Global Journal of Academic Librarianship.
Volume 1, Number 1 (2014), pp. 1-7
© Research India Publications
http://www.ripublication.com

Management of Hybrid Libraries for Effective Library Services in Nigeria: New Trends in Accessing Information

ANDREW UCHENNA OGBONNA, UZOAMAKA IGEWSI and UCHE V. ENWEANI

E-Reference Librarian, Digital Library Section
Prof. Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria (uchetek4real@yahoo.co.uk)
Center for Energy Research & Dev. Library University of Nigeria, Nsukka Enugu State, Nigeria (uzoamakaigwesi@yahoo.com)
Anambra State University Library, Igbariam Campus
Igbariam, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Abstract

This paper highlights the many ways available to library managers and patrons on the management and use of hybrid libraries, especially in academic libraries in Nigeria. The paper focused on the best practices that exist for making an effective use of library services by both patrons and library administrators. Considering the growing trends in new ways for accessing information which resulted from the emergence and explosion of Information and Communication Technologies, the paper looked at the needs, problems and strategies for making library services available and more efficient for the clienteles. Among these needs are, fast, improved and convenience- based services which hybrid library system is expected to provide. This is hoped to be enhanced by the appropriate installation and use of the Internet by both library administrators and patrons. Being focused at the developing nation like Nigeria, the problems ranged from poor information environment, poverty, lack of facilities to help the establishment of the hybrid system, to patrons' inability to adapt to the foreseeing trends and the administrators' inability to organize training workshops for their workers. The paper provided solutions to these problems through liaising with the different University management and governments to provide the needed funding for the provision of library infrastructure and the introduction of Social Media and Interactive tools to boost information service delivery in libraries.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of libraries as physical places where one visits to access information has been dramatically changing to virtual places without walls but providing organized access to intellectual records. This means that today's libraries provides information wherever it resides, whether in physical places or in scattered digital information space, thereby paving way to the recent model of hybrid nature of libraries. According to Carr (2001), there has been an enormous range of available information around the world, and as a result, print media are no longer considered sufficient in accessing the ever-increasing volume of stored information. Interestingly, Okeke (2007) noted that knowledge and information are multi-dimensional phenomena and which have been growing at a geometric progression. This growth has actually necessitated the need for the selection of appropriate information by librarians for their users. Okiy (2002) therefore, revealed that the current trend in information provision in libraries today should best be through the application of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Okiy further contends that this has helped in the provision and expansion of the scope of information for library patrons, irrespective of their location.

The fundamental roles of libraries have been to select, acquire, process, store and disseminate information resources to users. But in the present information age (i.e., the ICT era), libraries are contending with every available means to meet up with the diverse information needs of the users, considering the print and electronic format, thereby leading to the present, ever-needed, hybrid library development.

Rushbridge(1998), described hybrid libraries as those containing a mix of traditional print and a growing number of electronic-based resources. According to him, hybrid libraries are mixes of traditional print materials such as books, newspapers, magazines, monographs and journals, as well as electronic based materials, such as downloadable audio books, electronic journals, e-books, etc. Nevertheless, hybrid libraries have been the new norm in most public and academic libraries in developed world and which is being considered seriously in many academic libraries in the developing countries, especially Nigeria.

In the foregoing development, Tiwari (2007) defined hybrid library as "a library that uses the technologies available to bring resources together into the library, thereby, reflecting the best of both worlds". For Tiwari, hybrid library is an integrated model which renders information services to users with both electronic and print media. In the same vein, Pearce (2006) further described a hybrid library information environment as one where an appropriate range of heterogeneous information services are presented to the user in a consisted and integrated way via a single interface. This may include local and or remotely distributed services in print and electronic format.

Hylife (2001) was of the opinion that the hybrid library has been a continuum between the conventional traditional and the digital library divide where electronic and paper-based information resources are used alongside each other. Hylife further remarks that the hybrid library is one where "new" electronic information resources and the "traditional" hardcopy resources co-exist and are brought together in an integrated information services, accessed via electronic gateway and available both on-site and remotely via the internet or local computer networks. The philosophical assumption underlying the establishment of hybrid libraries is that libraries are mainly

intended to organize resources for the purpose of easy access and satisfaction of the users.

Today, the world is canvassing seriously towards open access to information generation and use. Nevertheless, no library, even individuals can give what they do not have. Therefore, what do advances in hybrid library development mean to librarians? What are the needs for hybrid libraries in Nigeria? And how can hybrid libraries be appropriately managed to enhance user satisfaction and encourage global access to information among library managers? These and other probing questions will be addressed in this paper.

Need For Hybrid Libraries

The emergence of information resources in electronic format in the late 1980s, and the advent and pervasive dominance of the internet in the 1990s has served to accelerate a new and welcome emphasis on giving prominence to the wants of library users, since students, academics and businessmen generally are beginning to adopt very different forms of information-seeking behavior. The alternative therefore, remains the provision of different resources in all available formats to serve the users in one situated place. Carr, (2001) posits that while, some librarians saw the development of global electronic access to information as a threat to the very future of the physical library, others saw it as an opportunity to rethink, and to refashion their library's services according to what users needed in what had become a "fast-changing" information environment.

Today, especially in the developing world such as Nigeria, catalogue has been a sine-qua-non for most libraries. However, the old, traditional, manual catalogue has been and remained acceptable only to a dying breed of older users whose research habits had been formed in earlier days. On the other side and pathetically against those old breed is a wide range of networked electronic resources, a comprehensive local intranet, document delivery system, the portalisation of web-based resources, the population of institutional virtual learning environments, with information tailored to the needs of users, and even the digitization of materials already held locally have all brought an unimaginable changes that libraries need to attack.

In Africa, and particularly Nigeria, there is great need for libraries, no matter the type, to establish an alternative user interface by providing a hybrid set-up. In the first place, the Nigerian literacy levels are appreciating by the day and the users of the library are always out to discover new learning environments. Moreover, the need for hybrid library has become more paramount considering the existence of cyber café in all nooks and crannies, holding information that are not organized. Worse still, some of the information held in these internet cafes does not have high level quality control, thereby, making information-seekers to parade wrong information.

Apparently, the seemingly challenges associated with the management of hybrid libraries, according by Edwards (1998) is how to encourage the end user resources discovery and information use in a variety of formats and from a number of local and remote sources in a seamlessly integrated way. Therefore, since the major need for its development is the user, library managers should do well to provide a sound environment for its effective development.

Hybrid Library Development.

The hybrid library development project began in the United States of America in January, 1998 and further to the United Kingdom. It first started as e-Lib Programme which aimed at investigating the issues of digital library implementation and integration in the developed world. Dowler (2007) report that the Electronic Libraries (e-Lib) Programme which was an off-shoot of the United States Digital Libraries Initiative (USDLI) was founded and funded by the USA Federal Government under the umbrella of the National Science Foundation (NSF); the Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA); and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Though these funding agencies were mostly concerned with computer science research, the subject areas were more in e-Lib. The decision was about how best to renovate the existing practice and make it work better, perfect and efficient.

However, Sloan (2006) remarks that the e-Lib Programme has been characterized by the UK Government as "development-based" rather than research. According to him, the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) became the parent organization of e-lib in 1997 and has since then, been stimulating, and enabling the cost effective exploitation of information systems and has also provided a high quality national network infrastructure for the UK higher education and research councils communities. In effect, JISC has funded a great number of development programmes aimed at supporting universities by piloting the use of appropriate new technologies in computer and information related environments. The UK and USA e-lib programmes has given birth to the numerous existing Digital libraries around the world today and which has necessitated many libraries to either convert their holdings or integrate their earlier traditional manual systems with the new electronic digital format.

In Africa, and particularly Nigeria, the hybrid library development has been so hazy, though on-going. The initiative of the National Universities Network (NUnet), a brain child of the national Universities Commission in 1985 and which was launched in 1997 heralded the era of internet library connectivity in Nigerian University Libraries. According to Ogbonna and Nwosu (2007), the UNDPs internet initiative to Africa in 2002 provided an access to twelve countries in sub-Saharan Africa, to which Nigeria was involved. According to them, there was also a Regional Informatics Network for Africa (RINAF) established by the United Nations in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife in 2002. After these initial establishments, the University of Ibadan, University of Lagos, University of Nigeria, Nnamdi Azikiwe University and a host of other Federal and State Universities discovered the need to provide internet facilities and programmes into their library systems. It was therefore, the establishment of the internet connectivity to these libraries that provided the impetus to harmonize what existed originally with the new ones, in order to provide alternative resources for the varying categories of users.

Management of Hybrid Libraries

Hybrid libraries are more than an interface, offering integrated discovery of resources, whether they are in analog or digital format, whether they are local, national or international. Johnson (1998) pointed out that the hybrid library is seen as an environment with physical and virtual services that supports the activities of the users

at their work place from the discovery of information to the manipulation and analysis of the delivered resources. As a result, successful hybrid library implementation must involve closer integration among the stakeholders such as the library staff, computer analysts, academic staff and educational development staff.

Other management aspects of hybrid libraries that needed to be considered include the training and development of service staff in order to achieve an appropriate skill mix, support and instruction for users, team-working and the management of change. Ultimately, these issues must be addressed strategically, as the hybrid library promises to become a central element of teaching, learning and research activities. Apart from the technical challenges that hybridization may offer, there are many management and organizational issues that are faced within institutions establishing this system. One of them is user-authentication, integration, interoperability and database and digitalization management.

User-authentication has been a predominant issue in hybrid library management, since the system must store information about the users and their personal preferences as well as details of resources they have to access by virtue of their membership of a given academic community. Authentication, as defined by Lynch (2002), establishes the identity of a user within a given context, its computerized processes, authorization, and the levels of controlled access to resources for the user identity. Authentication therefore, plays a key dual role, firstly in securing personal data privacy, and secondary in controlling which resources may be used. Networked operating systems inherently, provide this degree of administrative control. However, their locus of influence is confined to the organizations that deploy them. Pitiably, problems usually inevitably arise as users attempt to move between resources where different access restrictions apply. Traditional techniques of access control employing user identifier and password combinations are becoming unsustainable due to their high administrative overhead and practical shortcomings. The “password” proliferation scenario that is familiar to librarians, information managers, IT personnel and computer users themselves are symptomatic of this problem. Of-course, these issues when properly addressed would make for a better management of hybrid library system.

Integration in hybrid library management is web-focused. The web is seen as the best environment to achieve integration of different services. As Dempsey, et al (2004) observes, the web already provides a transfer presentation layer through which many different resources can be accessed. Dempsey further remarks that naturally, the organization’s resources are usually very shallow, and so, may be unified at the presentation layer by being linked to the same web. In contrast, seamless integration can only be achieved where services can be accessed through a single user-interface and with a single authentication gateway. If this level of integration is to be achieved, various technologies and processes need to be implemented for easy and better management.

On the issue of interoperability, it can be said without equivocation that the existing hybrid libraries, both local and international, own and subscribe to a range of resources and services which are supplied in a variety of formats and media--print monographs and serials, electronic journals, abstract and indexing services on CD-

ROMs, etc. Most of these electronic resources are accessed through remote servers. However, there, is no uniform way of managing and providing integrated access to these hybrid resources. And as a result users are forced to interact with each service individually and so, waste time in repeating the same steps to search different system. One possible solution should be to ensure that all the services providers conform to one model profile. In practice, this may be perhaps, unrealistic, given the spread of services currently in existence and those that will be involved in the future.

Another major contending issue is that of database design and digitalization management. These issues can be explored through a series of pilot activities. In order to assist teaching and learning, existing retrospective resources can be digitalized and achieved and databases can be created for these resources. Course learning materials, books and journals articles can be created. The storage, organization and migration strategy can also be devised for all the files, for easy access.

Problems of Hybrid Libraries in Nigeria

Hybrid library has apparently created changes in the over all process of information management, ranging from selection, acquisition, organization and preservation to availability and access. It has created an easy gateway, to information procurement and dissemination. In developed nations of the world, it has created a shift from the conventional traditional set-up to an electronic mix of known and reliable resources. This basic implication is that the physical library is no longer the only domain for information storage and access.

According to Okeke (2007), it is often easier to be pessimistic about the digital impact on the library management in developing countries. Poorly developed power system and poor telecommunications infrastructure, provide fuel for the fire of this pessimism. In the same vein, Omekwu (2004) posits that it is misleading to assume that the introduction of computer-based library and information system provides perfect and trouble- free information management possibilities. In Nigeria, for instance, the potential areas of problems include the hardware/software issues, inadequate support staff, such as programmers, software analysts and computer engineers. Other problem areas include poor bandwidth for reasonable coverage, copyright issues, user authentication and lack of computer education.

On the over-all analysis, today's hybrid library set-up are represented by a patch work of technologies, each having different strengths and none completely adequate. It is therefore, envisaged that with the nation's continued growth and investment in technologies, including her partnership with other developed countries, there is hope of light in the tunnel. That in the very near future Nigerian academic and even public libraries will be turned into hybrid ones.

Conclusion

The hybrid libraries are designed to use a range of technologies from different sources to explore integrated systems and services in both electronic and print environments. This means bringing the two worlds of librarianship in one place. Of-course, it further connotes that the Nigerian libraries are eagerly embracing the digital world. They are acquiring access to great quantities of electronic resources around the world, thereby

creating access to global knowledge in libraries. Though the issue of hybrid library development is still very new in Nigeria many academic libraries, especially at the university levels are seen to have adopted it.

Nevertheless, there are still mounting problems, problems associated with our environment, but hope is very high that in the very near future, Nigeria will join the committee of Nations to fully enjoy and contribute their quota on the global access to knowledge through hybrid library development.

REFERENCES

[1] Carr, M.O. (2001). Scholars' information requirements in a digital age: consultation draft.*: http://www.ahds.ac.uk/public/uneeds/uno.htul.* Retrieved on 6th June, 2010.

[2] Dempsey, Lorcan et al (2004). Managing access to a distributed library resources: report of the fifth models workshop. *Program,* 32 (3), 273- 274

[3] Dowler, Lawrence (2007). *Gateways to knowledge: the role of academic libraries in teaching, learning and research*. Massachusets: MIT Press.

[4] Edwards, Kein (1998). A distributed national electronic resource?: report of the fifth models workshop. *The Electronic Library*,16(4), 231-137.

[5] Hylife, D. (2001). Developing Digital Library. *http://www.unn.ac.uk/xcu2/hylife.Ret*. 19/07/10.

[6] Johnson, M.(1998). User authentication and authorization in the education sector in UK. *http://www.attens.uk.ac/ifo/authentication.html.*

[7] Lynch, Clifford (2002). The changing role in a Networked Information, Environment. *Library Hi Tech,* 15(1-2), 30.

[8] Ogbonna, Andrew & Nwosu Chukwuma 92007). Library of Congress Action Plan on Bibliographic Control of Web Resources: the Nigerian University Library experience. *Journal of Theoretical and Empirical Studies in Education,* 1(2) 140-146.

[9] Omekwu, C.O. (2004) information Technology Revolution in Libraries and Cultural Values: issues, impacts and inevitable challenges for Africa. 2003 World Librarian and Information Conference. Berlin, Germany, 1-10 Aug; 2004.

[10] Okeke Ifeka (2007). Global Initiatives and Dynamics of Library Digitization, with Special Focus on Nigeria. *Unizik Journal of Research in Library and Information Science,* 1(1), 33-43.

[11] Pearce, J. 92006). The Challenges of Integrated Access: the hybrid library system of the future: *URL:http://www.vala.org.au/pea cat.*

[12] Rushbridge, Chris (1998). Towards the Hybrid Library. D-Lib Magazine, July/August.URL: *http://www.dlib.org/dlib/july98/rushbridge*

[13] Sloan, Bernard. (2006). Service Perspectives for the Digital Library: remote reference services at University of Ulinois at Urbana Champaign. *Library Trends,* 47(2).

[14] Tiwari, P. (2007). *Digital Library*. New Delhi: APH Pub. Corporation.