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# Adequacy of Academic Journals in Nigerian University Libraries During Economic Gloom: the Kenneth Dike Library Experience

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## Abstract

*This paper discussed the adequacy of academic journals in Nigerian University Libraries during economic gloom using the Kenneth Dike Library (KDL) experience. It addresses the problem by looking specifically at the library allocations for books and journals from 1981/82 to 1989/90 session as well as the number of journal titles acquired annually vis-à-vis the number of registered readers in the library during the period. It was discovered that the library could no longer effectively support academic activities. As the number of registered readers increased, the number of journals acquired decreased. The library could hardly afford to maintain subscription in existing journals not to mention adding new titles to the collection. It is therefore advocated that priority journals should be given first attention when allocating funds. University library administrators should evolve co-operative acquisition programmes for foreign journals to avoid unnecessary duplications. Avenues of getting aid from international organizations should be explored while the opportunities presented by INTERNET should be utilized to enhance document delivery.*

## Introduction

The exploration of the corpus of knowledge for the purpose of facilitating academic activities of learning, teaching and research is the main function of University Library. Financial constraints have hindered the University libraries in Nigeria from performing this function effectively. For the past one and a half decades or more, the Nigerian economy has been declining. This is reflected in the dwindling value of the Naira when compared with other foreign currencies.

University Libraries must be properly funded by their parent bodies to enable them equip their libraries with books, journals and other informational materials useful for learning, teaching and research. The government seems not to appreciate the importance of this; hence, they merely make small subventions available to Universities thereby forcing them to give libraries reduced allocations which in turn inevitably lead to drastic cutbacks in the libraries'



expenditure. Ogunseinde (1989) stated that "...from the latter part of the 1970s, the chill wind of economic restraints began to blow with steadily increasing vigour and Universities were forced to cut back more and more in their expenditure."

Considering the fact that Nigerian University Libraries are usually the last to be favoured when budgets increase and the first to lose during depression (Nwagha, 1990), the effect of reduced subvention to Universities is very devastating on libraries. The Universities manage to settle wage bills and therefore have little left for other commitments. This brings to bare the question of the ability of these University libraries to perform their primary function of supporting academic activities.

### **Objective of the study**

The objective of this study is to determine whether or not Kenneth Dike Library (KDL) has been adequately equipped to support academic activities especially during economic gloom. The study focuses on the library's annual book votes and the number of journal titles acquired. It also reviews the annual increase in readers registration.

The study examines the relationship between the number of registered readers and the number of journal titles acquired annually from the 1981/82 session to 1989/90 session. It analyses the relationship between the number of journal titles acquired and the book vote on the one hand, and the relationship between the number of journal titles acquired and the number of registered readers on the other hand, with a view to ascertaining the adequacy of the library for academic activities.

### **Methodology**

The experience of Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan, Nigeria is used in this study. The descriptive survey method of research was used. Available library records were perused. Data were extracted from the *Ibadan University Annual Reports* and the library's annual budgets for the period under review were studied. The data were analysed with the aid of tables and percentages. Inferences and deductions were drawn as appropriate.

### **Discussion and findings**

**Funding of University Libraries:** The importance of funds to University libraries is enormous. The growth of library collection depends almost entirely on the amount allocated to the library by the financing body. This was authenticated by a study by Cohen and Leeson (1979) which indicated that academic libraries depend on their Universities for the bulk of their financial

requirements. It follows therefore that whenever the parent body is not financially buoyant, the pressure is passed down to the library.

The University Libraries in Nigeria are facing a very complex situation in the sense that, firstly, the nation is in a crisis of hyperinflation. Secondly, the value of the Naira has been nose-diving. And thirdly, only a paltry sum is released to the Universities by government to cater for learning, teaching, research and the development of general academic environment. Nwafor (1990) stated that while other Universities were facing problems arising from stable income even when costs was rising, University of Jos Library was actually experiencing decrease in annual allocation. A study by Douglas (1988) on the funding patterns of two State-owned Universities and two Federal Government Universities shows substantial decline in the actual figures examined. The minor increase in actual figures from one year to the other was small and the diminishing purchasing power was very high.

The result of another study (Ekoja, 1992) at the Usman Dan Fodio University Library in Sokoto revealed that the fluctuating allocations to the library make the purchase of books and journals not only to fluctuate but also to decline. The consequence of all these trend is apparent. Librarians are faced with the dilemma of ensuring that libraries are adequately stocked to meet the academic demands of the universities in the face of inadequate funds during hyperinflation and economic gloom. It becomes imperative that the libraries must cut down on book votes in the same way they will cut down on all other heads and sub-heads in their budgets. This, in turn means decrease in the number of materials acquired by the library.

### **Book vote and journal titles acquired in KDL:**

The votes for books and journals in KDL are not treated separately in the budget. The only indication of whatever was spent on each can be deduced only from the library acquisition policy which stipulated that about 50% of the total book vote be devoted to journal acquisitions annually (Ekpenyong, 1993).

**Table 1: Annual Book Vote of Journals**

ACADEMIC SESSION	BOOK VOTE (Nm)	NO. OF JOURNAL TITLES ACQUIRED	NO. OF ANNUAL INCREASE
1981/82	₦0.53m	179	-
1982/83	0.53m	160	-19
1983/84	0.33m	65	-95
1984/85	0.23m	12	-53

1985/86	0.39m	58	46
1986/87	0.4m	108	50
1987/88	1.03m	164	56
1988/89	2.0m	65	-09
1989/90	2.5m	47	-18

Table 1 shows the annual book vote in relation to the number of journals acquired from 1981/82 to 1989/90 session. In 1981/82 session, ₦530,436.00 was expended on books and journals – 179 journal titles were purchased. In 1984/85 session, ₦232,000.00 was spent as book vote and only 12 journal titles were acquired. Surprisingly, when the Structural Adjustment Programme was introduced in 1986, the library's journal subscription increased to 108 titles, and then further to 164 titles in 1987/88 session. The sum of ₦400,000.00 and ₦1,026,870.00 were spent as book votes for the two sessions respectively. This was made possible because the Vice-Chancellor at the time granted the library an additional £500,000.00, from the University account in Universities Commission (NUC) Office in London and the money was devoted entirely to acquiring journals for the session. (Ibadan University Library Annual Report, 1985/86).

During the 1988/89 and 1989/90 sessions, the sums of 2 million and 2.5 million naira were spent as book votes and only 65 and 47 journal titles respectively were bought. It is then clear that during the period of this study, the number of journal titles acquired declined from 179 in 1981/82 to as low as 47 in 1989/90.



acquisitions made in the same subject groups in the last two sessions of the study (1988/89 and 1989/90). The table shows that KDL could merely acquire 33.04% of the number of journal titles it used to purchase between 1981 and 1983 in the period 1988 to 1990. In fact, it is quite revealing that the total number of journal titles acquired in 1989/90 session by the library was exactly the number acquired in *only Science* in 1981/82.

On Technology for instance, 35 journal titles were acquired during the 1981/82 session. This number dropped to as low as 9 in 1989/90 session. On Education, 20 titles were purchased in 1981/82 and the number decreased to 5 in 1989/90. This is true of all other major subject groups within the period under study. It is an indication of a sharp decrease in the acquisition of journal titles in KDL.

### Annual registered readers and the growth in journal acquisition

In order to show the adequacy of journals in KDL, we have to show the relationship between the number of registered readers and the annual growth rate of journals in the library during the period under study. It has already been established above that there was a decline in journal acquisitions during the period. Was there a corresponding decline in the number of registered readers that made use of these journals during the period?

Table III: The number of registered readers in relation to the number of journals acquired for the period covered in this study.

Table III

SESSION	NO. OF REGISTERED READERS	NO. OF ANNUAL INCREASE	NO. OF JOURNAL TITLES	NO. OF ANNUAL INCREASE
1981/82	6183	-	179	-
1982/83	5091	-1092	160	-19
1983/84	5735	644	65	-95
1984/85	13867	8132	12	-53
1985/86	12265	-1602	58	46
1986/87	7661	-4604	108	50
1987/88	6787	-874	164	56
1988/89	7773	986	65	-99
1989/90	8779	1006	47	-18

Looking at Table III, it is obvious that the annual increase in readers registration was not concomitant with the annual growth rate of journals. Whereas there was a definite but unsteady increase in the number of registered readers, there was a

steady decline in the number of journal titles acquired at the time. The number of registered readers increased to a peak in 1984/85 with 13,867 readers and there was a sharp fall in the number in 1986/87 from 12,265 in the previous session, the figures relatively stabilized thereafter.

An average of 7,750 readers were registered in the library in the four subsequent sessions starting from 1986/87 to 1989/90. As earlier shown, a gradual decrease is revealed in the acquisition of journal titles from 179 titles in 1981/82 to 47 in 1989/90!

## **Conclusion and recommendations**

Knowing the importance of journals to academic activities, it is obvious that the library was hardly adequate for supporting learning, teaching and research. Although there was an increase in the number of registered readers when we compare the figures of the early '80s, the reverse is the case for the acquisition of journals. While the funds made available annually increased substantially, the value decreased drastically that it could not cope with the rising costs of journals in the face of scarce foreign exchange.

The following recommendations are therefore proposed to check the declining state of journal availability in the University libraries.

- ❖ more funds should be made available to Nigerian University libraries;
- ❖ funds provided should be managed judiciously so that priority journals would be accorded attention.
- ❖ library administrators should continue to solicit support from international book bodies;
- ❖ libraries should evolve co-operative acquisition of journals to minimise costs and duplication of journals in Universities situated in the same geographical area;
- ❖ there should be inter-library loans and co-operation among the libraries; and
- ❖ libraries in Nigeria should utilize the opportunities presented by Electronic Mail and link-up with INTERNET to enhance quick document delivery.

New Information Technologies are gradually creating advanced methods of organising information resources. These include the transfer of texts, images, sound, and graphics faster through the information superhighways. According to Adimorah (1995), Internet has created a World Wide Web (WWW) of global networking that has thrown open the doors of databases from different parts of the world to a user who has access to them. Through the Wide Area Network (WAN) linking several million computers and given the appropriate security permissions, a user can log into remote machines and run terminal sessions.

exchange data files and send E-mails, telephone calls, read news, listen to music, bulletin boards, images, graphics, publish books, journals, do tele-shopping and advertise products.

These media will enable Libraries and Information Centres in Nigeria and indeed the developing world have access to latest research reports and journals faster. Internet is a communication web that is gradually turning the world into one global village!

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