

Software Selection and Deployment for Library Cooperation and Resource Sharing Among Academic Libraries in South-West Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed software selection and deployment practices for library cooperation and resource sharing among academic libraries in South-West Nigeria. The purposive sampling technique was adopted and data collection instruments were questionnaire and interview. All of the 39 universities in the South-West zone were chosen and copies of questionnaire were administered to a representative of each academic library. 37 questionnaires were received. The descriptive statistical method of analysis was used. It was discovered that there is no form of cooperation and resource sharing among the academic libraries presently. The study recommends that National Universities Commission (NUC) should make automation a requirement for all academic libraries in Nigeria and recommend particular software(s) for cooperation and resource sharing to be possible among academic libraries among others.

Keywords: Resource-sharing, library cooperation, library software packages, Nigeria, academic libraries, South-West Nigeria

1. INTRODUCTION

The current trend in information technology and its relevance to the retrieval system compels librarians everywhere in the world to move from analogue to the digital systems. This is to enhance the efficiency of information management. According to Lesk¹, digital information can be accessed rapidly around the world, copied for preservation without error, stored compactly, and searched very quickly. Also technology advancement presents the library profession a platform for easy resource sharing.

University libraries in Nigeria should develop systems that will help them link online to other institutions of interest with a view to sourcing information online or creating real time access to information that will enable the faculty and student and to have access to current and up-to-date information². In essence, they should not be bound to their local book collection, but through networks, be able to borrow books or exchange documents with other libraries³.

Chapman⁴, observed that it is no longer feasible for any institution to provide all the information needs of its users while Zhang⁵, opines that we are entering the golden age of cooperation as, (a) The technology to link libraries and to make users of one library aware of the collections

of others is available and getting better all the time; and (b) Economies are forcing libraries to cooperate.

1.1 Statement of Problem

The use of different library software at the same time or the same library software at different times which are not internet compatible is a major problem which the academic libraries are facing in Nigeria. The governing bodies NUC (National Universities Commission) and NLA (Nigerian Library Association) have no laid down rules guiding all university libraries in the acquisition of a particular or set of software(s) and as a result, every institution makes its choice of software, based on how appropriate it is in meeting the immediate need(s), (perceived usefulness) financial strength, and maintenance capability. The implication is that the most advocated resource sharing and cooperation among libraries become a great impossibility.

Also, problems regarding complexity and enormous task of digitisation, access to the internet, electricity supply, and skilled man power are major obstacles in the path of technological advancement in Nigeria and the academic libraries are not left out of this predicament. With this background that the researchers seek to investigate software adaptation

practices and their application to library cooperation and resource sharing among academic libraries in South-West Nigeria.

1.2 Library Software and Cooperation/ Resource Sharing in Nigeria

The advent of library software in Nigeria, which dates back to the 1970s, had the challenge of acquiring and maintaining software packages because of cost. Even with the variety of library software available in the market, which came either as integrated or modular package, Nigerian libraries did not adopt any until 1984 when International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) library in Ibadan replaced its card catalogue with a fully computerised integrated software called, Battlelle Automated Search Information Systems (BASIS)⁸.

Academic libraries in Nigeria didn't seem to use library software until the National Universities Commission (NUC) acquired TINLIB for only federal university libraries and UNESCO introduced CDS/ISIS. Afterwards, different software came into market resulting to lack of uniformity in the use of library software became a major problem in the academic environment militating against effective resource sharing and cooperation⁹. Zhang⁵ explained that, for any successful cooperation and resource sharing among libraries, all interested libraries must form a consortium.

Library cooperation in Nigeria has its root traced back to the National Union Catalogue (NUC) which was conceived in 1963 by the National Library of Nigeria and had 85 libraries as participants. However, the programme could not accomplish its aim because it lacked standard in the cataloguing information supplied by participating libraries⁶. Then there was the meeting of the working group on inter-library lending held at a forum of the National Library of Nigeria in 1974 at Ile-Ife and the subsequent conference on cooperation in Nigeria, held at Kaduna in 1980¹¹. The result was the NUC project which aimed at examining the possibilities of cooperative acquisition and to consider a viable framework for operating the scheme in Nigeria, this also failed⁷.

2. OBJECTIVES

- Specific objectives of the study are to:
- Determine the extent of automation in academic libraries in the South-West zone of Nigeria
 - Determine the library software(s) in use in academic libraries in the South-West zone of Nigeria
 - Determine the extent of use of the software adopted by the libraries
 - Determine the level of library consortia among academic libraries in the South-West zone of Nigeria

- Identify strategies for enhancing library automation and software adoption practices in the academic libraries

3. METHODOLOGY

The survey method of research was adopted for the study. Respondents were chosen from Universities in the South-West geopolitical zone of the country. The purposive sampling technique was adopted and data collection instruments were questionnaire and interview. In Nigeria, there is a total of 128 universities while in the South-West zone comprising of six states of the federation, there are 39 as at the time of this study. All of the 39 universities were chosen and copies of questionnaire were administered to a representative of each academic library. 37 questionnaires were retrieved and valid for the study. The descriptive statistical method of analysis was used.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Table 1 revealed that 26 (70 %) of the respondents' libraries were PAWLS (partial automation with library software) meaning that the libraries do not fully deploy their software to all automation operations,

Table 1. Extent of automation in Nigerian academic libraries and the software in use

Institutions	Extent of automation	Software in use
University of Ibadan	PAWLS	VTLS
Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye	PAWLS	Alice for Windows
Covenant University Ota	FA	MILLENIUM
University of Lagos	PAWLS	MILLENIUM
The Bells University of Technology, Ota	LOWLS	
Fountain University, Oshogbo	LOWLS	
Mcpherson University Seriki Sotayo, Ajeblo	PAWLS	Liberty3
Redeemers University	PAWLS	KOHA
Lagos State University	PAWLS	Alice for Windows
Achievers University, Owo	LOWLS	
Pan-African University, Lagos	LOWLS	
Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta	PAWLS	KOHA
Lead City University, Ibadan	PAWLS	KOHA
Wesley University of Science & Technology, Ondo	PAWLS	Liberty 3
Crawford University	PAWLS	KARLMARK
Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba	PAWLS	SLAM

Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu-Ode	LOWLS	
Adeleke University, Ede	PAWLS	KOHA
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife	PAWLS	VTLS
Ladoke Akintola University Technology, Ogbomoso	PAWLS	KOHA
BOWEN University, Oyo	PAWLS	KOHA
Crescent University, Abeokuta	LOWLS	
Federal University, Oye-Ekiti	PAWLS	KOHA
Federal University Technology, Akure	PAWLS	SLAM
Afe-Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti	PAWLS	KOHA
Caleb University, Lagos	PAWLS	KOHA
Bishop Ajayi Crowther University, Ibadan	LOWLS	
Babcock University	PAWLS	KOHA
Joseph Ayo Babalola University	LOWLS	
Ekiti State University	PAWLS	SLAM
Osun State University		KOHA
Oduduwa University, Ipetumodutu	LOWLS	
University of Ado-Ekiti	PAWLS	SLAM
Ondo State University of Science and Technology		SLAM
CETEP City University, Lagos	LOWLS	
Technical University, Ibadan	LOWLS	
Elizade University, Ilara-Mokin	PAWLS	KOHA
National Open University of Nigeria, Lagos	PAWLS	Liberty 3

PAWL= Partial Automation With Library Software; FAWL= Low Automation Without Library Software, FA= Full Automation

for example what is available, is catalogue and not content of the materials even the catalogues in some libraries do not reflect majority the library's holding while 10 (27 %) were low automation without library software (LOWLS). However only 1 (2.7 %) was found to be full automation (FA). The Covenant University Library is automated with all routine activities computerised. It has a functional virtual library service, which gives staff and students' access to the web public access catalogue, and other electronic resources from offices, departments and wherever there is a computer terminal which is linked to the university network.

This indicated that about 75 % of academic libraries in the south-west Nigeria are automated to a fairly reasonable extent which is an improvement, compared to study by Isiaku & Ibrahim¹⁰ who found in a survey that resource sharing is practiced at a very low level in the two northern universities partly due to the fact that these institutions have failed to embrace the adoption of ICT (automation).

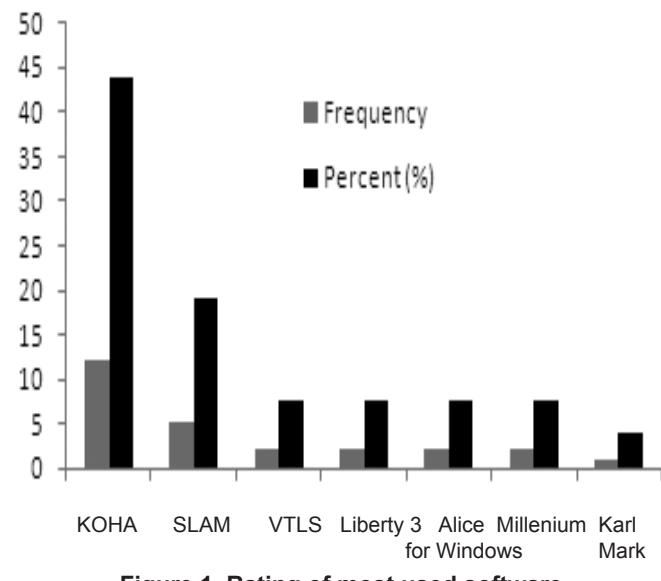


Figure 1. Rating of most used software

From Fig. 1, it is revealed that out of the 26 partial automation with library software (PAWLS) academic libraries surveyed, seven different software were identified. KOHA was the most commonly adopted software and perceived to be most available to academic libraries from South-West Nigeria universities with a total 12 (44 %). This followed in perceived affordability and availability by SLAM with a total of 5 (19 %), VTLS, Liberty3, Alice for Windows and MILLENIUM with an equal total of 2 (7.6 %) each, and KARLMARK 1 (3.8 %). KOHA appeared to be the most used perhaps because it is an open-source integrated library system and does not require fund to download and customise.

Table 2 revealed that majority of the respondent's libraries are not fully utilising their software. Only 1 (3.8 %) of the libraries have all its collections catalogued, indexed and has all its library routine activities computerised. The remaining 25 (96 %) only have part of their total collections catalogued and indexed. In essence, they are still in the process of cataloguing and indexing their collections. However, they do not yet have all their library routine activities computerised, except for 1 (3.8 %) of the libraries that is still in the process of test-running its software. The indication is that these libraries are automated to some extent yet the librarians are not fully utilising their platform for routine activities let alone share their resources. Nevertheless, response to interview questions revealed that beyond adequate skills and funding, there are challenges of misappropriation of the little funds that are meant for running the library and many of the universities did not consider resource sharing as criteria during software acquisition.

Finally, it can be deduced from the findings that many librarians in the South-West zone are indifferent about moving with the trend in the field

Table 2. Extent of use of the software adopted by the libraries

Institutions	Software in use	Cata-logue/index of all collections	Library routine activities computerised	Crescent University, Abeokuta	Federal University Technology Akure	SLAM	NCC
University of Ibadan	VTLS	NCC	0	Bishop Ajayi Crowther University, Ibadan	Caleb University	KOHA	
Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye	Alice for Windows	NCC		Babcock University Library		KOHA	NCC
Covenant University, Ota.	MILLENIUM	CAC	ALAC	Joseph Ayo Babalola University			
University of Lagos	MILLENIUM	NCC	0	Afe-Babalola University	KOHA		NCC
The Bells University of Technology, Ota				Osun State University	KOHA		
Fountain University, Oshogbo				Oduduwa University Ipetumodu			
Mcperson University Seriki Sotayo, Ajebo				University of Ado-Ekiti	SLAM		NCC
Redeemers University	KOHA	NCC		Ondo State University of Science and Technology	SLAM		
Achievers University, Owo				Federal University Oye-Ekiti	KOHA		
Pan-African University, Lagos				CETEP City University, Lagos			
Lagos State University	Alice for Windows	NCC		Technical University, Ibadan			
Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta	KOHA			National Open University of Nigeria,Lagos	Liberty 3		NCC
Lead City University, Ibadan	KOHA			Elizade University Ilara-Mokin	KOHA		NCC
Wesley University of Science & Technology, Ondo							
Crawford University	KARL-MARK	NCC					
Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba	SLAM						
Tai Solarin University of Education							
Adeleke University, Ede	KOHA	NCC					
Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife	VTLS						
Ladoke Akintola University Technology, Ogbomoso	KOHA						
BOWEN University, Oyo	KOHA						

CAC=Catalogue of All Collections

NCC= Non Catalogue of All Collections

ALAC= All Library Routine Activities Computerised

NALAC= Not All Library Routine Activities Computerised

therefore, not engaging in aggressive full automation exercise or the means of sustenance is lacking since they already have adopted one software or the other.

Table 3 showed the level of software use among academic libraries in South -West zone of Nigeria and that there is no form of cooperation and resource sharing taking place amongst PAWLS academic libraries in the South-West zone of Nigeria not even those using same software.

It was gathered from the interview session that the only activity that looks like cooperation is on the KOHA community platform where a co-user library can have access to a generated report of members of the community. Others on the VTLS

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Covenant University, Ota	MILLENIUM
University of Lagos	MILLENIUM
Redeemers University	KOHA
Lagos State University	Alice for Windows
Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta	KOHA
Lead City University, Ibadan	KOHA
Crawford University	KARLMARK
Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba	SLAM
Adeleke University, Ede	KOHA
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife	VTLS
Ladoke Akintola University Technology, Ogbomoso	KOHA
BOWEN University, Oyo	KOHA
Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba	SLAM
Federal University Technology, Akure	SLAM
Caleb University	KOHA
Babcock University	KOHA
Afe-Babalola University	KOHA
Osun State University	KOHA
University of Ado-Ekiti	SLAM
Ondo State university of Science and Technology	SLAM
Federal University, Oye-Ekiti	KOHA
National Open University of Nigeria, Lagos	Liberty 3
Elizade University, Ilara-Mokin	KOHA

platform claimed that efforts were made towards forming a consortium which failed because of lack of consistent power supply, fund for mechanical retrospective conversion of hard copies and difficulty in migrating from previous software due to improper conversion to MARC format (lack of IT skills).

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Seven different types of software packages were identified to be in use in these libraries and it was found during the interview sessions that there is no form of resource sharing and cooperation taking place among them. For a successful cooperation and resource sharing among academic libraries in the south-west zone and Nigeria as a whole, all interested libraries must form a consortium. There should be a policy on software acquisition which should include compatibility and ease of use as criteria for acquisition so as to ensure the possibility of resource sharing among libraries.

The findings of this study is in tandem with a survey by Anasi & Ali¹² which revealed that the prospect for resource sharing among university libraries in Nigeria is high, but that factors hindering effective exercise of same include: inadequate funding, a dearth of skilled librarians, power outages, an absence of web-accessible OPACs, uneven development of libraries, and slow progress of library automation. What is referred to as lack of skills may be that the software are not easy to use as observed and recommended by Wallace & Sheetz¹³ that software developers should direct more effort on ease of use as a measure in developing software.

This study recommends that the NUC should make automation a requirement for all academic libraries in Nigeria and recommend particular software which are internet compatible cooperation and resource sharing to be possible among academic libraries. Software developers should direct enough effort at ease of usage when developing software for libraries. All academic librarians should develop good ICT skills, be well-oriented and given in-depth training on the particular software that their library is using thereby being able to maximise the use of same. Librarians should endeavour to engage in personal cataloguing of their library's holdings rather than wait for mechanical digitisation that may never happen. Government and proprietors of tertiary institutions should give more attention to the libraries by making available better funding than is the situation presently. Finally, available fund should be well appropriated by the university authorities.

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