Collection Development in an Unstable Economy: A Case Study of the University of Lagos Library

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Abstract
Collection development at the University of Lagos has been a cooperative effort between librarians and the teaching faculty since the inception of the institution in 1962. In the 1970s and early 1980s, acquisition of books and journals enjoyed a boom because the country benefited from the oil boom through which it earned substantial foreign exchange and also had a strong national currency then. But problems emerged in the late 1980s and continued till now. This paper discusses library acquisition during the boom and lean years. Some comparison is made of the acquisition in these years and the problems which the library faces, while the impact of gifts and exchange programmes on library acquisition is highlighted. Continuous problems with regard to funding pose a threat to quality education. Some suggestions on funding are proffered.

Introduction
Collection development is a very important aspect of library service in any academic institution. All the programmes run by the institution have to be covered to ensure thoroughness and facilitate teaching, learning, research and community service. Reference materials that are relevant to the various disciplines have to be acquired and processed. They can then be made available to the patrons. Materials that are on the periphery also have to be acquired. It must also be noted that the librarian has to ensure a balanced collection so that a narrow aspect of each discipline is not developed at the expense of others.

The development of an academic library collection is not just the duty of the librarian, it is a cooperative effort between librarians and the teaching faculty. A deficient collection can have an adverse implication on the institution. It is imperative that the collection must be developed in such a way that it would meet the aspiration of the library patrons.

Various programmes in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria have to be accredited by the appropriate accreditation bodies like the Nigerian Legal Council, Nigerian Medical and Dental Association and others. This imposes more responsibilities on the library which has to ensure that the collection reflects the needs of the institution, as well as the requirements for the accreditation of programmes.

Ifidon (1997) has grouped library collections into the following:
- Quick reference or core collections
- Open access collections
- Research collection including specific collections
- General reading materials
- Documents.

Many librarians follow the grouping in their collection development while others develop their
collection in accordance with their specific needs. Lumande and Ojedokun (2005) in a recent study argue that curriculum and collection evaluation should be part of a library collection development process in academic libraries.

Librarians are usually guided by the acquisitions policy. In some libraries they have a written policy, while in others they do not. But there are written and unwritten acquisitions policies which libraries have to take into consideration in their acquisition.

Writing further on this Ochai (2001) asserts that:

In virtually all university libraries in Nigeria, the acquisitions policies stipulate the purchase of one or two copies of a book except in special cases where multiple copies may be acquired. The reason ostensibly is to spread the meager acquisitions budget among as many subject areas and titles as much as possible.

Before the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU) came to the rescue of university libraries in the early 1990s, each institution was supposed to spend five per cent of its total budget on the library. Ratcliffe's study, quoted by Edoka (2002), shows that in 1973/74, Ahmadu Bello University spent 4.36 per cent of its total budget on its library, University of Ibadan spent 4.6%, University of Lagos 4.50%, University of Benin 4.9%, University of Ife 4.76% and the University of Nigeria Nsukka, 10.20%. The fact that Nsukka spent more than the others can be explained. The civil war had just ended then and the library had to be rehabiliated.

The Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU) in 1992 reached an agreement with the federal government on library funding. It states:

It was agreed that the budgeting provision for library services be under a special head of its own and the head should account for 10% of the total regular budget. Federal Government of Nigeria and the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities, 1992 (ASUU, 1992).

This agreement provided that 60% of this fund should be spent on books and journals while the remaining 40% be spent on staff emolument. This agreement gave birth to the Library Development Fund (LDF) which is usually ten per cent of the university total budget. The ten per cent was made available for some years, but stopped some years ago. The joy of libraries getting ten per cent of the recurrent university budget has been short-lived. It ceased to be operational from 31st December 2001 (Ifidon and Okoli, 2002). Now there is no separate item of library funding in the National Universities Commission warrant sent to universities to intimate them of the grant from the government. Now federal university libraries are at the mercy of their vice-chancellors who distribute the cake as they deem fit. In recent times, in the preparation of the budget, the grant usually falls short by over 10% of what was approved in the previous year. Thus, each department or unit has to absorb ten per cent reduction, or stick to the previous year’s approved estimate, notwithstanding inflation and other factors that impact on collection development.

Thus, internal and external factors affect the fortunes of collection development in university libraries. The blame for stunted growth in the educational sector over the years has been put at the doorstep of the military government which ruled the country for most of the years after independence (Amor, 2003). This was one of the external factors that affected universities and library development in particular as the government determined what education should take in the budget.

The travails of acquiring books published abroad through foreign publishers in higher institutions in the country have also been documented. Foreign booksellers who were eager to do business in the 1970s and 1980s have now withdrawn into their shells.

Companies like Richard Abel, Swets, Blackwell Oxford, McGraw Hill, Oceana and others sold books worth several millions of naira in the 1970s when the naira was strong. Many of them are yet to recover all the debts owed. This made them to now insist on letters of credit to be opened through the local banks. All these make direct purchase from booksellers’ abroad a stupendous task because universities have to pay in foreign currency which is very scarce. Now most libraries buy books” through local reputable booksellers.

Oloruntoba (2002) identified high inflationary rate as another external factor that has worsened the plight of the librarians in their collection development efforts. The Nigerian university system has suffered stunted growth and signs of decay and despair are
noticeable. All these have adverse effect on collection development and the quality of library collection and service.

Collection Development at the University of Lagos Library

The University of Lagos was established in 1962. It has ten faculties: Law, Arts, Science, Engineering, Social Sciences, Business Administration, Postgraduate School, Environmental Sciences, Pharmacy, Education and College of Medicine. The University Main Library caters for the needs of all programmes except the College of Medicine Library, located some distance away, which caters for all medical programmes. There is an Education library located at the Faculty of Education but books and journals are acquired and processed by the Main Library for the Education Library.

Miss Moys, the first University Librarian, began the development of the library collections with the active collaboration of the academic staff. The tradition has been followed over the years. Thus, the library collection is made up of the books and journals received by purchase, gift and legal deposit.

Under the Publications Law (cap 107) of the Laws of Lagos State of Nigeria, the library became a legal depository for two copies of all books published in Lagos State. The library is also a depository for the publications of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), International Court of Justice (ICT) and other selected publications of the United Nations and Food and Agricultural Organisation, (University of Lagos Calendar, 2002).

At the University of Lagos, there is no written policy but the practice over the years has been documented. For all Nigerian materials, the library can acquire three copies if the prices are not too high. If they are high the library can acquire two copies. For all Africana materials, the library can purchase two copies. For books used as text by large classes the library can acquire a maximum of five copies. Some of these may be placed on reserve so that all the students can have access to them at any time.

By 1976, the library stock grew to over 130,000 volumes with over 4,000 journal titles on subscription (Olanlokun & Issah, 1987). By the early 1980s the journal subscription was about 5,000 titles but the boom years were soon over and economic depression which hit the country like a bang had an adverse effect on it and all institutions of higher learning. The library could no longer get adequate funds for its basic services. The library as at 2005 had a collection of about 350,000 volumes of books and over 55,000 volumes of journals.

The main objective of the study was to identify some of the factors that impact on collection development (internal and external).

Methodology

Some of the documents and statistics of library acquisition from 2000-2004 were examined and analysed to see the trend of collection development during these years. Comparison was made between the collection development during the oil boom years of the 1970s and 1980s when the country earned substantial foreign exchange and the lean years of the 2000s.

Findings

Books and Journal Acquisition, 1977-81, 2000-2004

The University of Lagos Library acquired books through purchase, gift and legal deposit. Tables 1 and 2 provide information on the library budget for materials acquired between 1977-1981, the boom years and 2000-2004, the lean years. The two tables reveal that a substantial amount of money (US dollars) was allocated each year for the purchase of library materials during 1977-81 compared with the 2000-2004 period.
Table 1: Library Budget for Books and Journals (1977-1981)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>₦ Naira</th>
<th>US. Dollars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1977-1978</td>
<td>120,000.00</td>
<td>189,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978-1979</td>
<td>140,000.00</td>
<td>220,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-1980</td>
<td>150,000.00</td>
<td>225,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-1981</td>
<td>200,000.00</td>
<td>300,000.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 2: Library Budget for Books and Journals 2000 - 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>₦ Naira</th>
<th>US. Dollars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>16,089,924</td>
<td>114,928.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>10,297,799</td>
<td>73,555.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>15,000,000</td>
<td>107,142.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>25,000,000</td>
<td>178,071.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: University of Lagos Approved Estimates, 2000 - 2004

Tables 3 and 4 show the vagaries of journal acquisition during the lean period (2000-2004). The number of foreign journals acquired between 2001 and 2004 ranged between 143 and 201 and for local journals between 40 and 77. This clearly shows that the library was not meeting the needs of its users given the fact that during the boom period the library was subscribing to about 5000 journal titles.

Table 3: Foreign Journal Purchased 2000-2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Journal Title</th>
<th>Value (US Dollars)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000/2001</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/2002</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>US$71,079.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002/2003</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>US$128,342.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Local Journal Purchased 2000-2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Journal Title</th>
<th>Value (US Dollars)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000/2001</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>US$1,720.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002/2003</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>US$2404.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003/2004</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>US$3,518.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Since the inception of the library, reputable journal subscription agents like Swets/Blackwell, EBSCO and Richard Abel were used. They performed very well but payment for journals became a big problem because of scarcity of foreign exchange and they became very careful in dealing with libraries in the country because of the debt owed. By the early 1980s, journal subscription was over 5,000 titles, but this has nosedived to under 1,000 titles, both local and foreign. The cost of foreign journals recommended for 2003/2004 was $117,028.23 (One hundred and seventeen thousand dollars, twenty and eight dollars and twenty three cents.) When converted into the local currency, the naira, it amounted to over thirty million naira, more than the total library budget. The library had to prioritise and reduce the number of titles on the list to what the resources could handle. The library had to prepay, which is the normal procedure for buying journals. And because the university subvention from government is released monthly, the Vice Chancellor gives priority to paying salaries first.

The library has been lucky because the university management gives primacy to knowledge; books and journals are regarded as important resources. The library was able to pay for half of the journal titles recommended in 2003/2004 for which it got a pro-forma invoice through bank transfer. This was in addition to EBSCO Host, a database which all Nigerian universities have access to for a period, courtesy of a Japanese philanthropist. Databases that offer free search services are courted by the Automation Unit to get some relief for the library patrons.

Books that are purchased are audited before the booksellers are paid and this can take two to three months but the good thing is that the vendors would get their money. Let us take a brief look at the statistics of books purchased in the 1970s and early 1980s.

In the four-year period, 1999-2004, the highest acquisition was in 2002 when 4762 volumes of books were acquired. This is far cry from the boom years of 1970s when over 17,000 volumes of books were acquired in 1977. Over 15,000 volumes were acquired in 1980. The acquisition of the early 2000s to 2004 was very low due to several factors. These included inflation, under funding and scarcity of foreign exchange etc. With the high cost of books and the poor funding which Nigerian university libraries experienced in recent times, the hope of replicating the large acquisitions of the 1970s and 1980s is dim.

Collection development is a hard task for any academic librarian in an unstable economy. New books and journals have to be bought either in book format, if available, or in electronic format. Failure to do this would affect the core mission of the university library - to support teaching, learning, research and community service. Getting funds to support the library programmes depends on what is made available by the university and how the chief executive sees the library.

**Donations and Library Exchange Programme**

The Library receives donations from several organisations. Some of them unsolicited and the materials are usually very relevant and useful. (The list of some donors appear in Appendix 1). The library has an exchange unit which handles the library exchange programmes. The Gifts and Library Exchanges programme now play a very important role in collection development effort. There are over one hundred exchange partners from all over the world and about half of them are very active. (Some of the active exchange partners are listed in appendix 2).

The library received gifts of journals, some covered over a twenty-year period continuously especially in chemistry and other science subjects from some donors. These are found quite useful by the staff and students. Some of these gifts were facilitated by the teaching staff who interacted with their foreign colleagues and persuaded them to donate their books and other collections to the library.

**The Way Forward**

An ingenious method of sourcing for funds for acquiring library materials has to be introduced so that library funding would not be at the whims and caprices of government who doles out money irrationally. University librarians develop goose pimples whenever accreditation panels knock on their doors and they have only a few new books and journals to display. University authorities scramble for money to get materials required for the accreditation exercise so as not to be disgraced.

Nigerian university libraries must rise up to the challenge of fulfilling their objectives of supporting teaching, research, learning and community service.
They cannot do this if they are inadequately funded. Their major source of funding are the institutions they serve and the economic crunch has had an adverse effect on them. It is not unusual at the budgetary hearings that departments are instructed to maintain the previous year’s budget notwithstanding inflation and other challenges which would make the retention of previous yearly approved budget unrealistic.

To get out of this quagmire, university librarians must continue to put pressure on the authorities to provide adequate funding so that we do not run a university of the nineteenth century in the twenty-first century. Lobbying is a fact of life in politics and even in business. University librarians must play the politics required. They must mobilise faculty members who are friends of the library for support so that whatever is due to them would not be denied them.

The Committee of University Librarians of Nigerian Universities (CULNU) should use its clout to impress it on the National Universities Commission, the Federal Ministry of Education and other agencies on the need to fund university libraries adequately. We had what was called “Library Development Fund” (LDF). This fund was separated from other financial items and was made available to libraries for their development. The National Universities Commission suddenly stopped the payment of LDF and university librarians were shocked. In spite of petitions written for restoration, nothing has been done. University libraries are now at the mercy of vice chancellors who give priority to payment of salaries than buying books and journals for the libraries. The LDF should be restored, at least the librarians would know what is due to them and can then plan to spend this. When the LDF is restored, the fund should be controlled by vice-chancellors, university librarians and the bursars. The university librarians should be signatories to the fund so that they can monitor its use. University libraries should expedite the formation of a consortium that would aid the libraries in sharing their resources and thereby reducing the cost of materials that they acquired.

For some university libraries, it is possible to generate money from external users. There are corporate bodies, multinational companies, individual firms and others who require information from libraries. For example, the University of Lagos charges these high-profile patrons fees. The library makes some money from this which is used for library development. There are law firms which cannot afford the high cost of law reports who want to use the library’s resources. Such firms could be charged yearly fees for consultation only and not for borrowing. Libraries can do literature search for external patrons for a fee. The money realised from such should be ploughed back to support information technology applications. Library cooperation in terms of acquisition and loans should be encouraged. This will make more materials available to patrons and reduce overall cost.

One of the most significant sources of funds for library development could be to charge students library fees. There is however a tradition of students resistance to paying any new special fee. Some university libraries have added library fees to their bill and this can reduce some of the burden of such institutions. Dialogue can be initiated with student bodies on the need to upgrade library facilities and have current books and journals, and the desirability of paying token library fees. Persuasion, dialogue and diplomacy on the part of the university authorities can assist in making students realise that quality education is not cheap and everybody has to make some sacrifice. All the stakeholders have to cooperate to ensure a virile collection development. These are the government, governing councils, vice chancellors, alumni and friends of the library. There has been a lot of discussion on autonomy. When the universities achieve autonomy they might be able to charge fees, including library fees, without running into much problem.

The university authorities should ask potential philanthropists to fund some resources and services in the library. If some agree to fund just twenty titles of journals as an endowment, this would go a long way to lessen the financial burden of journal subscription. The universities themselves can agree to give ten per cent of all their monetary donations from endowment to their libraries.

The university libraries should work in concert with the alumni association offices. The libraries should send them information on their libraries and seek their help for further development through funding or donation.

**Conclusion**

Some people have referred to the university library as the heart of the institution. The heart needs
constant pumping of blood to all parts of the body to make it function effectively and efficiently. The library needs funds for books, journals and other materials. Deny the libraries all these and the result will be like that of a child who is malnourished and has kwashiorkor. University librarians must be very active in sourcing for fund for their libraries. Some of the suggestions provided above can be tried.

Internally generated revenue, normal budgetary allocation, formation of a consortium, endowments, library fees and payment for special services can provide university librarians some leeway to provide quality service and help in the enhancement of education and the extension of the frontiers of knowledge.

References


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Mrs. E. A. Adekanye is the Acquisition Librarian, University of Lagos. She attended Andrews University Berneu Springs, Michigan State, USA and the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. She holds BA and MLS degrees.

Appendix 1: List of Some Donors

1. British Council
2. Ford Foundation
4. Nordiska Afrikanistitutet
5. Council for the Development of Social Research in Africa
6. National Centre for Economic Management
7. Centre for Social Science Research and Development.
8. Lucis Trust
9. Unicef
10. National Population Commission
11. World Bank
12. ZED Books
14. United Nations
15. Arts Council of the African Studies Association
16. Switzerland Embassy
Appendix 2: List of Active Exchange Partners

1. University of Pittsburgh Libraries U.S.A.
2. Foreign Materials Acquisition Division
   National Diet Library, Tokyo, Japan.
3. African and African America Collections,
   University of California at Berkeley,
   California.
4. Al Kegan African Studies Bibliographer, Library
   Administration, University of Illinois Library,
   Urbana, 61801, USA
5. Josie S Flores
   Gift & Exchange Division Stanford University
   Libraries Stanford C. A. USA.
6. Serials and Exchanges
   Main Library
   University of the West Indies
   St. Augustine Trinidad
   Trinidad & Tobago.
7. Indiana University Main Library E-660
   Indiana University Main Library
   Bloomington IN, USA.
8. The Library of Congress
   Africa/Asian Acquisitions and Overseas Division
   Washington, D. C. U.S.A.
9. Columbia University Libraries
   Exchanges Department
   108 Bottlers Library
   N.Y., U.S.A.
10. IDRC/CRDI International
    Development Research Centre Ottawa
    Ottawa ON K1G Canada.