

Document Delivery Services and Resource Sharing Preferences in Nigerian Libraries.

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Abstract

This paper assessed document delivery service and resource sharing in Nigeria libraries. The population comprised 172 participants that were inducted at 7th Conference of Certified Librarians by Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria held in Abuja, 2021. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire. Research questions were answered using frequency, bar charts, percentages and mean. The major findings revealed different document delivery services offered by the respondents in their libraries, such as electronic document delivery and paper. The Finding revealed that electronic document delivery service were more preferable over paper. The results further revealed that librarians are facing numerous challenges towards document delivery service and resources sharing activities such as limited budget, copyright law, economic barrier, network barrier sociological barrier, and technology among others. The study recommended that libraries stakeholders, Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria, National Library of Nigeria, Nigeria Library Association, parent institutions and government should give more support to resources sharing in the libraries, especially in this era of information communication technology for quality service delivery.

Keywords: Document delivery services; Resource sharing; Libraries in Nigeria.

Introduction

Document delivery is a service where a patron of one library can send journal articles and other copies of items that are owned by another library. Similarly Document Delivery Services (DDS) provide individual customers and users with copies of documents (mainly articles published in scientific journals) on demand. Document delivery is offered by a wide variety of service providers: libraries (public, private, research/special, national and academic library), scientific institutions and

laboratories, commercial document suppliers, host organisations, publishers, database publishers, subscription agents etc.

In Nigeria, the history of resource sharing started in 1963 at the “National Library of Nigeria” (Abubakar, 2007). Its emergence was linked to the creation of “National Union Catalogue” for all the resources held in Nigerian libraries. This is likened to the history of resource sharing in the United States. Each of the 85 participating libraries sent a copy of their main entry catalogue cards to the National Library of Nigeria. Consecutively, another historical emergence on resource sharing covering serials/periodicals was also initiated (Abubakar, 2007). Thus serials/periodical resources became part of the National Union Catalogue. These were all in print format. The deposition of catalogue cards was the main form of resource sharing until 1977 when inter-library loan of books or resources were initiated (Abubakar, 2007). This initiation was pursuant to the recommendation by the “Interlibrary Lending Committee” (held at Ife) that a “Bibliographic Centre” be formed. Later in 1980, a move for a cooperative acquisition amongst libraries was initiated; however, this was not expensive as it stopped at the initialization stage. This shows that resource sharing is not alien to Nigeria and is assumed to be the order of the day; but this is yet to be explored. However, there are issues within the Nigerian educational system which could have awoken collaborative sharing of resources among libraries in Nigeria which include issues like inadequate funding of Nigerian Universities(Komolafe-Opadeji,2011), lack of adequate human resources or expertise

and the lack of quality resources (Ali and Owoeye,2010). Resource sharing is ingrained in many libraries worldwide (PARMA University, 2004).

Therefore, the term resources sharing describes a range of a collaborative activities among libraries to collectively develop and sharing information resources so as to optimise user's satisfaction and reduce collection development cost. In addition, Illinois' Administrative Code defines resources sharing as the process of making collections of one library available to patrons of another library efficient and effectively (Robinson, 2019). Factually, resource sharing is not a new phenomenon universal, only that it has not recorded so much achievement story. Meanwhile, developing a resource-sharing network is challenging, but librarians consider it as very important. The current resource sharing activities are rather at a minimal level, as all local libraries do not actively participate. Similarly, Aina (2001) also observed that many of the university library cooperation failed due to adoption of wrong strategies. Efforts to share information in the past have not been successful in many libraries and university libraries in Nigeria. Therefore, the concern of this paper is to assess documents delivery services and resources sharing among libraries in Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What types of documents delivery service do you offer?
2. What types of document delivery service do you prefer?
3. What are the reasons for the preference?
4. What are the challenges associated with document delivery service and resource sharing in Nigeria Libraries?

Review of Related Literature

Technological innovations have created an environment where students can take advantage of library resources through document delivery services without ever stepping inside the library doors. In addition, technology has also produced an environment where the availability of online resources has reduced the need for document delivery services. Turner (2013) in his study revealed that the role of consortium arrangements in effective resource acquisition among university libraries is to share physical resources amongst consortium members as access to resource is now considered more important than collection building. The advent of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has changed the sophistication and pattern of information needs of users. Individual libraries also experienced decreases in the number of document delivery requests and interlibrary loan statistics after the introduction of electronic journals. The demand for document delivery requests in the University of Glasgow Libraries declined nearly 80% between 1998/99 and 2001/02 (Kidd, 2003). Some 22% of this decline was directly attributed to the Elsevier journal titles.

Meanwhile, literatures analysed has not shown any genuine practice of resource sharing among libraries in Nigeria. This lack has often been linked to poor funding of Nigerian libraries and lack of platforms for effective practice. In Komolafe-Opadeji (2011), lack of adequate resources to purchase digital equipment was seen as a constraint; however academic libraries which have ICT (information and Communication Technology) equipment were found not practising resource

sharing (Abubakar, 2007). This then becomes a problem which is assumed to be ingrained in Nigerian library system as Ejedafiru's (2010) findings show that Nigerian libraries have been making efforts at resource sharing which efforts have not been yielding results. However, the efforts being made were not expatiated on; though his findings show that modern technologies needed for collaboration were lacking in some libraries studied. Findings further showed that librarians who are to manage collaborative sharing of resources lack ICT skills. According to Judy and Ojiambo (2015) pointed out that duplication of resources and services was also caused by low levels of library automation. This resulted in many librarians not knowing what their counterparts in other libraries owned. Automation was necessary because most information resources were in print format and their catalogues were not visible. However, this is gradually changing and many university libraries are now automating and putting their catalogues on the web. Additionally, some libraries did not have a union catalogue; a situation that made information resources discovery very difficult. Other reasons given include lack of trust among libraries and the fact that interlibrary loan, in most cases, was done on 'gentleman understanding'.

Zachary, Zulu (2015) in his study revealed that though some libraries engaged in some form of resource sharing activities the state of resource sharing between libraries was unsatisfactory due to the following factors inadequate funding, lack of a unified national union and institutional framework to promote resource sharing among libraries. The study findings further revealed that libraries would like to share resources within networks in which they had the same preferences. In addition,

Babatunde, Alhassan and Babalola (2020) in their study effective resource sharing services in university libraries in North Central Nigeria. Their study revealed that e-books, e-journals, e-magazines, e-newspapers, human resources, e-theses and e-dissertations are the resources shared among university libraries, resource sharing affects the library's resource acquisition such as the library possessing the ability to subscribe to many databases, ability to access electronic journals which will eliminate demand for large library space and shelving cost, ability to able to exchange professional ideas with other libraries, among others.

Similarly, Ogunrewo, Zubairu and Peter (2015) carried out an investigation on information resource sharing among selected academic libraries in South-West Nigeria. The selected academic libraries are those of Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Osun State, Federal University of Technology Akure, Ondo State and Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State. The researchers discovered that resource sharing is very important for the survival of library, computerised information resources are mostly used in resource sharing and resource sharing will not affect the confidentiality of the library. Usman and Adam (2013), found out that lack of finance, lack of well-developed Information Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure; lack of requisite skills in Information and Communication Technology (ICT); faculty formation strategies; unstable power supply and low level conversion of local content are major barriers towards effective resource sharing services in university libraries.

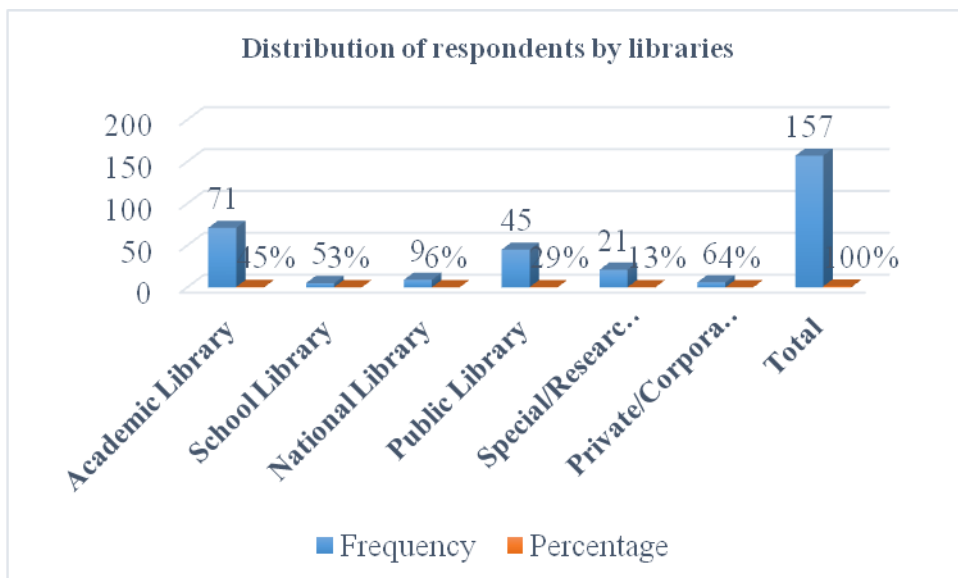
Research Method

This study was carried out using a social survey method. The research instrument adopted for the study was questionnaire. It was validated using expert opinion. The reliability of the instrument was tested using test-retest method. Twenty five questionnaires were administered to librarians in Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria. The completed questionnaires were returned and re-administered to the same set of librarians, and the responses were the same with the previous ones. The population of the study was 172 (7th Conference of Certified Librarians) from various libraries and institutions across Nigeria by the Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) held in Abuja on the 11th – 16th October, 2021. While considering the manageable number of the subjects of this study; the researcher used the whole population. Census sampling was used to select the librarians involved in the survey.

The questionnaire was administered to one out of every three librarians being inducted on the day. A total of 172 questionnaires were distributed to librarians and 157, representing 91% response rate, were completed and returned. Results were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and are presented using descriptive statistical tools such as, bar chart, percentages and frequency distribution.

Results

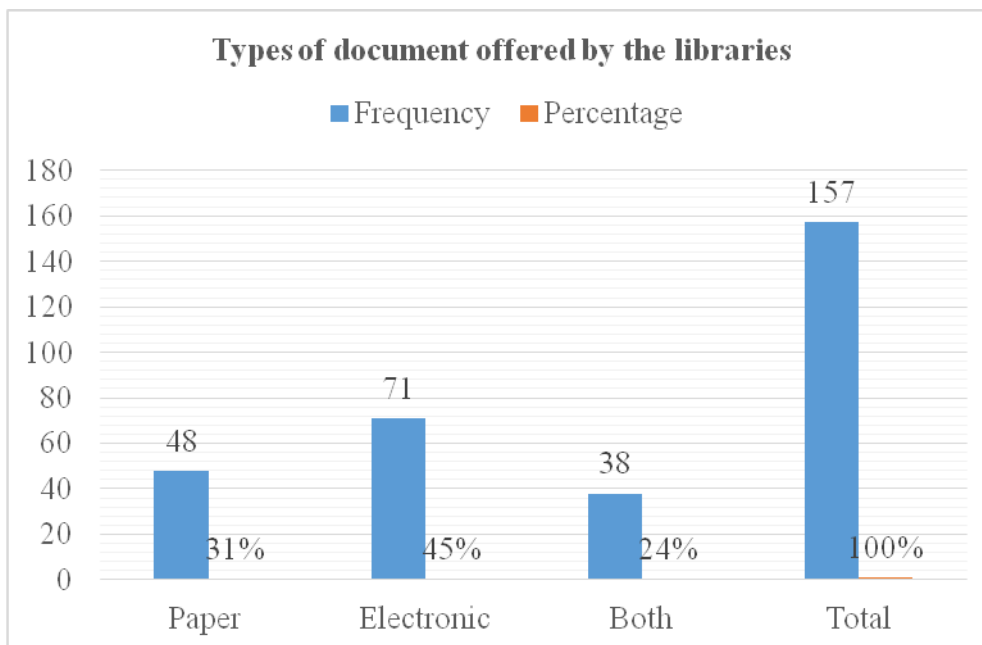
Fig 1: Distribution of respondent by library



Respondents in the survey cut across the different types of libraries that are available in Nigeria. Majority 45% of the respondents were from academic libraries while other categories were equally represented. This includes public libraries 29%, special/research libraries 13%. National library 6%, private/corporate libraries 4%, and school libraries 3%..

Research Question 1: Types of document offered by the libraries

Fig 2: Types of document offered by the libraries



As witnessed from figure 2, 45% offered electronic document, 31% paper document and 24% were offered both services in the library.

Research Question 2: Types of documents preferred

Fig 3: Types of documents preferred

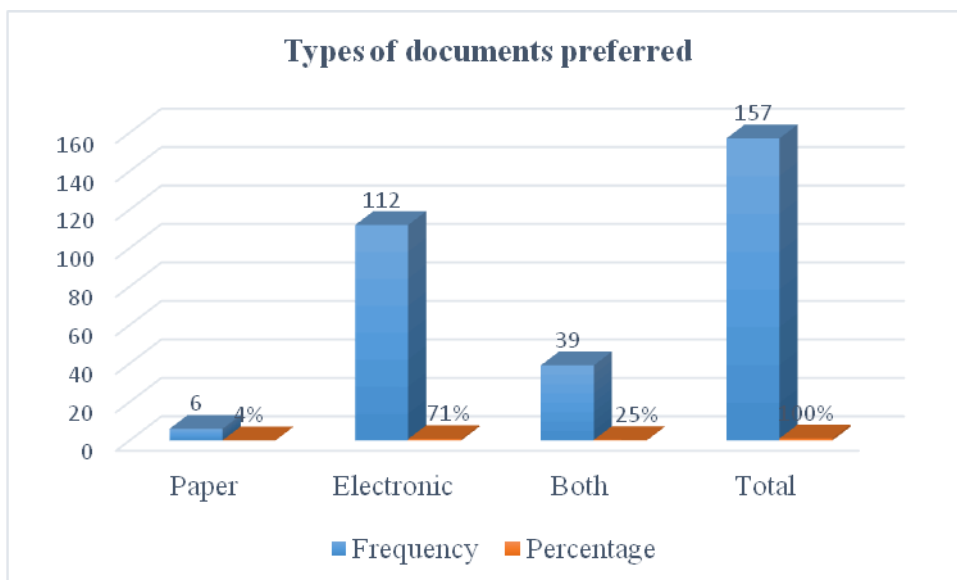
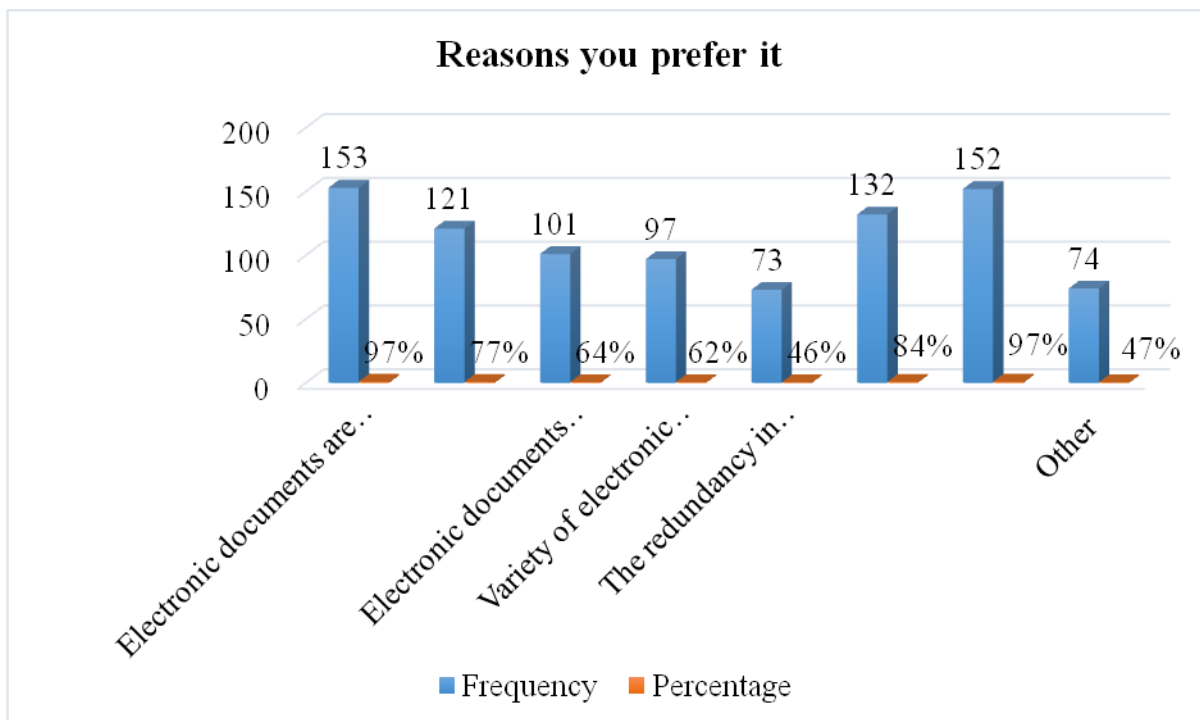


Figure 3, shows types of documents preferring by the respondents. 71% electronic document, 25% both and 4% paper.

Research Question 3: Reasons you prefer it

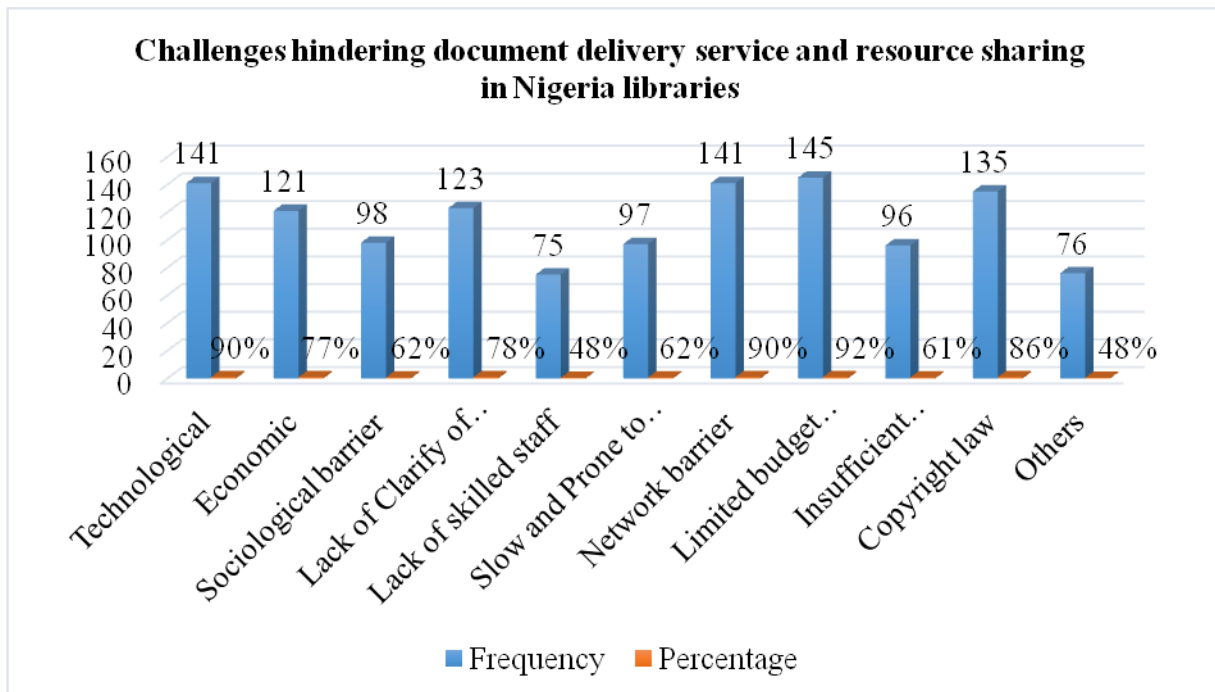
Fig 4: Reasons for prefer it?



As witnessed from figure 4 above, majority 97% emphasised that electronic documents change faster, more frequently and easier than paper documents and electronic documents are more efficient than paper documents whereas 84% proposed that electronic documents are more persistent and more difficult to destroy than paper documents while 77% recommended that electronic documents last longer than paper documents whereas 64% suggested that electronic documents contains attributes lacking in paper documents while 62% of the participants suggested that variety of electronic documents is larger than paper documents.

Research Question 4: Challenges facing document delivery services in Nigeria libraries.

Fig 5: Challenges facing document delivery services in Nigeria libraries.



A numbers of challenges were identified, these includes limited budget allocation by parent institutions 92%; technology and network barrier 90%; copyright law 86%; lack of clarify of existing rules 78%; economic barrier 77%; sociological barrier /slow and prone to errors 62%; insufficient information resources to shared 61%; lack of skilled staff and other 48%..

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that majority of the participants were offered electronic document and paper document services in the libraries whereas electronic document service is more preferable over the paper document delivery services by the

respondents. The reasons were that electronic documents change faster, more frequently and easier than paper documents and electronic documents are more efficient than paper documents, electronic documents are more persistent and more difficult to destroy than paper documents, electronic documents last longer than paper documents, electronic documents contains attributes lacking in paper documents and variety of electronic documents is larger than paper documents. The finding is in support of assertion of Babatunde, Alhassan and Babalola (2020) their study revealed that library possessing the ability to subscribe to many databases, ability to access electronic journals which will eliminate demand for large library space and shelving cost, ability to able to exchange professional ideas with other libraries, among others.

The findings further revealed that librarians faced numerous challenges towards document delivery service and resources sharing activities such as limited budget allocation by parent institutions, technology, network barrier, copyright law, lack of clarify of existing rules, economic barrier; sociological barrier /slow and prone to errors, insufficient information resources to shared, lack of skilled staff and others. This findings is in consonance with that of Adam and Usman (2013) who in their study identified lack of finance, lack of well-developed information communication technology infrastructure, lack of requisite skills, unstable power supply, and low level of conversion of local content are major barriers toward resources sharing services in university libraries. In a similar study by Komolafe-Opadeji (2011), emphasized lack of adequate resources to purchase digital equipment was seen as a constraint.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

1. Stakeholders, Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria, National Library of Nigeria, Nigeria Library Association, parent institutions and government should give more support to resources sharing in the libraries.
2. The Library management, National Library of Nigeria, Nigeria Library Association and University management should create massive campaigns about the need for Librarians and other academic staff to embrace resources sharing among the academic staff. This can be done through training, campaign, conferences and seminars etc. on the need for resource sharing among libraries.
3. Technological, economic and sociological barriers should be removed for effective electronic document delivery.
4. The electronic library must be supplied with electricity that is uninterrupted. One must acknowledge that the present level of power supply in Nigeria is not satisfactory. This can however be complemented by ensuring that uninterruptible power supply units are procured, stand by generating set be provided in case of power outages.
5. More Funding should be injected to the libraries and library committee should ensure that money allocated for the library is properly utilized.

Conclusion

Many university libraries are sharing resources among themselves based on personal arrangement among their colleagues, even though there have been many efforts that have been initiated to fuel information resource sharing activities in Nigeria Libraries, these initiatives have not born much fruit in improving information resources sharing activities among libraries and university libraries in Nigeria . Even though academic libraries that supposed to take the league were left behind. Therefore, today library professionals must be proactive to new changes by maintaining the flexibility, creativity and making easy access to information to meet the increasing demands of the users at different level. Since libraries are involved in a wide range of media and the librarian is compelled to be aware of the emerging media technology for effective and efficiency service delivery.

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