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## IMPROVING SERVICES IN A HYBRID ACADEMIC LIBRARY SYSTEM

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## IMPROVING SERVICES IN A HYBRID ACADEMIC LIBRARY SYSTEM

### Abstract

*The mixture of traditional or manual ways of carrying out library operations with new, modern, automated systems often brings about several problems. The problems are ones that can be tackled within the framework of having appropriate systems dynamics routines applied and also making use of personnel skilled in strategic management of hybrid library systems. The paper describes a hybrid academic library system and draws up a model of this system suggesting strategies and scenarios for achieving optimum performance of the system in a technology changing world. A system dynamics model for the management of the system is developed around the issues of personnel management, collection management, capacity building, and provision of access to research materials, Information Technology (IT) infrastructure, forming of Consortia, and Security in the system. Recommendations are made as to which strategy/ scenario or combinations of scenarios will provide lasting solutions to the problems recurring or likely to reoccur in a hybrid academic library system.*

## Introduction

The concept of hybrid libraries deals with the responsibility of harnessing the dual collections of traditional and manual nature with the modern sources of digital and technological operational system. Such libraries are gateways that look at the documentary sources of the past (Johnson, Zion and Boselin Prabhu, 2019). In the same token, it does look at electronic sources that will increasingly be available in the future. The hybrid library is on the continuum between the conventional and digital library, where electronic and paper-based information sources are used alongside each other. The challenge associated with the management of the hybrid library is to encourage end-user resource discovery and information use, in a variety of formats and from a number of local and remote sources, in a seamlessly integrated way (<http://www.dlib.org/dlib/october98/10pinfield.html>).

## The Hybrid Library System Model

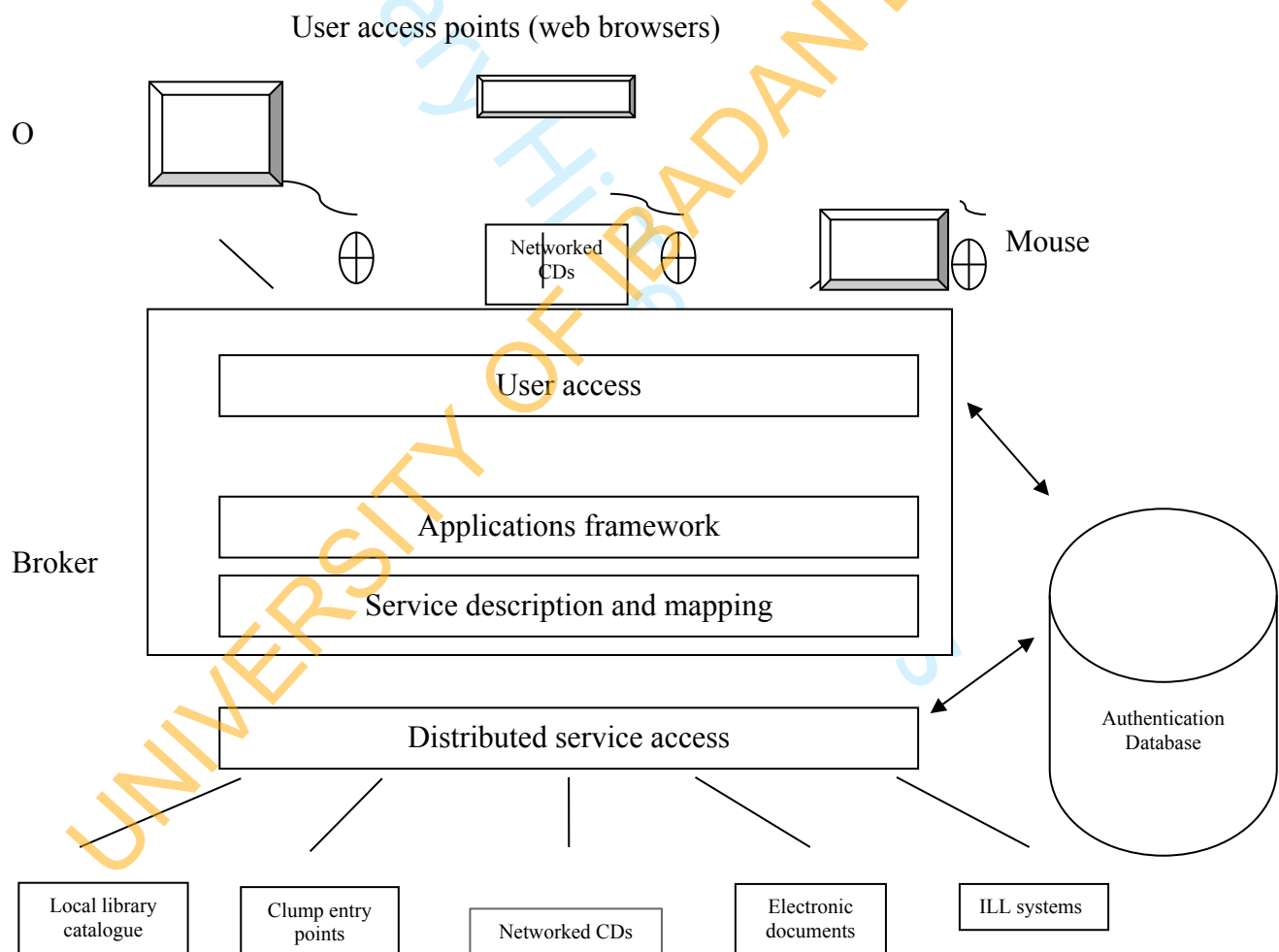


Figure1: Adaptation of the MODELS architecture. (Source: Pinfield, 1999)

This model of library will, to a large extent, bridge the divide between the information demand value of the new and modern, and, the old and passing generations of information seekers. Meeting the dual of information needs representing the generational sources implies great tasks for librarians in terms of administration, budgeting and managing library resources. The cost implications for library managers and proprietors will be enormous. In a hybrid library system, the mixture of traditional or manual ways of carrying out library operations with new, modern and automated systems often brings about several problems (Nwosu, 2017). The problems are ones that can be tackled if the human resources involved in the change or improvement process are ready to cooperate and manage the library system properly.

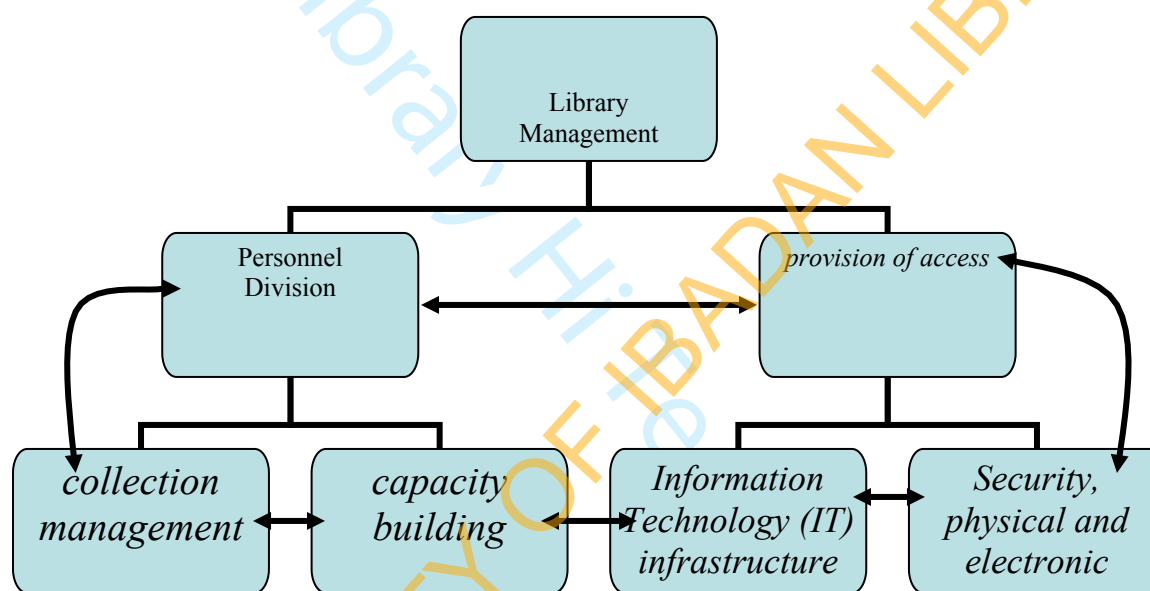


Figure 2. Library System Framework

The different areas in which the improvement of services is needed will have to be identified and a strategic plan adopted for the systematic implementation of the changes. Generally however, the changes in any hybrid library system will involve many issues such as will be discussed in this paper. A model for achieving the goals in a hybrid system is drawn up as well, taking cognizance of the technology acceptance problem in library environments.

A general framework for most academic libraries in their operations which are hybrid in nature, is shown in Figure 2. The management of the library hinges around provision of access to the collection, and this is handled by personnel in the library using either manual or automated (online) means. Management of each function of the library depends on the training received by

1 library personnel and how much importance is given to capacity building by the library. Equally  
2 important is adequate security provision for the collection, and the IT infrastructure in place to  
3 carry this out. In hybrid library systems, the monitoring of procedures has to be doubled as both  
4 the manual and automated functions must proceed seamlessly in order not to disrupt effective  
5 service delivery.  
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### 10 11 **Personnel in hybrid library systems**

12 In a hybrid library system, pressure will increase for personnel interaction with the library  
13 clientele through e-mail, instant messaging, and real time contacts. This means that librarians  
14 will have to restructure their daily activities. Librarians will have to re-write their job  
15 descriptions and specifications. But mostly librarians will be able to concentrate on the results of  
16 the interactions with their clients more ever than before □ because the clients will be closer □  
17 the new technologies would have ensured that the gap between the librarians and their clients  
18 shrinks. From a system of learning new skills, librarians will transition to a life-long learning  
19 framework in a hybrid library system. This environment will need flexibility and capability to  
20 embrace new technical and non-technical skills. As a result, librarians may need to develop new  
21 communication skills. They will have to continue to adjust constantly to changing hardware and  
22 software packages in order to meet the challenges of developmental strides occasioned by the  
23 new practices of librarianship.  
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34 Librarians will continue to develop new skills. Training will need to be integrated into  
35 everyday work. Training, better and constant learning will be emphasized and expected (Oyelude  
36 and Oluwaniyi, 2020). In addition, librarians will have to be more flexible, friendly and tolerant.  
37 They should:  
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- 41 • adjust to constantly changing technologies environments;
- 42 • maintain healthy skepticism of technology;
- 43 • maintain a high degree of curiosity;
- 44 • develop and maintain good relations with faculty as well as students;
- 45 • maintain the desire to work independently and to cooperate constructively;
- 46 • be ready to constantly undergo trainings; and
- 47 • be ready to be less visible physically but more interactive in cyberspace (online).
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At another level, quantity and quality of library personnel will have to be considered. The library system should be organic in the growth of its collection and personnel. It is to be expected that the collections growth should be matched with staffing strength increase. In other words, service and the capacity to deploy it must be concomitantly matched. The growth in library resources; the increase in clients' quest for information should be equated with available experts and professionals for the effectiveness of the library system and the optimization of desired output. As staff disengages, either through retirement, resignation from their duty posts or mortality, new hands should be recruited to replace them. This will eliminate the creation of vacuum in the staffing. As found out in an Australian study, lack of cognizance of the fact that population of retiring staff was leaving a gap, had adverse effect on the workforce (Weare, 2015). Management of the library will need to put in place of a policy for the systematic recruitment of staff of different categories to be effective from well before the retiring staff are going so that the new hands may learn from whom they are taking over from.

### **Collection Management**

Collection management is a newly adopted, broader term that has replaced the term Collection development (CD) especially in hybrid academic library systems. It has become the chief focus of attention and is concerned mainly with building and managing the collections. Collection management ensures that the collection grows in the right direction. In its efforts to enhance quality research, provide teaching and learning resources, the hybrid academic library has as its primary focus, the provision of up-to-date collections that can be accessible to its diversified users in a variety of formats. The research needs of users are in two broad categories:

- i) The print and
- ii) The non-print format

The print format materials are the resources printed on paper which include - textbooks, reference materials (Encyclopedia, Dictionary, Almanac, Bibliographies, Handbook, Abstracts, Indexes); periodicals like journals, magazines, newspapers, proceedings, reports yearbooks etc. Others are special collections like theses, publications ordinance collections, Africana materials, Nigeriana manuscripts and so on.

The non-print formats are the audiovisual materials and the equipment for accessing the information. An important non-print resource is the electronic information resources (EIR). In this category, we have the electronic forms of the printed materials. The information here is not

1 printed on paper but stored in media such as CD-ROMS, discs, and microforms, Internet arcades  
2 and so on.  
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5 The management of the collection is very essential to keep the materials in good condition  
6 and to provide access for the users. The diversity in the formats of the materials in a hybrid  
7 library system makes collection management a somewhat complex matter. The systematic  
8 development of the collection and its preservation and conservation has remained a priority issue  
9 in hybrid library systems.  
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13 Another important aspect of collection management is weeding which is necessary for  
14 collection growth. Piling-up materials in the library without taking cognizance of their relevance  
15 to users and ensuring that they are not just adorning the shelves but are put to productive use, is  
16 unscientific and unprofessional. Materials that are not used or consulted over a long period of  
17 time are weeded and sent to places / libraries where they are mostly needed. A mixture of the  
18 electronic and physical resources adds to the responsibilities of Collection Development  
19 Librarians and as a result, the responsibilities they carry also are evolving since new technologies  
20 are coming up. The ordering process for library materials is being electronically handled in many  
21 library systems and online payments are not the exception anymore, but more the norm.  
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### 30 31 **Capacity building**

32 Current trends in librarianship show a great deal of dynamism. New trends are being  
33 discovered from time to time, and old practices are giving way to new discoveries. This is  
34 basically due to the application of Information and Communications Technology. The capacity  
35 of library staff in hybrid systems essentially is one in which training needs are more acutely felt  
36 and new knowledge has to be acquired daily to cope with the changes. In view of this, academic  
37 library authorities should respond by ensuring that all categories of staff are adequately equipped  
38 to cope with the challenges posed by this new development.  
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44 All staff holding administrative positions should be trained in administrative and  
45 management skills, and the training and re-training should be continuous. Staff in the library  
46 should be exposed to national and international trainings. This will enable them appreciate the  
47 development taking place in the profession and will create avenues for networking. The library  
48 authorities should encourage and finance the staff to attend workshops, seminars and  
49 conferences. There should be an in-house training center in the hybrid library to cater for in-  
50 house trainings for students and staff. This updates them on the moving of technologies for  
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1 providing the services from manual to automated. In recognition of the importance of training of  
2 library staff, Akanji and Ola (2010) emphasized that the new developments in the librarianship  
3 profession resulting from the applications of information communications technologies make  
4 training and retraining of library personnel imperative in order to face the challenges of the  
5 sophisticated information needs of users.  
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## 10 **Provision of Access to Research Materials**

### 11 **Networking:**

12 Where branches or departmental units exist in the hybrid library setting, a few issues need to be  
13 tackled. Some of them are:

- 14 • Linking of main library to the various faculty or departmental libraries.
- 15 • Creating more network points within the library for the future.
- 16 • Taking the library wide network into consideration when procuring  
17 hardware and software.
- 18 • Procurement and upgrading of equipment, and;
- 19 • Providing alternative power supply.

20 Collaboration between library staff and faculty in the Departments is particularly desirable (Pham  
21 and Tanner, 2015). The synergy is quite beneficial in the long run.

22 In order to make sure that the application of ICT is effective, there should be provision of  
23 alternative sources of power supply. This is most applicable especially in developing economies  
24 where the basic infrastructures are not reliable. Ordinarily, this should not have been a priority  
25 but in situations where the alternative power supply now constitutes the major source of energy  
26 or electricity in Nigeria, it is absolutely necessary that provision should be made for a stable  
27 electricity supply. The use of solar energy in this regard is quite desirable.  
28

### 29 **Multimedia Center:**

30 The library plays a key (pivotal) role in accessing global resources residing outside the  
31 library. Inter-operability of the information system and the use of the web in making it possible  
32 for library users to access information across the libraries are quite desirable. Any printed copy  
33 of information, especially grey literature, should be made available in digital format as a backup  
34 and to also preserve the rare and fragile materials in the library. A multimedia centre would  
35 therefore not be out of place in the hybrid library system.  
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### Information access:

Limited access to information has created an information shortfall in hybrid library systems hitherto. Government agencies need to communicate more effectively in order to streamline operations and reduce overlapping efforts. Financial and commercial institutions need better access to automatic data communications for financial transactions payment services, trade and business, to support economic activities in their country. In the same vein, universities and research institutions need to keep up with current literature in order to enhance their knowledge-base and maximize their capabilities.

Once information technology is seen to be a useful tool for providing complete, accurate and timely information at the most basic level, the clientele will be right for developing more sophisticated studies aimed at further reforms. The popularization of an Information Culture in the academic community will encourage a suitable environment for the Information Society.

In setting up of a workable platform for the successful implementation of ICT in a hybrid library, the use of good infrastructure cannot be overemphasized.

- More computers and other peripheral devices are needed.
- More office space/ extension of existing structures
- IT Equipment are needed, and
- Software e.g. original copies of Microsoft products (licensed copy of EXP 2000) that could be advanced server/professional ms-office, Open source, LINUX, UNIX and others.

### Space and maintenance

Provision has to be made in the library budget for maintenance of all building facilities. 5% of total cost of procurement, for maintenance is suggested. Maintenance of library grounds should also be given priority as a beautiful environment makes study, teaching and learning more attractive and satisfying. The library greening projects currently being favoured in developed countries are a case in point for example (Leyrer, 2017).

Funds are needed for:

- ✓ Infrastructure
- ✓ Power Supply
- ✓ Competent personnel
- ✓ Building cleaning and maintenance.

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Meanwhile, traditional library buildings were designed and constructed without thinking of the new or recent technology. With the advent of modern techniques for managing libraries, the designs and architectures are beginning to change (Beth, 2018). Social relations, information and learning commons, structure-friendly designs that take care of users' comfort and attract patronage are considered imperative these days. Examples include accommodation for food and drink, and areas for relaxation within the library setting.

### **Library Use Instruction and Information Literacy**

In order to properly engage users, the role of Library Use Instruction (LUI) cannot be overlooked. Information literacy skills acquisition is essential especially as it helps reduce library anxiety (Oyelude, 2011). The goal of any hybrid library should be:

- Making LUI more interactive by using electronic media to instruct
- Giving LUI more time and wider coverage e.g. include instruction on preservation activities
- Making LUI practice-oriented
- Present a proposal to library management to make LUI compulsory
- Stress the need for the faculty to be actually involved in its implementation
- Knowing what is being taught in the LUI curriculum
- Having approachable personalities to handle LUI
- Remembering that LUI involves human components and not ICT alone
- Skills and training for users and also for library staff (information literacy skills)
- Cost and sustainability
- Policy and Strategy
- Putting in mechanisms for evaluation of LUI

### **Research and Development (R & D) unit**

In an ideal hybrid library, there should be a Research and Development Unit which functions as one that will gather any data or information that can be useful to the library. This unit will serve to provide the materials to be used for current awareness services of the library through exhibitions, press conferences, public lectures, etc. The unit will also organize seminars at all levels so that results of new discoveries, current research of staff and visitors of the library can be disseminated to staff of the library and the public periodically.

1 The unit will also be responsible for image making of the library. It will participate in fund  
2 raising, grant seeking activities and concerted efforts to make sure the library has and maintains  
3 its good reputation as a forward-looking, research and development-oriented part of the  
4 academic community it serves. The academic library needs to perform the role of information  
5 provider to all facets/sectors of the community.  
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### 11 **Forming a cosortium**

12 Information and Communication Technology (ICT) opens up new possibilities for  
13 cooperation among academic libraries running a hybrid system. The shaping of ICT projects  
14 does not come in building an empire around one's (ICT) constituency. Information  
15 professionals working in libraries should learn to collaborate and de-centralize. The minimum  
16 standard of connectivity must be ascertained. Self or institutional interest should be put aside to  
17 reach out to the entire global world of information.  
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24 As for sustainability, huge investments are needed for deployment of ICT in a hybrid library  
25 but how can this be attained? If foreign or external aid is relied upon, what happens when the  
26 donors phase out their programmes? Sustainability is a key for long-term development. In the  
27 tropics, the bandwidth problem is well pronounced and appears to be the prime obstacle for  
28 Information Communication Technology (ICT) in university library systems. By collaborating  
29 with one another, academic library directors or heads can negotiate better prices for bandwidth  
30 for example. This is where the forming of library consortia is necessary, in hybrid academic  
31 library systems.  
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### 39 **Security**

40 In hybrid academic library systems, physical security issues are crucial but more  
41 importantly, electronic security issues also have to be considered. Security in terms of preventing  
42 unauthorized access necessitates authentication by the broker working from the remote or hidden  
43 location to ensure safety of the library collection. Preventive preservation like those of protecting  
44 against fire, water, and theft, has to be those for which provision must be made. Crime detection  
45 devices in form of electronic security system like close circuit television (CCTV) for example, is  
46 advisable in all hybrid academic settings. Protection of collections stored in the cloud is also  
47 paramount.  
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## The systems dynamics modelling of library operations

The library operations heretofore described can be managed using an ICT tool for evaluation. One of the areas in which ICT could be used in the hybrid library system is in the modeling of the operations of the library. Modeling and simulation have emerged as non-destructive, non-expensive but elegant methods of understanding system processes.

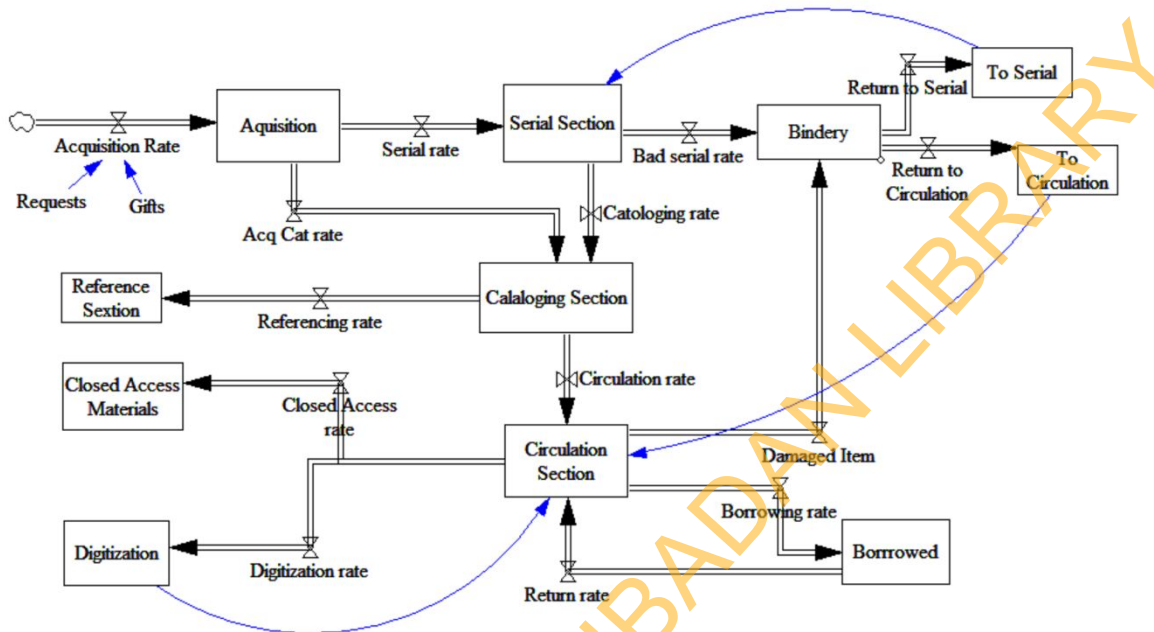


Figure 3: System Dynamics Model of Library Operation

The outcomes of tested models provide decision makers with informed insights into the behaviours of the system (Adeniran, et al., 2019). Figure 3 shows the system dynamics model of a typical library operations.

For example, after the simulation of the model, it was revealed that the serialization of books grew steadily from an initial level of 48,000 to about 6,000 volumes within a period of 12 months (Figure 4). Also Figure 5 shows that the Bindery processed a total volume of 4,700

volumes during the same period with varying rates of inflows.

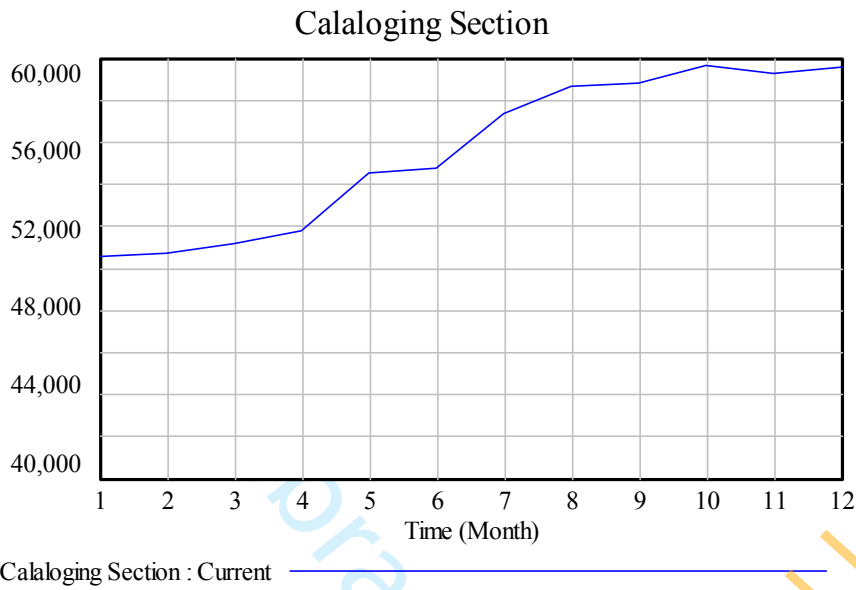


Figure 4: Operation trends in the Cataloging Section

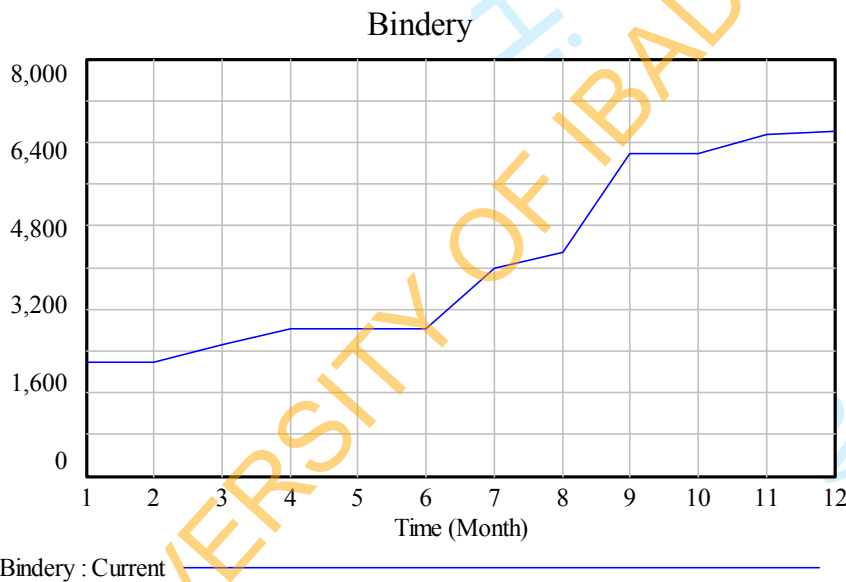
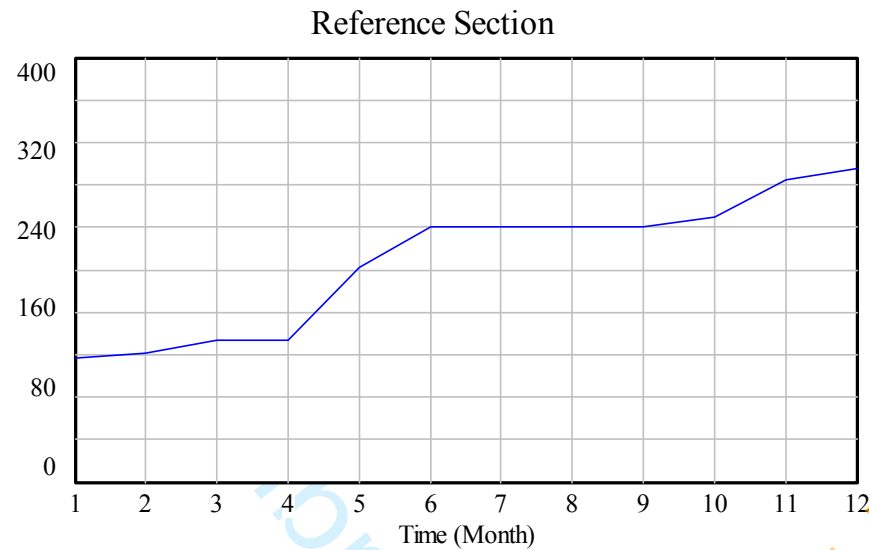


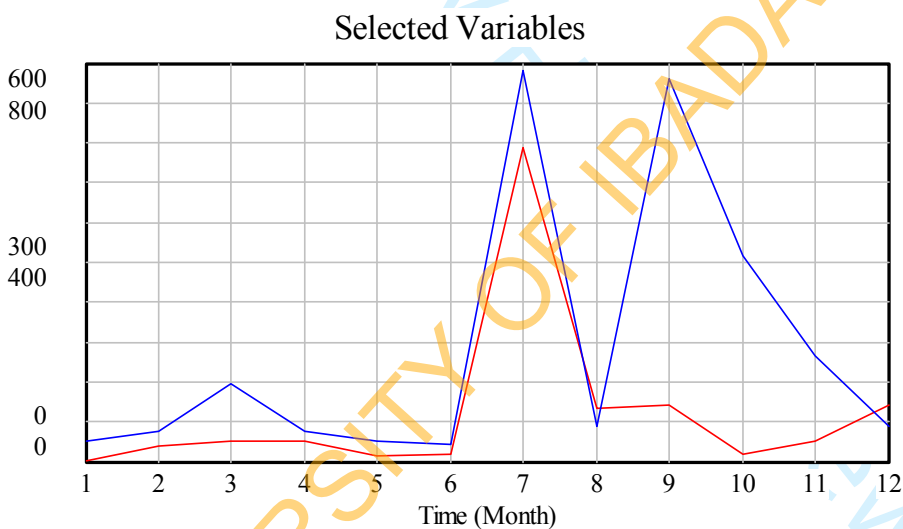
Figure 5: Trends of volumes repaired in the Bindery

Figure 4 shows the trend of volumes processed from the Cataloging section to the Reference section while Figure 7 compares the borrowing and returning of materials borrowed from the library. It also shows that the rate of returning materials to the library is far less than the rate of borrowing, especially in the 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> months which might be the period of examinations. The veracity of system dynamics tools can be appreciated with this simple example.

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Reference Section : Current



Borrowing rate : Current  
Return rate : Current

Figure 7: Borrowing rate vs Return rate

Conclusion

In conclusion, the hybrid library phenomenon may be one that has to be contended with for a very long time to come especially in developing countries where library development seems to progress slowly. The dichotomy between the dual worlds of managing information resources for traditional or manual and modern users implies high level management skill and diplomacy. The transition from the traditional to the modern will have to be gradual and systematic. It should not

1 be sudden or abrupt and noticeable, else the library may suffer a devastating decline in service  
2 delivery and user patronage arising from user satisfaction deficiency. With time, the old practice  
3 will give way to modern techniques. Then, the library can once again embrace and enjoy cost-  
4 benefit and cost-effective fiscal and sustainable existence.  
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## Appendix

### ROUTINES IN A HYBRID LIBRARY SYSTEM

*personnel management is overseen by the Library Management team in each of the sections below:*

*collection management is a joint task that involves all the sections listed below:*

*capacity building is for all the persons working in the library system*

1 *provision of access is the concern of all working in the sections detailed below:*

2 *Information Technology (IT) infrastructure is the factor enabling the proper functioning of the*  
 3 *library especially in the hybrid setting*

4 *forming of Consortia helps the library system achieve more in terms of its mandate especially in*  
 5 *a hybrid setting*

6 *Security, physical and electronic is essential for the hybrid setting in particular* □

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 13 ACQUISITIONS (**Selection** of library resources) - Manual

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 17 **Ordering** of library resources - Manual Online

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 19 Online

20 **Receiving** of library resources -

21 **Checking** of library resources to see if complete and in good condition □

22 Stamping and Accessioning the materials □

23 Taking **Statistics** of number of books ordered, received, stamped and  
 24 accessioned, and those sent to Cataloguing section

25 Send to Cataloguing and Classification section (Physical movement)

26  
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 30 CATALOGUING & CLASSIFICATION □ Searching to see if material has been previously  
 31 catalogued - Manual search

32  
 33 - Online search

34  
 35  
 36 If previously catalogued, add item as □ added entry □,

37 If not,

38  
 39 Catalogue and classify - Manually or

40  
 41 Online

42 Save to Database

43 Label and paste book pocket -Manually

44  
 45 Electronically

46  
 47 Send to Circulation Section

48  
 49 CIRCULATION □ Shelf library resources-

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 51 Charging of library resources □ Manual

52  
 53 - Online

54 Discharge of library resources (send back to Shelf)

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Shelve reading

Weeding  (Book damaged? Send to BINDERY)  
(Book outdated? Dispose of)

OR

Send to

SERIALS -

Shelve library resources-

Charging and discharge of Serials  Manual  
- Online

OR

Send to

REFERENCE SERVICES SECTION  Shelve library resources-

Provide access  Manual  
- Online

Information provision  Physical  
- Electronic

OR

Send to

CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION  - Bindery  
- Reprography  
- Digitization

OR

Send to

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS - Shelve library resources-

Provide access  Manual  
- Online

Information provision  Physical  
- Electronic

SECURITY  Physical  
Electronic

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