging of library materials, classification, and information technology related services and during the time of delivering on job training among the junior library staff of the collaborating libraries.

Challenges for the formation of Library Cooperation among Universities
Budget Constraints

Forming library cooperation requires enough budgets that can be devoted to cover the total operation costs among the cooperating libraries, this include funds to purchase new reading materials, library software's, training of library staff and the users, cost relating to the

maintenance of the equipment such as computers, scanners, printers, and subscription funds to enable users and staff of the cooperating libraries to have access to various e-journals published all over the world. This has been the serious challenge towards the formation of library cooperation among the two Universities. MoCU is a public institution while MWECAU is the private institution and therefore it has different terms when it comes to library budget allocations.

Shortage of professional librarians

Effective library cooperation requires the presence of dedicated professional librarians who's their desire is to deliver effective library services to its users at the accepted standard. These services may include information literacy training, Readers advisory services, indexing and abstracting services, cataloguing and classification, audio visual services, microfilming services, database designing and maintenance including website development. As a result of having only few library professionals MoCU and MWECAU have not been able to form library cooperation for the purpose of sharing the information resources.

Shortage of Information Materials

The purpose of forming library cooperation is to ensure library users including students and staff of particular institutions are benefiting out the formed cooperation especially in accessing and utilizing information of their needs. Since library cooperation allows one library to borrow information materials from another cooperating library then the libraries need to have rich collections with enough reading materials. The

two University libraries are currently facing the shortage information materials which could be used for sharing and therefore it has limited them to form the cooperation which otherwise could help them to minimize the cost relating to the collection development.

Absence of library cooperation policy

Library cooperation policy normally states how the library cooperation will be implemented and therefore it acts as a guide among the cooperating libraries. Currently there is no policy relating to the formation of library cooperation among the two Universities. Absence of library cooperation policy has denied students and staff from the two Universities to utilize the advantages resulted from libraries resource sharing.

Low Level of Technology Adoption and use

In areas where library cooperation has been successful including in United State of America and other developed countries, adoption and use of technology has been a major factor. One library is connected to another through the use of the internet which is reliable and therefore users may have access to various information materials available from the cooperating libraries databases. This has helped the cooperating libraries in fulfilling the information needs of their users. The challenges which currently face MoCU and MWECAU include unreliable power supply, unstable internet connection. Also the state of technology adoption among the two libraries is still very low as some of these libraries are still operating manually hence it has hindered the formation of

the cooperation and resource sharing among the two Universities.

Lack of support from the Universities top Management

Formation of cooperation among libraries can be effectively achieved if there is strong support from the top management of an institution. The top management is the one which set different policies for an institution and therefore giving priority to library related issues such as formulating policies on library cooperation could really result into a strong cooperation among the libraries, this is not the case with the two institutions where little attention have been put in library related matters. This has prevented the libraries to form the cooperation for the purpose of information resources sharing.

Conclusion

Study conclude that with financial constraints library cooperation has been a solution for many Universities in minimizing costs relating to subscription of library materials, library cooperation and resource sharing has enabled library and information users to access thousands of e-resources and therefore meet their information needs. Findings of the study shows that in order to form sustainable library cooperation there should be some important factors which include presence of library cooperation policy among the cooperating Universities, and the management guideline of the cooperation. Finally study identified a number of challenges that affects the formation of library cooperation and resource sharing between MoCU, and MWECAU. Identified challenges include budget constraints and the

nature of the institutions, MoCU is a public institution while MWECAU is a private institution with its unique way of operation. Other identified challenges are lack of professional library staff that could perform multi task relating to the cooperation, shortage of print library materials that could be used in interlibrary loan, absence of library cooperation policy and low level of technology adoption and use in libraries attached to some of these two Universities.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

Allocation of Enough Budgets Among libraries

Formation of library cooperation and resources sharing requires strong financial commitment of the institution. Therefore to support the formation of library cooperation among MoCU and MWECAU, these libraries need to be allocated with enough budgets to meet the operational costs of the cooperation to be formed. Financial resources will enable professional librarians to cover the costs relating to subscription to e-resources, staff training, collection development, user education, internet costs and purchase of equipments such as computers which may facilitate library services delivery.

Employment of Professional Library Staff

One of the prerequisite in forming sustainable library cooperation and resources sharing is presence of professional librarians who can deliver quality library services to their users. This present the demand for the two Universities to employ qualified library

professionals who are experienced and capable to work in a networked environment. Today library professional are expected to possess Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills so as to meet the information needs of the library clientele. So in order for MoCU and MWECAU to form library cooperation with the aim of sharing information resources, then all institutions should first prove to have library professionals who can deliver library services at the accepted standards. If library professional are not available then they should be employed.

Formulation of Library Cooperation Policy

Library cooperation policy will provide a guideline through which the library cooperation among the two Universities will be operating. So it is important at this stage that MoCU and MWECAU they formulate library cooperation policy that will capture all important aspects relating to resource sharing. It is important that the policy captures sensitive issues like intellectual property laws including copy right, security issues, loan privilege, loan period, information to be shared, membership, budget issues etc.

Adoption of Computerised Library Services

Resource sharing among library can easily be achieved if all cooperating libraries have computerised their libraries services and therefore the information can be made available to the potential users through the use of internet services. With the internet connection, users may have access to information from the database which is shared by the cooperating libraries and thus making it possible for users to access information of their interest at the lowest

cost possible. Digitization of print materials have made the sharing of information materials among libraries easier and therefore MoCU and MWECAU Universities have to digitized its print resources if they wish to attain the goal of forming library cooperation and resource sharing.

Formation of Memorandum of Understanding between Cooperating Institutions

Since MoCU is a public owned institution while MWECAU is a private institution, there is a need for the formation of a memorandum of understanding between the two institutions to enable its libraries to form a solid cooperation for the purpose of sharing its information resources, in doing so the institutional libraries will put themselves in a right position to fulfill its users information needs. Memorandum of understanding will provide a legal framework on the time in which the cooperation will be valid and terms of agreement between the cooperating Universities.

Support from the Management

The management of the two Universities has to give support to its library management towards ensuring the initiatives of forming library cooperation is achieved, support from the top management can be in terms of approving the proposals on establishment of the library cooperation, facilitation allowances in case of meetings or travelling cost, training of the library staff so as to prepare them to work in a networked environment, preparation of memorandum of understanding and so on, in doing so the top management will facilitate the

whole process of the formation of library cooperation among the MoCU and MWECAU Universities which its end results will be fulfilling the information needs of its users.

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