BLUEPRINT/BENCHMARK FOR THE SELECTION AND ACQUISITION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to study the blueprint/benchmark in the selection and acquisition of library materials in the 21st century with particular reference to FAN Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. The paper highlights the minimum Standards and Guidelines for Academic Libraries in Nigeria, selection and acquisition practices in FANL and the challenges. Strategies that will enhance effective implementation of the Minimum Standards and Guidelines for Academic Libraries in FANL were also highlighted. The study recommends among other things, the establishment of collection development committee, review of the collection development policy on ground and immediate adoption of ICTs in the selection and acquisition processes of the Library.

Keywords: Blueprint/Benchmarks, Selection; Acquisition; Library materials, Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library.

Introduction

Libraries are the repositories of knowledge. They have always been described as the heart of any academic or research institution. The quality of any library is determined by the quality of information resources acquired and services given to the users. The richness of library collection and services has a direct impact on the quality of teaching, learning and research that take place in an academic environment. In corroboration (Aiyebelehin, 2012), stated that the quality of teaching, learning and research is predicated on the robustness, availability, accessibility and utilization of the library and information resources. A library without relevant information resources could be regarded as an ordinary reading room. To ensure that relevant library materials are selected and acquired, benchmarks are instituted and implemented and regulated.

The Concept of Selection and Acquisition

Book selection is the process of choosing books for inclusion in a library with a view to providing a balanced increase to the stock (Prytherch, 2000). Monroe (1997) observed that the surest way to reduce access time to information resources is to own the desired item, and this can be achieved through selection. Selection procedures can be influenced by the size of the allocation, relative emphasis on current versus retrospective purchasing, use of special purchasing arrangements and the involvement of those whom the fund most directly serves (Okoye, 2008).

Dorado (2012) opined that selection of library resources is conditioned by three factors viz.: the demand, in the light of local interest, in different areas of the field of knowledge; the supply or extent and nature of the availability of books in the market; and the total finance available and the proportion allocated to different subjects in relation to the strength or weakness of the already existing collection. The process of book selection is very crucial as judicious judgment has to be exercised, taking note of current and retrospective materials, conforming to the acquisition policy of the library. While selecting books, the needs and demands of the library users, budget provision and specific and related

borne in mind (Dorado, 2012).

Munroe (1997) listed the criteria for quality selection as follows: authoritativeness (reputation of author or publisher); accuracy; impartiality; currency of data; adequate scope; depth of coverage; appropriateness (level appropriate to users); relevance; interest; organization; style; aesthetic qualities; technical aspects (includes faithfulness of illustrations on sound); physical characteristics (quality of package); special features (bibliographies, notes, appendices); library potential (potential use, or how an item fits a particular library); cost (Is it permanent or ephemeral? Should it be purchased or rented or obtained through document delivery?).

The processes of obtaining books and other items for a library, documentation centre or archive is known as acquisition (Prytherch, 2000). The acquisition of information resources is a fundamental function which lays the foundation of library service. It is the library activity through which it obtains the possession of library materials provided to the users. The acquisition process requires the implementation of the selection decisions. In fact, it is the process that actually gets the information resources into the library. Generally, acquisition implies making orders for library materials, taking deliveries of the consignment and making payments. The issue of selection and acquisition of information resources is fundamental to determining the level of library development.

Concept of benchmark/benchmarking

The term "benchmark" according to *Dictionary.com* is a standard of excellence or achievement against which similar things must be measured or assessed. According to Fadehan (2010), library benchmarks are conducted with a view to assessing the status of an individual library and as a means of charting new course of action. The quality of library services however, has been linked with good benchmarking activities. Benchmarking library procedures and management practices amongst libraries of similar mission statements is necessary to improve performance and adopt international best practices. White (2002) observe that the origin of the term benchmarking is traced back to the business environment, as a concept that has been used to adopt the best practices in business and is now being imported into other fields, including the library and information field. Furthermore, he defined benchmarking as an ongoing, systematic process for measuring and comparing the processes of one organization to those of others that exhibit - functional "best practices. Fadehan (2010) stated that benchmarking is a management/strategic technique employed for healthy comparison, self evaluation, adoption of best practices, creation of business niche and setting of standards with a view to improving performance of organization within similar or related business environment.

The Association of Commonwealth Universities (2005) presents benchmarking as a tool of self evaluation. Benchmarking is a self-improvement tool for organizations to compare themselves with others to identify their comparative strengths and weaknesses and learn how to improve. Similarly Nicholas (2006) noted that benchmarking has been applied to the library and information services as a Total Quality Management tool (TQM) with a view to measuring and comparing one library's work process with those of other libraries. It is also done in order to make the

services and products of the library better, especially in meeting the needs of library users. Strouse (2002) opined that information centres are benchmarking themselves so as to enhance operational best practices, rationalize information spending and find out new trends in work processes among others. Also, Gohlke (2002) of the Library Benchmarking International emphasized the need for benchmarking in libraries to establish best practices.

Benchmarking activities in libraries of the developed economy date back to the 1980s and it has led to their improved performances. Some international library associations have succeeded in producing standardization documents/instruments which are modifiable and have been serving as guidelines for different categories/areas of library operations over the years (Fadehan, 2010). It is interesting to know that Nigerian libraries are not left behind in this move. The Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria has produced such document.

Minimum Standards and Guidelines for Academic Libraries in Nigeria (Draft) June, 2014 was developed by Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) in June, 2014. This body in line with Act of 1995 which established it is mandated to develop libraries in Nigeria through regulatory policies, guidelines and standards. These standards and guidelines were meant to benefit Federal, State, Local Governments as well as Ministries, Department and Agencies (MDAs) academic institutions that have no standards in place. In this regard, it is expected that library managers use their experience and judgment to apply these standards and guidelines in accordance with the exigencies and possibilities of local conditions. It is important that academic libraries are guided by standards in order to offer effective and efficient services that meet the needs of members of their communities.

Academic Library Standards are policies that highlight the required values and principles, which an academic library should aspire to accomplish in the course of its service delivery. It should serve the following functions:

i. Articulate the goal for library programme, services and staffing;

ii. Determine the criteria for quantity, quality, extent and level of suitability;

iii. Support the qualitative and quantitative criteria, both of which are amenable to review as the needs arise;

iv. Serve as a tool for decisions and actions by the authorities of the institution with regard to planning and administration of library programmes and services; and

v. Predict outcomes to be achieved by academic libraries.

Academic Library Standards are subject to periodic review by LRCN and other stakeholders. A breach of the Guidelines shall be deemed to be a breach of the Act. These standards and guidelines are mandatory for all institutions, private or public, which receive any form of funding from the federal government or are available to the general public. The following issues were discussed extensively in the *Minimum Standards and Guidelines for Academic Libraries (Draft):*

- Staffing
- Accommodation
- Furniture and equipment
- Collection management

- Services
- Budgeting & funding
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
- Governance & administration

Collection management which is the focus of this paper does not only involve the selection and acquisition process, but also the organization and use of all materials in all formats to the level required to support academic programmes in research, teaching and public service.

Collection management practice is offered from the following perspectives

- There shall be a year-round and carefully planned programme of selection and procuring of library materials. The faculty shall actively participate in the selection of print and non-print materials especially in their areas or disciplines of specialization;

- The library shall define in writing the policies for collection development that will guide the selection and acquisition of library materials to support the realization of the vision and mission of the parent institution;

- The collection should consist of quality, current and relevant resources that support the library's vision to meet the curricular, institutional research, and recreational needs of its clientele;

- Need for collection management policy;

- Involvement of end users in selection of materials for acquisition;

- Acquisition of materials in sufficient size to support the mission and vision of the parent institution;

- Acquisition of materials in varied formats, with consideration for formats that appeal to all segments of user community;

- Collection should be well chosen and well balanced;

- Use of different means of collection acquisition, such as purchases, gift and exchange, bequests, institutional membership, intervention, etc

- Acquisition of up-to-date collection;

- Development of an articulate programme for collection organization and care;

- Periodic evaluation and weeding programmes; and

- Need for local and indigenous collections, including local repositories (LRCN, 2014).

A Brief History of Festus Agbagbo Nwako Library, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria.

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka is an offshoot of the defunct Anambra State University of Technology (ASUTECH). ASUTECH was established by Edict No.7 on 30th July 1980 by the Government of the old Anambra State under His Excellency, Chief Jim Ifeanyichukwu Nwobodo. ASUTECH was a state owned university and operated as a multi-campus university, with campuses at Abakiliki, Awka, Enugu and Nnewi. In 1991, following the split of the old Anambra State into Anambra and Enugu States, the Awka and Nnewi campuses of the former ASUTECH became Anambra State University, owned by the new Anambra State government. Later on, progressive events culminating in the approval by Rt. Hon. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe the University was named after him at the request of the then State government. On November 26, 1991 consequently Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka was taken over by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The academic programme of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, is woven around fourteen faculties namely Faculty of Agricultural Science, Arts, Basic Medical Sciences, Biological Sciences, Education, Engineering &Technology, Environmental Sciences, Health Science & Technology, Law, Management Sciences, Medicine, Pharmaceutical Sciences, Physical Sciences and Social Sciences (*The History of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka*-Nigeria (2011).

The University Library was established in 1982 to acquire information resources (books, journals and non print) in line with the existing departments and curriculum of the university. It is the core of academic activities of the University and was established by the University Law to support teaching, learning and research activities of the University. The library was named after the first Vice-Chancellor of the University, Professor Festus Aghagbo Nwako. The university library was a conventional or traditional library operating within the four walls of a building and it's use compel users to visit the location before accessing the resources. The resources of the conventional university library cannot be accessed outside the hours of operation and their services are localized. These shortcomings of the conventional library led to the establishment of the digital section in the library.

Selection and Acquisition of Library Materials: The FANL Experience

Selection and acquisition of library materials is an ongoing process. Librarians and faculty members are the major participants in book selection processes thereby making the collection well chosen and balanced. The University Library is authorized to acquire information resources based on the academic programmes of the Faculties in the University. Presently, there are fourteen Faculties in the University. The Faculty members are requested to submit their recommendations including choice of format to the Library. Catalogues of individual publishers and booksellers are usually sent to the Heads of departments (HODs) and Deans of Faculties to select books relevant in their fields of study. Librarians also make their selection. The source for selection of books published in the United Kingdom is *Whitaker's Books in Print*. It lists titles that are freely available to the general public through the book trade. English language titles published in continental

Europe are also recorded. Additionally, titles published elsewhere overseas may be included provided they have English language text and are available to the trade through a sole stockholding agent based in the United Kingdom *(Whitaker's Books in Print, 1997)*. Sources for selection of books published or distributed in United States are *Books in Print* published by R. Bowker and *American Book Publishing Record (ABPR)*. These bibliographic resources or book selection tools are also available in other formats such as online databases and CD-ROM. Database vendors such as (OCLC) Online Computer Library Center, Inc., OVID Technologies, Inc., and Silver Platter Information, Inc., make the *Books in Print* database available to their subscribers (*Books in Print,* 2005). Some traditional sources used for the selection of print and non-print resources are also available in the electronic form. For example, Library *Journal Digital* is the online edition of *Library Journal*. It includes news written by librarians to help with purchasing decisions. Reviews cover all formats -books, audio, video, CD ROM, web and magazine.

Other sources used for book selection are catalogues of individual publishers and booksellers, bibliographies, book reviews in periodicals, suggestions of the readers, booklists from the faculty members, book exhibitions and book fairs.

Materials selected are collated in the Acquisitions Department and bibliographic authentication is carried out to verify that: materials selected are not already available in the Library; multiple copies of materials which are already in the library are needed; the bibliographic descriptions or entries of materials selected are correct and; selected titles are not on order. To get the above catalogue, acquisitions accession register, books on approval, books on order, books selected, books in process, *Books in Print* and other bibliographic tools. Whatever will emerge as a result of the exercise are lists of materials for both local and oversea order.

The Library has a written collection development policy which serves as a guide for procuring library collection. The use of this document is flexible and adjustments are allowed as the fund of the Library improve or dwindle or changes occur.

Acquisition Methods

Library materials are acquired centrally under the supervision of the University Librarian. Acquired materials are distributed to faculty libraries in the system viz.: Faculty of Law Library Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Agulu, College of Medical Sciences, Nnewi Faculty of Agriculture, Ifite-Ogwari

The Library has acquired over One hundred thousand (100,000) volumes of information resources from inception and they are accessed offline. The e-resources in the Digital Library are accessed online. Information resources are acquired by using the following methods:

Purchase: This is the most common method of building up library collection. Greater percentage of the library resources are acquired through purchase. Library materials are purchased from local vendors in most cases. Orders are also placed with oversea vendors and publishers for those materials that cannot be obtained locally. Yearly subscriptions are made for journals.

Gifts/Gratis or Donations: The library solicits for and receives gifts or learning materials. These often come through individuals, governmental and non-governmental organizations. Sometimes the library receive cash gift which is meant to purchase materials for the Library. The initial book collection with which the University Library took off comprised of several donations.

Exchange: Exchange is an arrangement whereby an organization exchanges its publications for those of another organization (Prytherch, 2000). A library can build its collection by exchanging materials with other libraries that have similar interest. Books, periodicals, non- print materials, etc, could be exchanged. Publications for exchange comprise duplicates, institutional publications, etc. In this Library, exchange arrangement was made initially with Indiana University Library and Library of Congress.

Bequests: This means giving an individual's properties out after the death of such individual. These properties may include books and other library materials. Bequests are solicited for in this Library.

Legal Deposit: This is an obligation on publishers, authors and printers to place their publications with designated libraries and maintain an archival record of nations published input (Akidi, 2012).The University Library publications emanating from World Bank, International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU), and International Geosphere Biosphere Programme (IGBP).

Membership of professional associations: The Library is a member of Nigerian Library Association (NLA). The publications of this association are sent to the Library free. Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TetFund) also donate some of their publications to the library.

Processing Methods

All materials selected and acquired for the Library are, on arrival, identified with the Library's ownership stamp and accessioned after validation. Book accession means assigning a given number that is unique to each copy of the books sequentially. Accession numbers are recorded on the material and the Accession register. Accession number is the number allocated to an acquired material on arrival to identify it for control purposes (Prytherch, 2000). The Accession register must make provision for date, accession number, author, title, publisher, source, quantity, price, remarks, etc. The materials are ready for further technical processing after accessioning them. They are now moved to the Cataloguing Department of the Library for cataloguing and classification.

The bills after they have been stamped and endorsed by the Acquisition Librarian are submitted to the University Librarian who will verify the bills, and, upon satisfaction, will endorse it and pass it to the Vice-Chancellor for approval and payment. The Library budget is part of the University budget. The University usually allocates some percentage

of the budget to the Library. This is however not strictly followed most of the time.

Format of Materials

Library materials are acquired in hard copies as well as in electronic format. The Library collection comprises books, reference works, serials, special collection, and items on special interests such as Nigeriana and Africana. These formats appeal to all segments of the users.

Challenges of Selection and Acquisition of Library Materials in FANL

- Limited financial resources
- Attitude of university management towards the library
- High rate of foreign exchange
- Difficulties in acquiring special documents such as government documents
- Shortage of professional
- Rising cost of library materials
- Non application of ICTs in collection development of the Library.
- Poor bibliographic control: It is difficult to identify and locate books published in this country.
- Inflation and devaluation of our currency
- Delay in payment as a result of bureaucratic administrative procedures.

Strategy for effective implementation of Minimum Standards and Guidelines for Academic Libraries in FANL

The present traditional methods employed in the selection and acquisition of library materials in FANL is no longer suitable in this 21st century; hence the need to integrate ICT into the system. Today, libraries create access to information available online. Alexander, et al cited in Aiyebelehin (2012) stated that the changing pattern of faculty and student information needs prompted libraries to continually examine their services and revisit their collection development methods to reflect the integration of ICT. This will increase the visibility and accessibility of the library collection to the users. The literature reviewed in this study shows that the aspects of collection development where ICT is mostly applied are in ordering of books; production of books- on- order; checking publishers' catalogues; keeping acquisition records and; online acquisition. Others include processing the acquisition of electronic journals; correspondence with suppliers, monitoring the progress of materials ordered; bibliographic searching; invoice clearing and; online payment that use ICT in collection development leads to the acquisition of current materials; improve the quality of library services; eliminate delays in delivery of books; saves time; hastens the delivery of information resources to library users; leads to better communication with vendors/publishers; saves cost of transportation of hard copies; improves professional image and; helps to develop new information technology literacy skills. Using ICT in collection development leads to the acquisition of current materials; improve the quality of library services; eliminate delays in delivery of books; saves time; hastens the delivery of information resources to library users; leads to better communication with vendors/publishers; saves cost of transportation of hard copies; improves professional image and; helps to develop new information technology literacy skills (Adesoji, Jegede, & Otedola, 2013, Nwalo & Emojorho, 2009, & Aiyebelehin, 2012).

Online networks, for example, could be used

in expedited book selection, book ordering, and book processing, using data from large databases like the OCLC and the Library of Congress (Nwalo & Emojorho, 2009). Behera and Singh (2011) highlighted the benefits of using ICT in collection development as high compact storage; ease of reproduction, multiplication, manipulation and transmutation; contents can be very easily detached from its media or container; ease of migration of contents from one medium to another; ease of transmission, communication and storage; hypertext and multimedia; seamless integration of print and electronic resource; sophisticated and multipronged searches through keywords, free text, Boolean operators, lass numbers and natural languages processing; wall-less libraries leading to the vision of multi-media global virtual library (MGVL) inaugurating an era of "Death of distance", and; convergence of technology, which is getting more powerful each day.

Recommendations

1. Establishing Library collection development committee comprising the University Librarian, the Deputy University Librarian, Departmental Heads of the Library, some Faculty members and students.

2. Review of the collection development policy on ground by the collection development committee to ensure it is in tune with the Minimum Standards and Guidelines for Academic Libraries in Nigeria. The collection development policy should also be periodically , reviewed and revised in line with changing trends in the university.

3. Immediate adoption of ICT in the selection and acquisition processes of the Library.

4. Application of ICT in libraries is capital intensive. Adequate funds should be allocated to the Library by the federal government to ensure that ICT facilities is properly integrated in the acquisition processes.

5. Imported ICT facilities should be duty free in Nigeria.

6. Provision of more infrastructure such as book shelves, standby generator, etc.

7. The university management should not have the final say over which resources are to be purchased in libraries. They should rely heavily on input by librarians.

8. Librarians should be members of faculty boards and attend their meetings to get the knowledge of their information needs. This can help the library in keeping abreast of new programs, courses, accreditation mandates.

9. Periodic evaluation and weeding programmes should be introduced in the Library.

Conclusion

This paper has tried to discuss the blueprint/benchmark in the selection and acquisition of library materials in the 21 st century with reference to Festus Aghagbo

Nwako Library. The Minimum Standards and Guidelines for Academic Libraries in Nigeria were also highlighted. They serve as the benchmark - the standard of excellence against which all the academic libraries in Nigeria are assessed. The discussion shows that Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library is aspiring to attain these goals irrespective of the challenges. However, the paper noted that the implementation of ICT in the selection and acquisition practices of the library will enhance these functions and help the library to remain relevant and serve the users better.

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