

RETHINKING FEE-BASED LIBRARY SERVICES FOR WEALTH CREATION IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to evoke the idea of fee-based university libraries services, and to examine areas of library services that could be employed for wealth creation in Nigeria, in the 21st century. The exploratory study was adopted for the study. The strategies for rethinking fee-based university library services for wealth creation revealed in the study includes reprographic services; bindery services, digital library services, charging and discharging of library materials, in terms of overdue fine. Challenges include financial limitations or poor funding, whether deliberate or accidental, it tends to reduce the ability of the university library to fully achieve their primary goal of meeting the information needs of the community it serves. As recommendations, university libraries and librarians should be equipped with the necessary skills and facilities tailored towards rethinking fee-based library services for income generation. Finally, boosting the library image to world class standard is of paramount importance, in this 21st century. Library services to patrons should be provided by the university libraries, especially the internet and internet of things, in line with the global best practices.

Keywords: *Fee-based Library Services, Libraries, Librarians, University Libraries and Wealth Creation.,*

Introduction

The University library as part of type of libraries are established in higher institutions of learning such as the university, polytechnics, colleges of Education for teaching, learning and research. However, it is referred to as academic library in other higher institutions of learning other than a university. The university library according to Klain-Gabby and Smith, (2018) is that integral part of the university community that profoundly reflects the vision and mission of the university. Its service delivery should therefore synchronize with the current change in the ways teaching, learning, and research have been handled, and the ways in which library services are rendered. The objectives of the university libraries are in line with the reason for the establishment of the university as stated by Jubb and Green, (2017) in Ozioko 2022). The university library is

established for the following reasons: establishing information centre and rendering services and advice to users; disseminating knowledge through teaching, learning, research, publication and extension programmes; conservation of knowledge in antiquity; adopting new technologies and helping the faculties and students to achieve highest academic honour and life-long learning.

The university libraries render several services that are user oriented. To ensure effective service delivery, the university library must bound to meet the set objectives of the university which are teaching, learning and research and also provision of information resources to its clientele. According to Harrison and Beeham (2015) in Ozioko 2022) the following are roles of the university library: to serve the information needs of the academic community, to provide reference materials at the appropriate levels as well as study areas for users, to provide active information service that may extend beyond the institution to local industry and commerce. The roles of the university library help to enhance the university education as university education system assume the centre stage in the national development. This is because the university education, helps in training any country's high-level manpower, and invariably a potent driver to its economic, political and social development. All these cannot be achieved without the services of the university library.

The importance of university library services is anchored on the fact that university libraries play an essential role in local communities, by providing access to information services and resources, supporting literacy and education, and promoting lifelong learning and training. They also serve as a community literacy learning space, Maker space, and community gathering space, university libraries are free, and they offer a variety of resources that are important to research, learning, and scholarship. However, the researchers think that some of these university library services should be fee-based to enhance the sustainability of university libraries and

wealth creation. Fee-based library services refer to services and products rendered by libraries to their clientele in exchange for financial benefits. Webb (2003) states that fee-based services are a range of information services provided on demand and in return for payment. Libraries have traditionally been custodians of information which is provided free of charge to users. However, the recent decline in funds for libraries and the changes in the concept of information from a free resource to a marketable resource in the information age have necessitated the re-evaluation of fee-based services in libraries. The world is known for constant change, and we all need to embrace change or be left out, in the global village, and this is what necessitated the study.

The study therefore seeks to: define the library services in university libraries, determine the fee-based university library services; determine the benefits of fee-based university library services to university libraries; determine the challenges of fee-based university library services, and proffer strategies to enhance the fee-based services in university libraries.

The Notion of Fee-based University Library Services

Information is a valuable commodity that could be given in exchange for money, and it is worthy of note that human beings do not often attach importance to any free or cheap commodity. This is one of the reasons for considering provision of information materials and other services by libraries for a fee. Reitz (2021) defines fee-based services as information services provided by a library or information brokers in exchange for monetary payment. Fee-based services are recognized as alternative funding sources for university libraries. Fee-based services charge fines for late returns of borrowed materials, document delivery, journal article delivery, interlibrary loan, health information services, patents, trademarks, computer searches, research services customer service skills, knowledge of collections and information sources, and interpersonal and communication skills among others.

Fee-based library services help to transform your library services with the latest technological devices. There is an increased ability to serve a larger clientele and it is a source of income for the library and the information broker. Fee-based library services enable all other employers to focus on serving primary users, as well as releasing staff from the strain of responding to outside user groups at the same time. Fee-based services were established in North American research libraries as early as 1955 and increased in number through the 1990s. Although libraries have traditionally provided free access to information and services, the implementation of fee-based models in academic libraries has primarily been driven by demands for specialized services, the need for coordinated library services to accommodate external users, and libraries' capacity to use these models to generate revenue.

It is important to remember that the library is not just a mere building but includes the collection of information resources made accessible to a defined community of users for reading, research, or borrowing purposes. It may be a physical building, a virtual space, or a room that provides physical and digital access to information materials. As earlier mentioned, these library services expected of the federal university libraries are loan (book), reference/referral, information packaging and repackaging, current awareness, indexing and abstracting, documentation, bindery, and reprographics, inter-library loan, document delivery, literature search, scholarly database search, and retrieval, book reservation, library orientation, and Internet services, among other services (Okiy, 2015; Ifidon, 2012; Ilo, Idaerefama & Fufuri, 2016; Chukwueke, Onuoha & Nnadozie, 2018). Since in recent times, University libraries are underfunded and needs fund to keep afloat in their service delivery, these services listed above could be commercialized at minimal cost levels to raise fund for the running of University

Library Services. Nonetheless, apart from the general routine services provided by the library to its users, there exist other arrays of specialized services through which the library can raise funds (Okoye, 2015). Internet browsing services, repackaging of information, sales of old stocks/weeded materials, hiring of library space, reprographic services (photocopying, printing, and translational services), consultancy, registration and clearance of users, selective dissemination of information, current awareness services, document delivery, bindery services, literature search, indexing and abstracting services and hiring services amongst other services provides avenues for this fundraising. The emergence of ICT, according to Ilo, Idaerfama, and Fufuri (2016) has also created an avenue through which funds can be raised in university libraries. As they specifically noted, “one of such avenues is the Internet browsing services and digitization which is commercialized when provided out the library. They were of the view that the university library management can equip its ICT unit with Internet facilities and charge a token from users who visit the unit to have access to online information resources and services. On repackaging of information as a fee-based service, Oguntuase and Falaiye (2020) opine that information repackaging, which involves expert evaluation, careful/systematic retrieval, and analysis of information to ensure accuracy and currency as well as interpreting it to serve a particular user group, can be marketed by university libraries. The library can do this by selecting and organizing information contents to satisfy the information needs of a selected group of users. The University libraries provide a variety of library and information services to satisfy different information needs such as:

Reference Service:- Reference services help users to locate and obtain specific piece of information from information sources such as reference books, catalogues, directories, files, abstracting and indexing periodicals, databases (online and CD-ROM), and other reference

materials. Library personnel may either help users in searching (direct search) or do the search for users (delegated search) in online or offline mode. Reference service is subjective because of it is based on personalized service.

Referral Service: - Referral services aim to refer users to sources of information such as secondary publications, information units, professional organizations, research institutions, and specialists/experts. Such services do not provide the documents or information required by the user for his/her query but give direction on how and where to get the required information.

Current Awareness Service (CAS): - CAS satisfies users' current approach to information and thereby keeps them up to date in the field of their work. The important characteristics of CAS is that it is a technique of communicating current information to users.

Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) Service:- SDI is a special type of current awareness service. It provides each user with the references of documents to their predefined areas of interest, selected from documents published recently or received during a particular period. In the 1950s, H. P. Luhn first coined the concept of SDI as a computer-mediated information service.

Literature Search Service: - It is an extension of a reference service. This service includes the following steps: Analysis of the search parameters of a query; Formulation of a suitable strategy for searching different information sources; Identification and choosing of most appropriate sources to be searched and the order of searching them as well as understanding of retrieval features of online databases and CD-ROM.

Document Delivery Service (DDS) Document delivery is a key element in access to information. Unless the documents required by the user are available to him/her, all the other services are of no use. DDS is a complex process and is concerned with the supply of documents

to users on demand in the required format. DDS is the last point in this chain of information services that locate the required document and supplies it to users in the required format. Electronic DDS supports the delivery of documents in digitized form at anytime from anywhere.

Translation Service: - In the area of science and technology, about half of the world's literature is published in languages other than English. Access to non-English literature by people who understand English is possible through translations. Translation services thus help in the global access to information. In India, DESIDOC, NISCAIR, IASLIC, ONGC, BARC, BHEL, DRDO laboratories, and several wings of the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Science and Technology provides translation facilities.

Web-OPAC Service: - Web-OPACs are the next generation of OPACs. Web-enabled OPACs allow users to search library catalogues and access other services from anywhere at any time. It allows users to search for the bibliographic records contained within a library's collections. It helps users find out the necessary information and removes the time barriers. The users access the Web OPAC service with a standard web browser connected to a client machine because the mechanism does not require the installation of any additional client-side software (Bhatnagar & Anjana, 2021).

Article Indexing Service: - Modern automation packages also provide the facility to create and index a database of articles or papers published in the journals subscribed by the library. The abstracts of papers/articles may also be included in the database. Such a database allows specific and combined searching by author, title, keywords, etc., and produces several user-specific services like a table of contents services, a compilation of subject bibliographies, and generation of CAS, SDI, etc. in online and offline modes.

Lending Service: - Lending service provides a facility to allow books and other library materials to be read elsewhere by users. This service increases the use of library collections. Computerized lending includes the following: value-added user services, Quick issue, return and renewal of books and other library materials. Automatic display of document availability and possible date of availability, display or printing of documents borrowed by a member; Quick generation of fine receipts; Issue of member ID card with photograph; Membership history in the form of list of documents issued and returned by a member during his/her membership tenure; E-mail reminders for overdue books; Reservation of document by users through OPAC/Web-OPAC, if it is on loan; Interlibrary loan (ILL) services.

Union Catalogue and Inter-Library Loan Service: - Union catalogue is a collection of bibliographical details of resources belonging to a group of libraries. No library in the world can purchase all the needed resources. Union catalog helps the user of one library to check the availability of required documents in other libraries, if not available in the stock of the local library. A union catalogue is the result of cooperative processing works of member libraries of a resource-sharing network or consortium. These are available in the form of CD-ROM databases or online databases. Rowell initiated U.C. Berkeley's first program of inter-library lending in 1894, with the California State Library as a partner.

Electronic Document Delivery Service: - Document delivery has always been at the heart of services offered by libraries. Due to the digitization of documents; it is possible to make them more efficient through the introduction of electronic document delivery. The document delivery service is an integration of document discovery, the location of a supplier, request, and delivery. It takes many forms, deals with a variety of formats, and involves many intermediaries. The

different types of document delivery services include Library networks and consortia-based services; CD-ROM-based services; supplier and agent base services.

Outreach Services: - Outreach services aim to automate the processes required to deliver materials to the home-bound and other patrons who cannot physically enter the library. Automated library systems also offer community information services in the form of a list of names and addresses of local organizations or persons, local leisure facilities, etc. Outreach services allow the creation of user interest profiles, reading histories, easy selection, delivery, and return of items. Access to outreach services and community information services is often integrated with OPAC.

ICT Base Library Services: - Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has made a significant impact on all spheres of human life. For the libraries, ICT has tremendously changed the Management of Resources or House Keeping Operations as well as the way services are delivered. IT application tools and Integrated Library Management Systems are largely used in housekeeping operations, like acquisition, cataloguing, circulation control, serials control, etc. In the library, the Internet has been used extensively as a resource as well as a tool to deliver Library and Information Services. (Chauhan, Budhdhi & Prakash, 2014).

Reprography Services: - Reprography means a reproduction of documents by photography or xerography. Reprography service is useful for information dissemination. This service is provided with charges. Today, reprography plays a very important role in the transmission of knowledge in library resources and services. Introducing Reprographic services helps to preserve the document from stealing or mishandling.

Benefits of Fee-based University Library Services

University libraries now look elsewhere for additional sources of funding for their numerous engagements. In this era of shrinking budgets due to cuts in subventions from central governments, as well as from their immediate heads of institutions, it has become necessary for academic libraries to find additional sources of funding. Anyaoku (2009) believes that fee-based services have been advocated and accepted as the panacea to the economic depression in libraries. Hence, some libraries have introduced different courses of action to promote income generation from library patrons. Not minding the massive cry of most university libraries concerning poor funding as well as the massive campaign by scholars, In the opinion of Osei-Boadu and Ahenkorah-Marfo (2018) in Zakari (2021) intimated that “of all the different types of libraries in Nigeria, only university libraries have a clearly defined policy on funding. However, university libraries are allocated only 10 per cent of the annual recurrent budget of their parent universities, a result of the Federal Government and Academic Staff Union of Universities agreement of 1992.

Fee-based library services give an increased ability to serve larger clientele satisfactorily, and this is made possible with resource sharing. Fee-based services enable libraries to offer services to library users and others that would not otherwise have been able to provide and brings in a useful amount of extra income that is plowed back into library service aimed at satisfying users. The demand for fee-based services is a measure of the necessity of library services. This will help the management to plan for future needs. When fees are charged, services are managed more efficiently. Besides, it makes room for competition which in turn promotes efficiency. Despite contending arguments about the rationale and after-effect of imposing fees on library services, the inherent benefits of these fee-based services to the library give it an ample advantage.

These advantages as opined by Mahmood and Haider (2015) include meeting the increasing needs of users, effective and efficient utilization of library resources and services, maintenance and upgrade of library facilities and resources, and creation of new ideas. According to Mahmood and Haider (2015), fee-based library services limit and prevent wastage and reduce the burden on the use of library resources and services. Stating further, the authors assert that people are already used to paying for such services at parks, and museums etc., how much more information? People tend to value what they pay for and as such, it improves the value of the resources or services so provided or rendered. This becomes even more in tune with the fact that the service given will be of immense benefit to the user.

Information seeking will hence be a matter of necessity as against taking a stroll in the library. The basis of this argument is that fee-based services reduce abuse and enhance the effective and efficient use and management of resources and services. Furthermore, Anyaoku (2012) believes that the more funds available to the library, the better its ability to improve its services and facilities. Anyaoku (2012) has it that fee-based services strengthen the opportunities for research and technical assistance rendered. In addition, it enhances access to electronic and print materials/collections, while also creating avenues for open access and availability. Doubtless, the increase in the running costs of libraries has made user fees a necessity, with fees, new services can be introduced. People already pay user fees for several public services (e.g., parks, museums, bridges, highways) although they are supported by taxes. It also strengthens research opportunities and pays for technical assistance rendered. It enhances access to both electronic and print material collections. It maintains open access and availability while charging for extraordinary and often costly services. It translates the newfound knowledge of unmet needs

into service delivery and the study will anchor on technology acceptable model, because it is information based.

Theoretical Framework: Davis (1989) Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

Information technology is dramatically affecting the way people work and learn. In studying librarians' acceptance and use of technology, the TAM is frequently cited. The technology acceptance model (TAM) was proposed by Davis (1989), he contends that many factors influence the decision of a person to accept and use new technology. The model focuses mainly on the adoption and use of technology in the workplace. It models how users accept and use new technology. The model suggests that when libraries and users are presented with new technology, several factors influence their decision about how and when they will use it. Such factors include Perceived Usefulness (PU). This was defined by Davis (1989) as the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system or structure would enhance his or her job performance. Perceived ease-of-Use (PEOU)- Davis defined this as the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free from effort (Davis, 1989).

In the context of information technologies, TAM suggests that users formulate a positive attitude towards a particular technology when they perceived that the technology is useful and easy to use, (Davis, 1989). This model reveals the factors that influence one's attitudes towards the acceptability or otherwise of a particular technology including perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. As such, it relates to the present study in the sense that if the users of the university libraries are meant to understand the benefits of using information Technology, and how user-friendly the information technology is, they will develop an interest in it and subsequently intensify efforts towards acquiring information literacy skills for effective and efficient service delivery. This theory was propounded by Davies in 1989. In this study, the

model focuses mainly on adoption and use of technology in the workplace. Technology acceptance model is linked to the study, because of the growing rapidly use of information and communication technology gadgets for both academic and non-academic purposes, for the library users. The theory asserts the need for university library professionals to embrace the technology to satisfy the users of the university library and create access to online resources. (Zamani-Maindashti, Mermarbashi and Khalighzadeh, 2013). In this study, it is important to suggest that students and library professionals, researchers, and library users should be satisfied in the university library services. Technology acceptance Model (TAM), posits, that the theory is anchored on the usefulness of the technology, and its important in serving the needs of library users, by librarians.

Challenges of Fee-Based University Library Services in the University Libraries

There are barriers to providing information services to users in libraries such as poor user education, lack of professional and non-professional staff, policy matters, lack of autonomy for the library professionals, etc. It is very difficult to make available all the desired documents to users at the user's demand while purchasing new books, periodicals, and other print and non-print information. Users who are not close by are not reached. Remote access to information about a collection depends on the degree to which a library has automated its catalogue. Computerized catalogues are the norms and retrospective conversion that make the entire collection available and make access relatively easy. The problem is that computerization of library catalogues is not widespread, and access is relatively difficult.

Furthermore, the paradigm shift to electronic information resources has made library patrons seek information in different formats, which requires additional costs to deliver them

(Ishola, 2014). As such, the multi-diverse needs of library users, coupled with minimal funds at the disposal of these libraries, necessitates devising alternative means to generate revenue to meet such increasing needs of its users, (Yetunde, 2018). Ishiola's (2014) study on funding problems in Nigerian university libraries: fee-based library and information services to the Rescue, focused on pricing policy, and revealed that university administration normally releases funds through small quota to libraries and that students pay to access and use the library services in the following areas: registration fees, inter-library loan services, online services, Internet connectivity, CD-ROM services, reprographic services, etc. Furthermore, Igbokwe, Ezeji, and Obidike's (2010) study on problems militating against the marketing of library services in selected Nigerian libraries revealed that the major fee-based services were binding and photocopying while the free services were a compilation of bibliography and retrospective services which revealed a narrow view of the fee-based services as already outlined This is because fee-based services not only ensure additional income generation but go further to indirectly improve the services of the library as well as increase its ability to procure the relevant facilities and in so doing improve users' satisfaction (Nnadozie, 2013; Jenda, 2010, Obodoeze, 2017; Ward, Fong & Camille, 2022).

Hence, some of these libraries in Nigeria have not delved into the concept of fee-based services (Olurotimi, 2014). Nwosu (as cited in Ishola, 2014) thinks that even though libraries have traditionally been custodians of information that are provided free of charge to users, the recent decline and underfunding of libraries and the change in the concept of information from a free resource to a marketable resource in the information age have necessitated the revaluation of free services in libraries. Studies and investigations have shown that most university libraries in

Nigeria still operate within the range of charging fees for users' registration, levies for over-due fines, charges for photocopying, and charges for database searching (Obodoeze, 2017).

Despite the limitation in library services being charged, Ifidon, in Anyaoku (2012) states that the existing fee-based library and information services in Nigerian libraries, especially, the federal university libraries are not properly managed. Stating further, Ifidon explains that the library staff offers fee-based services routinely like every other library service, and the records of the transactions are not well maintained either in such a way as to assist management in effective decision-making processes or make for adequate funding of these libraries. Nonetheless, it is not even easy for Nigerian federal university libraries to embark on fee-based services. This is because the dwindling finances/financial crisis has ultimately led to the inability of the university libraries to sustain their services and even institute new programmes like e-current awareness services, e-SDI services, mobile phone services, and other special services in their libraries. The issue of poor planning and pricing policy is another challenge (Anyaoku, 2012). This, therefore, calls for adequate planning from the onset of fee-based services in the libraries, especially university libraries for wealth creation.

Strategies to Enhancing the University Fee Based Library Services for Wealth Creation

University libraries have a mandate to fulfill in their parent institutions. In order that they do not renege on this mandate, they can also make industry the target for sale of information products. Research departments of industries or their information centers can rely on university libraries for information on research and new developments in their areas of interest. Industry in turn could give back in support to the library's activities. This support or returns can either be in cash or in kind.

Reports show that fee-based services in libraries in Nigeria have not gone beyond levying charges for photocopying, database searching, and overdue fine (Edoka 1991, Obodoeze 2017). Ifidion (2015) reports that the existing fee-based library and information services in Nigeria are not well and properly managed. The library staff offers fee-based services routinely like any other ordinary library services and the records of the transactions are not well maintained either in such a way to assist management in their decision-making process. Where fees are charged, there are no planning elements to make it contribute meaningfully to library development. Apart from inadequate planning, the poor state of libraries is a major factor contending against fee-based services in Nigeria. There is a general lack of basic structures to support fee-based services like technology tools, internet connectivity, and electricity supply. University libraries have provided fee-based services for research support, book loans, photocopying, and document delivery for non-primary user groups of their institutions before the Internet age. There are also many descriptions of specialized fee-based services such as patent and commercial database searching for external communities, such as business firms, law firms, and independent researchers. When access to the Internet became more readily available, demand declined for fee-based services, and recent searches of the literature resulted in only a handful of articles about fee-based library services since the 1960s. These included services offered to non-university clientele, university clientele, and university departments, highlighting library resources and librarians' expertise.

Library units responsible for this should look for the research interests or profiles of researchers and entrepreneurs so they could provide quality services to them for a fee. Staff training will be crucial to the effective and efficient functioning of such units. Some level of expertise in information searching on a wide range of subjects is required. For this reason, it will

be very good to get subject-specialists to monitor the activities of these units. These subject specialists may not be people who are authorities in their disciplines but those who have studied subjects up to at least bachelor's degree.

Conclusion

Universities are the conscience of nations; They help steer the ship of society along the course of national development. The university has the primary functions of teaching, research and community services; to be able to perform these services effectively, the university libraries must be adequately funded as the university libraries are not immune to the financial woes of their parent organization. Seeking alternative funding to solve the problems of lack of funds in university libraries, is paramount, hence fee based library services have been advocated for, and could be accepted as major alternative sources of funding for university libraries, in face of multimedia library services which despite its numerous benefits have created a great financial burden to library managers as libraries have no choice than to embrace it so as to be able to provide 21st century library services to patrons.

The study recommended that libraries should continue to join in the struggle for improved funding of the university, while the Vice chancellors should respect the 10% allocation to library development and allow the librarians to spend the funds on the library development instead of undue interference. Similarly, University librarians should be bold to introduce fees-based services where required but must ensure that the right pricing policies are adopted for pricing of these fee-based library services so that the primary function of the university library will not be compromised. Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) can be done for good returns. Libraries can search and package the information needs of industry in research and innovation. The application of Information Technology should be fully explored and exploited in fee-based

library and information services. This problem can be resolved by the availability of additional sources.

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