

**FUNDING RESEARCH LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA: ISSUES AND WAY FORWARD**

By

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Research libraries are important appendages to research institutions and their primary aim is to aid the parent body achieve their mandate and objectives which is to advance knowledge production and innovation through research. This paper is designed to highlight the funding challenges plagued by research libraries in Nigeria and to identify practical ways to ameliorate their financial situation. Findings from this paper is based on a conceptual study which revealed the contrast between the ambitions targets of the country's national science and technology policies and the level of fund allocations provided to research institutions. The ability of the research libraries to effectively execute their primary functions as gatekeepers of knowledge and information is significantly impeded due to lack of funds. It was therefore suggested that while the library continues to strengthen their advocacies and lobbying of key stakeholders, policymakers and the management. There is also the need to look into alternative monetary sources as well engage in activities that will capture the attention of their management and research community to promote the relevance of the research library as equal partners in fulfilling the research goals of the country.

**Introduction**

Libraries are referred to as the purveyors of information, the custodians of knowledge, and the houses of learning and research. Libraries are built and maintained for a specific community in order to support the varied information demands of the users. Research libraries are established to serve as important research centres. The functions of research libraries encompasses those of other types of library services, but their principal role is to provide resources and services that will meet the research requirements of researchers in a timely manner and in the form in they are needed (Olaifa & Oyeniya, 2014). The majority of research libraries in Nigeria are run by their parent institution, which means that research libraries in Nigeria, as the case may be, are housed in research institutes, and this is reflected in the types of resources available in such libraries. For instance, a research library in an agricultural research institute in Nigeria will focus more on resources related to agricultural research in line with the mandate of its parent body (Olaifa & Oyeniya, 2014). Since research

libraries in Nigeria are found in research institutes, the number of research libraries in Nigeria is equivalent to the number of research institutes in Nigeria.

Research libraries' funding has an impact on the resources they have available. Funding is a basic necessity for acquiring research libraries' resources and services offered to their users. In addition, hiring competent library personnel responsible for operating and maintaining the services also requires funding. Research libraries provide an enormous and essential service that shapes the whole system of the research institutes and without which its capacity to function as a centre for research as well as teaching will be limited. Consequently, the library can be considered as the research institute's heartbeat; therefore, it requires funding in order to function properly. Research libraries are essential to sustaining a progressive national development that includes the education system, innovation, and discoveries (DFID, 2019). However despite their ability to contribute to a progressive national development, studies reveal (Odili, 2021, Olaifa & Oyeniya, 2014, Oyeniya & Olaifa, 2013) that libraries in research institutes are currently being underfunded, hence, this study aims to highlight the problems caused by financial constraints that have plagued research libraries in Nigeria and to suggest ways to fix them.

### **Conceptual Overview of Research Libraries**

A research library is a library that encompasses an extensive collection of resources on several subjects. A research library generally includes an in-depth selection of materials on a particular topic or set of subjects and contains primary and secondary sources (Britannica.com). They are established to meet research needs and, as such, are stocked with authentic materials with quality content. Research libraries are typically attached to academic or research institutions that specialize in that topic and serve members of that institution

(Britannica.com; Online Computer Library Centre (OCLC), 2022, Young and Belanger, 1983).

University libraries can also be considered as research libraries that often consist of many specialized branch research libraries dedicated to different faculties of specific disciplines. These libraries provide research materials for students and staff of these organizations to use, they can also publish and stock literatures produced by these institutions and make them available to others (Wilms, 2021 & Cunningham, 2010). Research libraries could also be accessible to members of the public who wish to gain in-depth knowledge on that particular topic. Some specialized research libraries including those affiliated with governmental organizations may hold documents of historical, legal, economic or political import (Branin, Groen, & Thorin, 2011). According to Haneefa (2007), research libraries will generally have materials that are typically non-fiction and scholarly. These traditionally include books, periodicals, journals, newspapers, and manuscripts. With the emergence of information technology, this has evolved to include E-books and online research databases. The collections of a research library are focused on specific subjects or disciplines, and the materials available on those topics are typically more extensive than those found in public libraries (Britannica.com). It is possible for a research library to be connected to the services of open scholarly communication, such as support for open access journals run by the institution and the operation of an institutional repository, as well as support for the usage of other institutions' repositories and open archives through discovery tools and scholarly search engines. Research libraries do publish their own institutional research findings, which are conducted with the help of the librarians on their topics of choice (CLIR, 2022).

Research libraries can be of different types: they can be either reference only (that is they do not lend their holdings) or lending libraries, which do lend all or some of their

holdings (Britannica.com). As the contents of research libraries are deeply focused, there can sometimes be a high demand for certain book titles. To ensure that as many patrons as possible can have access to the materials they need, libraries have reserve collections, for books that are only available for short-term loans. These loans can range from a few days to as little as a few hours. Patrons can also gain access to periodicals and journals that require paid subscriptions through their libraries, which gives access to primary research materials (CLIR, 2022).

### **The Significance of Research to National Development**

The Nigeria's vision 2020; Economic Recovery and Growth Plan; and the 2013 National Education policy signify the Nigerian government recognition of the link between scientific research and economic development (DFID, 2019). In 1986 the Nigerian government published the first National Science and Technology Policy, after a series of refinements between the years 1997 to 2013; the most recent, titled the "National Science, Technology Innovation Roadmap (NSTIR) 2030" was published in 2017. The NSTIR focal point is to connect research in all sectors to national development and provide support for industrial innovation in the country. In addition, one of the aims of the NSTIR is to "facilitate the creation and acquisition of knowledge production, adaptation, replication, and utilization of technologies" (DFID, 2019, p.4).

Since 'adequate information' according Nzotta (1985, p.223) is the 'soul of research', therefore, the function of research libraries in providing sufficient access to reliable, accurate and up-to-date information required for every stage of research is vital in Nigeria. Olaifa and Oyeniya (2014) reported that Nigeria has over 100 research institutes and each of these institutes have libraries as an appendage. The authors stated further that the Agricultural

Research Council of Nigeria (ARCN) alone for instance oversees close to 15 agricultural research institutes in Nigeria, with several other colleges of agriculture where research is being conducted. This means that the numbers of research libraries in Nigeria is quite significant; therefore the need for their development is important (Olaifa & Oyeniya, 2014).

### **Funding Research Libraries**

Although the research libraries occupy strategic positions in the pursuit of the objectives of the research institutes, they are not self-financing. Funding research libraries has been the responsibility of the government or the parent body of the research institute. According to Odili (2021), the Nigerian federal government is the primary source of income for research libraries; other sources of income include parent organizations, donations, and endowments. The extent to which the library, including the research library, can execute its functions depends on a number of factors and they include: adequate information resources; qualified personnel; adequate accommodation; and the availability of funds (Odili, 2021, Okiy, 1997; Nzotta 1985). Of all these factors, funding occupies the most strategic position and it is the key factor that helps to attain and sustain successful librarianship around the world. (Okiy, 1997).

However, despite the Nigerian's government ambition towards research and development documented in the nation's Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) policy and in the documents of National Institutions for research such as, the National and Research Innovation Council (NRIC), Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST), National Council on Science, Technology, and Innovation (NCSTI), State Science, Technology and Innovation Council SSTIC, Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) there appears to be comparatively low government expenditure towards research and development (DFID, 2019). Consequently,

the effect of lack of funding has had an effect on research institutions, quality of research outputs as well as research libraries (DFID, 2019).

### **Challenges of Funding Research Libraries**

According to the DFID (2019,p.iii) report, “Nigeria does not have a national organisation dedicated to funding research. TETFund, a government-owned foundation which is responsible for managing the National Research fund is mainly focused on education and according to the study conducted by the DFID (2019,p.iii) it was discovered that there are certain limitations in this arrangement part of which include: “limited funding for research, no clear research funding priorities” and among others. Several works of literature have reported the situation of the lack of funds particularly in Nigeria’s research libraries. For instance, Olaifa and Oyeniyi (2014) stated that research institutions are facing a lot of challenges in sourcing for funds to sustain their libraries unlike the academic area, where there is a percentage of allocation for equipping libraries, but in research institutes in Nigeria, this is not the case.

Odili (2021) reported that the research libraries studied were operating at a level of mediocrity due to poor funding. This has impacted negatively on their collection growth and the nature of information services delivered to users. The libraries rely heavily on old collections and local journals and have witnessed a decline in users’ patronage. Also, it was further stated by the author that the factors responsible for research library underfunding in Nigeria have persisted for decades such as the rising costs of books, serials, online subscriptions; the depreciating value of the Nigerian Naira; limited budget, rising salaries, and growing user demand. But, there have also been additional causes in recent times, such as the global economic recession and the fall in the price of crude oil.

Furthermore, Fatuyi, Yusuf, and Ibrahim (1997) opined that, ironically, the federal government, who is responsible for funding research institutes, are yet to recognize libraries or the information they provide as an essential and important product, not just for daily living but for industry and commerce. The lack of funds appears to be a significant factor in the deterioration of research libraries. As a result of a lack of funding, research libraries face the challenge of making research materials accessible and available to patrons.

Government agencies and research institutions have complained in many of their arguments about the state of funding that there has been a sharp decline in their overall revenue. The need for more funds to support research library services is not in doubt, but agencies stress that the low level of available funds limits the amount that can be dedicated to the library (Irenea, Emilian & Eru, 2019). Therefore, the library finds itself in a dilemma of whether it should continue to operate with its present level of funding, or search for alternative source of funding? This thinking is not new. However, the current economic environment makes such considerations crucial. It is basic to link any proposal for internal income to specific needs of the library: collection development, equipment purchase, or building construction. Income-yielding activities will vary with the environment and mission of each library and could include one or more of several options (Irenea, Emilian & Eru, 2019).

### **The Way Forward**

Research libraries are required to be more efficient in meeting their patrons' demands while keeping up with continuing dwindling funds. According to Anglada (2014), the sustainability of libraries, including research libraries, can be assessed by examining the relationship established between the values added and their costs. Since a library is part of a

larger organization, it seems logical to think in terms of asking the parent institution to provide adequate funds, which is a common expectation of most library heads from their parent institutions.

As a result, the funds allocated to a research library are often times connected to how well the librarian can lobby the management of the parent body through budget requests or proposals. However, there is now a need for the librarians to consider extending the lobbying and advocacy for the interest of the library beyond the institutes. Research institutions occupy a strategic position in society. The libraries and their parent institutions must creatively seek ways to get the attention of policymakers and agencies that could improve the system of fund allocations to libraries through appropriate policies and laws (Anglada, 2014). Lobbying top political elites should be pursued vigorously and it requires the research libraries to understand the importance of developing advocacy skills and applying practices in politics. These competencies are needed to aid in establishing relevant contacts, expressing arguments, and convince potential donors and sponsors to offer financial and, of course, for politicians and policymakers to increase library funding (Kondylis, 2014).

Fee-based services would also be necessary as an additional source of income for the research libraries. According to Ishola (2014), in developed economies, increasing numbers of libraries are introducing fee-based services for some or all of their users. However, fines for overdue materials and charges to replace missing books or borrower cards have been ineffective in most libraries in Nigeria. Research libraries in Nigeria should look further into such ideas as charging for bibliographies, online searches, and among other alternatives to ensure the continuity of services. Beneficiaries of research grants could be required to include costs for fee-based services in their funding proposals as a way of supporting services that benefit from the library. Also, research library services like translation services, book sales,



reprographic services, publishing of documents, and renting of facilities help generate funds for libraries. Grants, gifts, and endowments are also an essential source for funding research library services. Private individuals, non-governmental organizations, foundations, International bodies, foreign governments and large corporations are known to support research libraries. Such opportunities have to be explored to further the libraries research services.

Another avenue for funding research libraries' services is the formation of "friends of the library" groups, the purpose of which should be to assist libraries in identifying sources of funds and lobbying government functionaries and research institute authorities for financial and material support (Akporhonor, 2005). Friends of the library can also organize collaborative projects in which research libraries partner with book sellers or publishers to establish a library bookshop. Also, they can assist when the need for funds arises by organizing a public launch for funds to enable projects and infrastructure to be purchased for research libraries. Capital projects such as constructing buildings can be undertaken by public-spirited individuals, with the projects named after the specific donors in support of the libraries (Akporhonor, 2005).

Although, the users of research libraries are experts and knowledgeable about the library system, however, this should not be taken for granted as some might have limited knowledge on library resources and how to access them; therefore, it is imperative for research libraries to consider introducing well planned and systematically executed user education (Nzotta 1985). Also, seminars and workshops can be organized on a variety of specialist topics, for which premiums can be charged to support research library services. The essence of these ventures is to bring the library to the forefront of research activities and to

gain recognition within the research community, particularly the attention of the management responsible for allocating funds to the different sectors in their organization, as equal partners in fulfilling the mandates of the institutions and the government's ambition of advancing knowledge and innovation through research (Odili, 2021). Olaifa and Oyeniya (2014) opined that, if research libraries in Nigeria are fully funded by the necessary stakeholders, it will not only improve research development, but also drive Nigeria to a fast-developed status.

### Conclusion

The funding of research libraries is critical to the development of research in Nigeria. Research libraries' major goal is to provide resources and services that will meet users' demands for their research in the right format and at the right time. The services provided by research libraries in Nigeria have been significantly impeded due to poor funds. Consequently, they have been operating at a level of mediocrity and this has impacted negatively on their collection growth and the nature of information services delivered to researchers. In order to address the challenges of funding research libraries in Nigeria, the government and other stakeholders in research institutes must adequately fund the libraries to improve and develop the information delivered to the numerous researchers in the country.

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