

## **IMPORTANCE OF SHARING RESOURCES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES: AN ANALYSIS OF RECENT RESEARCH STUDIES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The goal of resource sharing in academic libraries is to maximize the availability of materials and services at the minimum cost. In this article, the researcher has considered the research done after 2000 to analyze. Some of the common areas of resource sharing in academic libraries that the researchers have identified are inter-library loan, exchange of publications, cooperative acquisition, cataloguing and classification, sharing of bibliographical data, preparation and maintenance of union catalogue and union list of serials, networking, exchange of library expertise and personnel etc. Later on, building up consortia made it convenient for academic libraries to share their resources.

Even though there are barriers to resource sharing such as technology/infrastructure barriers, financial challenges, manpower limitations and legal, political and administrative barriers, the researchers have emphasized the importance of resource sharing among academic libraries.

**Keywords:** Resource sharing, Interlibrary loan, Networking, Consortia,

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

In a country, Universities are the centre of innovation through advanced research and development. According to Yao and Zhu (2015), an academic library is an important hub of information exchange, gathering different kinds of information and educational resources.

Library resources consist of materials, functions, methods, services and manpower. Library cooperation is an ancient concept and a form of resource sharing. It is nothing but the sharing of library resources with other participating libraries who need it. It is a form of library cooperation, where every contributing library shares their used or unused and sometimes their most prized resources with other libraries. According to Chatterjee (2010), "It will not merely mean mutual sharing of information sources available in different libraries, it will mean utilizing the information sources of one library for generating services by another library".

The concept of resource sharing refers to mutual agreement between libraries to share their resources to provide better services to their clients. Such resources may include document collection, staff members, technical facilities and mechanical support among participating libraries. The main purpose of such arrangements is to achieve what the members of a group cannot achieve individually (Bangoni, Chizwara, & Moyo, 2018).

The goal of resource sharing is to maximize the availability of materials and services at the minimum expense. The effectiveness of library services largely depends on the ability of libraries to provide quick delivery of documents or books requested by library users within a minimum time and cost. As Posner (2017) points out, the main objectives of information resource sharing include,

but are not limited to; increasing the availability of resources, extending the accessibility of resources, diminishing cost and promoting the utilization of resources.

According to Chavare (2002), the need for resource sharing was realized by libraries a long time ago. Besides entering into inter-library practice, libraries also thought seriously of resource sharing in many other areas, such as cooperative acquisition, cooperative cataloguing, cooperative classification, etc.

To collaborate among libraries, there are some basic requirements such as a willingness to join with the resource-sharing activities, a communication link or system between the cooperative libraries, availability of the necessary technology, equipment, standardized library software, hardware and database for sharing of library resources.

Chavare (2002) emphasizes that the participating libraries need to come together and cooperate in developing the collection on a shared basis and developing services for exploiting such a collection to make resource sharing a success.

## **2. RESOURCE SHARING IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES**

Some of the common areas of resource sharing in academic libraries that the researchers have identified are:

- Inter-library loan.
- Exchange of publications.
- Cooperative acquisition, cataloguing and classification
- Sharing of bibliographical data.
- Preparation and maintenance of union catalogue and union list of serials.
- Networking.
- Exchange of library expertise and personnel.

### **A. Inter-library lending**

Inter-library lending has been practiced as one of the most popular resource-sharing activities amongst libraries. Though inter-library loan in a traditional library is severely affected by barriers to information communication, such as indifference of the lending libraries, distance, language, time, etc, a computerized inter-library loan system overcomes these limitations (Chavare, 2002). To make this process a success, the participating libraries should think that they all are customers and all benefit from the knowledge or information gained by ILL. (Ashton, 2007).

While some studies conducted on ILL in academic libraries revealed that ILL has increased, some found that the data has decreased.

After conducting a study on resource sharing data of research libraries in general and the University of Alberta in Canada specifically, Jong and Frederiksen (2015) have revealed that both lending and borrowing transactions declining.

A study was conducted in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania covering four academic institutions namely; the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), the Open University of Tanzania (OUT), Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (MUHAS), and Tumaini University Dar es Salaam College (TUDARCO), and it revealed that only 2.5% respondents have stated that they use ILL as a resource sharing method which is one of the oldest methods of resource sharing among libraries. (Mubofu & Chaula, 2020)

A study was done in the USA and found that the USA was one of the few countries in the world where the data of ILL and document supply continued to increase (Mak,1995). The major cause for the effectiveness of resource sharing was their intra and inter-collaboration. Other factors were the improvement in discovery tools, requesting processes, the more recent improvements in the delivery process and providing cheap or even free use of document supply.

A study was conducted among 20 selected University libraries in North Central Nigeria and it revealed that e-books, e-journals, e-magazines, e-newspapers, e-theses and e-dissertations are the resources shared among university libraries in North Central Nigeria (Babatunde. et.al., 2020). The researchers point out that they may be the most needed materials as well as they are portable.

By analyzing the interlibrary loan and document delivery in University libraries in Jiangsu Province, China, Xi. et.al. point out that ILL and DD can be done better through small consortia and discipline centres (2015). Since only half of University libraries take part in consortia in Jiangsu Province, increasing the number of consortia was recommended.

In recent years, e-resources have had a direct impact on ILL services. With the popularity of e-resources, many people think that "electronic resources could be the death of ILL", though some librarians remain positive that ILL will survive with the print materials and the encouragement of the librarians (Hales, 2012, p.131).

### **B. Cooperative acquisition, cataloguing and classification**

Consortium acquisition, online cataloguing, resource integration, interlibrary loan and document delivery, resource public archiving, statistical evaluation, union training etc were mentioned as the main methods of resource-sharing activities in China (Yao & Zhu, 2015).

A study done in Zimbabwe recommends that with an integrated library management system, shared cataloguing and shared catalogue storage, shared circulation and ILL, the academic libraries in Zimbabwe can share their resources (Chisita &Fombad, 2020).

### **C. Networking**

A study done with four University libraries in Tanzania has revealed that 65% of library staff stated that they share resources via networking (Mubofu & Chaula, 2020).

In Bangladesh, a study was done with selected academic libraries to find out the users' perceptions about the present status of resource sharing, networking and telecommunication in those libraries and to find ways to improve information services (Siddike, 2012). The researcher pointed out that it was an exclusive experience most of the respondents were unaware of library networking and resource sharing. However, 20 % of the users have emphasized the importance of establishing library networking and resource-sharing systems.

### **D. Sharing library expertise and personnel**

Compared with sharing other resources among libraries, they are not much interested in sharing human resources. Mubofu and Chaula (2020) reveal that 5% of their respondents stated that they work on collective staff training. A study done in North Central Nigerian University libraries has revealed that they share human resources as well as e-resources (Babatunde. et.al., 2020).

### **E. Benefits of Resource Sharing in Academic Libraries**

Mubofu and Chaula (2020) have found that increasing the subscription power, minimizing storage requirements, helping the libraries to keep up with the pace of information generation and acquiring new resources not in stock as benefits of resource sharing.

According to Kaur et.al.(2006), their respondents were asked to describe how their libraries benefit from being involved in resource sharing and 83% of respondents indicated that resource sharing increases the subscription power and 73% of respondents stated that it minimizes their libraries' storage requirements.

Hernon and Powell (2008) tend to list the benefits of collaboration among academic libraries as follows:

- a more comfortable and convenient learning environment for library users;
- enhancement of student learning and success;
- development of ties with other academic and support services;
- improving user access to information and computer resources;
- integration of library resources into teaching and learning;
- facilitation of new modes of scholarly communication such as institutional repositories;
- fulfilling user expectations for seamless, convenient service and extended hours;
- aiding in student retention, an issue of institutional importance, a measurable outcome;
- the opportunity to develop creative ways of providing academic services;
- an increase in the library's involvement in student learning and campus life;
- obtaining more financial and political support from the university administration;
- consolidation of learning support services;
- development of closer relationships with other campus service units;
- more fully integrating learning and technology into the curriculum;
- the ability to reallocate resources through the merging of departments;
- increased use of library resources and services (and those of library partners);
- greater status for partners who cooperate" (p.128).

## F. Barriers Related to Resource Sharing

The researchers have identified several problems, issues or barriers related to resource sharing among academic libraries and in the table below they are categorized into four subthemes such as technology/infrastructure barriers, financial challenges, manpower limitations and legal, political and administrative barriers. (Ratnayake, 2022)

**Table 1: Barriers To Resource Sharing**

No.	Barriers to Resource Sharing	Examples
1.	Technology/Infrastructure barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication technology, poor communication infrastructure. Fatoki (2005)</li> <li>• Lack of well-developed ICT infrastructure. Edem (2010), Ejedafiru (2003, 2010)</li> <li>• Lack of requisite skills in ICT. Tanvir (2005), Nwalo (2008), Fatoki (2005). Nok (2006)</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient power supply. Anasi &amp; Ali (2012), Edem(2010)</li> <li>• Erratic Internet services, lack of hardware and software. Fatoki, (2005). Eshijo (2011)</li> <li>• The slow progress of automation. Anasi &amp; Ali (2012)</li> <li>• Telephone calls, local transportation, courier services and other expenses take time and money. Nwalo (2008). Debagha (2012)</li> </ul>
2.	Financial challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of funds and poor finance management. Nwalo (2008), Aina (2001), Tanvir (2005), Odini (1991), Eshijo (2011) Debagha (2012), Edem (2010), Anasi &amp; Ali (2012)</li> <li>• Higher logistics cost. Xi et.al. (2015)</li> <li>• Inflation and unstable budgetary allocation. Ejedafiru (2003)</li> <li>• Difficulty in the importation of books and journals from abroad due to the high rise in foreign exchange. Fatoki (2005).</li> </ul>
3.	Manpower limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient ILL librarians. Xi et.al. (2015)</li> <li>• Lack of skilled personnel in ICT. Edem (2010)</li> <li>• A dearth of skilled librarians. Anasi &amp; Ali (2012)</li> </ul>
4.	Legal, political and administrative barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copyright, jurisdictions, initial dual operations and resultant economic burden. Sridhar (1995), Eshijo (2011)</li> <li>• Lack of firm national policy for libraries. Eshijo (2011), Debagha (2012)</li> </ul>

### 3. CONSORTIA

As the Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English (1966, p.260) says the term ‘consortium’ literally means “temporary cooperation of several powers or large interests to effect some common purpose.”

According to Narasimhan (2002, p.556), a library consortium is “a community (a cooperative) of two or more information agencies which have formally agreed to coordinate, cooperate in, or consolidate certain functions to achieve mutual objectives”

Further, Murthy (2002, p.14) describes clearly that it is "a group of libraries that agree to pool their resources by allowing the users of each institution some type of access to the resources of all other institutions, either through inter-library loan or borrowing privileges.”

The concept of consortium is very old. At the earliest stage of library cooperation, some libraries have got together and built up a network and worked as a union for the benefit of their respective users. Then the resources were mostly in printed format. As Chatterjee (2010) points out, after computerized networks had become the mode of sharing resources, bibliographical databases were created. The users of the respective participating libraries could get the necessary materials from

other libraries through document delivery service. With the introduction of e-resources, the concept of consortia has been used mainly for e-journal acquisition. Since the resources that are obtained at present through a consortium are mainly e-resources, the users can access and download the required materials remotely without even going through the usual process of inter-library lending. Even though library consortia are used mainly to share e-resources, other resources also can be shared.

### A. Benefits of Consortia

The common benefits of consortia that were identified by the researchers are access to a vast collection, avoiding duplicating materials especially e-journals, creation of a virtual digital library by networking member libraries, building communication/ network among libraries, staff training and manpower sharing and cost-effectiveness. They are displayed in the table below.

**Table 2: Benefits Of Consortia**

No.	Benefits of Consortia	Examples
1.	Access to a vast collection.	Cooperative collection development. Chatterjee (2010)  Availability of comprehensive collection. Chowdhury (2012)  Possibility of information resource sharing. Poshiga, Godfrey & Seimode (2015)
2.	Avoid duplicating materials, especially e-journals.	Chowdhury (2012)
3.	Creation of a virtual digital library by networking member libraries.	Chatterjee (2010)
4.	Building communication/ network among libraries.	Chowdhury (2012), Poshiga, Godfrey & Seimode (2015)
5.	Staff training and manpower sharing.	Poshiga, Godfrey & Seimode (2015)
6.	Cost-effectiveness.	Chowdhury (2012), Mohd, Yusof & Umar (2014), Poshiga, Godfrey & Seimode (2015), Chisita (2020)

### B. Barriers to consortia

Chatterjee (2010) points out several barriers to adopting the method of consortia in academic libraries as follows:

- “Lack of awareness among the libraries and library authorities about the ultimate benefits of consortia,
- The conservative mentality of the library authorities about e-information resources, especially online resources,
- The unwillingness of some libraries to share their resources,
- The unwillingness of some libraries to share the burden of resource sharing i.e. serving users of libraries other than their own,

- The uneven development of libraries in different sectors and the slow progress of library automation,
- The inability of many libraries to meet the minimum commitment required to join a consortium due to financial and other infrastructural constraints,
- Lack of demand for resource sharing on the part of users,
- Poor bibliographical control of the holdings of the libraries,
- Lack of sufficient information resources to be shared.”

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The rapid growth of published documents as well as the increasing cost of the information sources, techniques and their developments that offer newer methods of information processing, retrieval and dissemination have made resource sharing compulsory. (Chavare, 2002)

Even with all the difficulties, problems or barriers, all the researchers recommend resource sharing among academic libraries.

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