

Contributions of Kenya Library and Information Service Consortium (KLISC) in Expanding Access to Information Resources: Case Study of St. Paul's University, Limuru, Kenya

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Abstract: It is not possible for a library to hold full stock of information resources or procure all information which may be in demand by its users. To solve this problem, library cooperation started long ago such as interlibrary loan, document delivery, library network, etc. Consortia are commonly formed to increase the purchasing ability of collaborating institutions to expand the resources availability and offer automated services. In Kenya, there is KLISC which has carried out commendable activities to support research in Kenya. Kenya has over 600 institutions but only 112 are KLISC members and also very little has been documented about the contributions KLISC has had to the member institutions. The study therefore tried to identify the contributions that KLISC membership has had to its member institutions. The study objective was to assess the contributions of KLISC towards access to information resources. Descriptive survey design was used and a population comprising of the University Librarian and post graduate students from Faculty of Theology. Through purposive sampling and simple random sampling technique, a sample size of 51 respondents was obtained; the University Librarian and 50 post graduate students. The study established that the respondents were familiar with a few of KLISC's databases. The study also found out that out of the 58 databases provided through KLISC, the respondents were only familiar with and used 4 databases. Poor ICT infrastructures and poor internet connectivity were the major challenges. The study therefore recommends that KLISC together with the information managers promote the Consortium services and products to the non-members in Kenya and also create awareness of the various databases to information users.

Keywords: Information resources, Library, Library consortium, Library cooperation.

I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Consortium refers to co-operation, co-ordination and collaboration between and amongst libraries for the purpose of sharing information resources. Through the consortium, it has become possible to purchase information in stabilized and reasonable prices (Islam & Mezbah-ul-Islam, 2000). Consortia are commonly formed to increase the purchasing ability of collaborating institutions to expand the resources availability and offer automated services. Consortia may be formed at local, regional, national or international level, on a functional or formal basis, or on subject basis (Chander & Gupta, 2015). The internet has become the new medium of information storage and delivery. The most challenging tasks for information professionals and information centres in the age of information overload, is that of supervising the huge information that is being produced and developed in the world. It is impossible for a library to monitor all the explosion of knowledge fields and accumulate for its users. To cope with this situation, the phenomenon of consortia has become very important (Islam & Mezbah-ul-Islam, 2000). Islam and Mezbah also state that consortia of libraries are well known for sharing of resources all over the world. Several libraries in the world have formed consortia to share their human and electronic resources.

Academic library consortia in the United States have existed for multiple decades, having gained momentum in the 1970s with the development of shared catalogues and then having moved full speed into the shared purchase of electronic resources in the 1990s [3]. In India, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has set up the Indian National Digital Library in Science and Technology (INDEST) Consortium. Through this consortium, the ministry provides funds required for the subscription to electronic resources for 38 core institutions, and a few other centrally funded

government institutions. Besides that, 60 government-aided engineering college and technical departments in universities have also joined the consortium with the financial support from the All Indian Council for Technical Education. Members of the INDEST consortium have a networked infrastructure of computers available at their campuses or institutions.

In Nigeria, several types of library consortia or partnerships exist such as: the National Virtual Library project; Nigerian University Network; and Nigerian University Libraries Consortium. They were formed to embrace all universities with a view to expanding academic and research libraries in Nigeria. As a result of ICTs developments, there has been a paradigm shift that sees, among other things, libraries moving from owning specific physical information items in a local collection to providing access to many information sources, regardless of their format and location. This shift from ownership to access appears to be the force that promotes consortia building among libraries and also increasing the rate of research studies on library consortia in Nigeria etc. (Posigha, Godfrey, & Seimode, 2015).

Locally, Kenya Library and Information Services Consortium (KLISC) was established in 2003 with the main objective of collective subscription to electronic resources to cope with the increasing cost of information resources. It was agreed that the Consortium would draw its membership from university libraries, research institutions, and public / national libraries. Since its inception, its secretariat has been based at the University of Nairobi Library. KLISC's vision is to be a leading library consortium with unlimited access to knowledge and information. The mission is to provide leadership and synergy building in knowledge and information resources sharing through capacity building, advocacy, networking and collaborations [5]. KLISC membership consists of universities (public and private), research institutions, tertiary institutions and national library. An institution may become a member upon a vote by the membership and payment of subscription. Currently, KLISC has 112 members. KLISC has partnered with International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP), Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL), International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), and Kenya Library Association (KLA). According to Mwanza (2014), KLISC has enabled Kenyan libraries to be able to access electronic information resources at low costs through bulk buying and negotiated prices.

Contributions of Consortia in Expanding Access to Information Resources

Collaborative efforts among and between libraries have been documented as far back as the late 19th century. Academic library consortia in the US have existed for multiple decades. Several library and information science authors have covered consortia history and development, notably Weber (1976), Alexander (1999), Kopp (1998), and Bostick (2001). Literature on library consortia suggests that there are considerable

advantages of consortia activities. The literature discuss about the benefits of library consortia from the perspective of shared purchasing of electronic resources and collection development along with resource sharing and networked systems [3]. The highlight of the benefits covered includes:

- i. Shared purchasing of digital content.
- ii. Sharing library materials through interlibrary loan or courier services.
- iii. Shared catalogues.
- iv. Advocacy.
- v. Expanded access to content not held by member libraries.

Chadwell (2011) however, states that while the literature about consortia and consortia websites provides more than adequate information describing the benefits of academic library consortia, the literature of marketing and sales argues that benefits and features alone do not represent value. A value proposition statement is a clear, compelling and credible expression of the experience that a customer will receive from a supplier's measurably value-creating offering, where, Value equals Benefits minus cost. Most libraries justify consortia membership costs by arguing that they realize savings through consortia deals for journal packages or databases. Value is more meaningful to many stakeholders in higher education because it demonstrates what an academic library enables its users to do, not just what financial investment in an academic library returns to the investor, in this case the home institution. Determining impact value requires eliciting information from library users. Impact value links an academic library's value more to services and librarians than to products and collections, but the services have to result in an experience or condition that helps improve their state, the value experience.

A study conducted by Dzandza and Alemna, 2011, on Challenges and Prospects of Consortia: A Case Study of the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Ghana (CARLIGH), found out that members of CARLIGH got access to electronic resources at reduced cost, benefited from free training workshops, resources and knowledge sharing, websites linked by hyperlink from the CARLIGH website, interlibrary lending and technical support. The study also found out that some academic libraries receive more support from vice chancellors due to their membership status. The respondents agreed that the formation of CARLIGH was a good initiative and gave the following reasons:

- i. Has given smaller libraries the chance to also to get electronic resources.
- ii. Enabled libraries to share information.
- iii. Enhanced access to electronic resources at reduced cost.
- iv. Serves as a platform to pool resources together.
- v. Attendance of workshop to share knowledge.
- vi. Has brought most of the academic libraries together (Dzandza & Alemna, 2011).

Libraries come together as a group to form a consortium because of the many benefits that it offers. Consortium membership expand the use of services and resources as users of the member libraries are allowed to make on premise use of each other's library resources and facilities, and interlibrary lending. Members also get to enjoy more favourable terms and conditions of use of e-resources not to mention the reduced costs of e-resources which is a good indication that the efforts of the consortia to leverage on their buying power as a consortium pays off (Fresnido & Yap, 2014).

According to Galyani and Talawar (2009), electronic publishing brought many possibilities for resource sharing and consortial activities have increased with advances in ICT. Co-operative and collaborative efforts have grown from being on the periphery with a limited amount of resource sharing to being integrated system-wide resource sharing in recent years. Consortia bring economy, efficiency and equality in information availability and use. Member institutions of a consortium have access to their own resources as well as for other institutions. This bridges the gap between the information resource rich libraries and those that are deficient. Member libraries also acquire more resources by paying less as consortium offer reduced costs in the inter-institutional document delivery processes for specific resources. Resource sharing is the greatest contribution of consortia for libraries today. Consortium increases the collective strength of resources of various institutions available to it through wider access to electronic resources at affordable cost (Galyani & Talawar, 2009).

Access to resources is today considered more important than the collection building. Library consortium facilitates libraries with the benefit of wider access to electronic information at affordable cost and at the best terms of licenses. A consortium, with the collective strength of resources of various institutions available to it, is in a better position to resolve the problems of managing, organizing and archiving the electronic resources (Islam & Mezbah-ul-Islam, 2000). The two authors give the following as the major contributions of library consortium:

1. Leverage resources by sharing existing resources or collection through virtual union catalogue and sharing of:
 - Collections and collaborating on collection development.
 - Electronic resources.
 - Storage of resources.
 - Sharing the archiving of resources.
 - Sharing of staff expertise.
 - Sharing risk.
2. Reduces the cost of library operations by obtaining a group purchased price for information products.

3. Bring pressure on especially publishers to reduce the rate of rise in the cost of purchasing information.

Library consortia are commonly formed to negotiate joint purchases and to share resources. Chauhan and Mahajan (2013) assert that library consortia, with their collective strength of participating institutions, have attracted highly discounted rates of subscription coupled with most favourable terms of agreement. They give an example of UGC-Infonet Digital Library Consortium which is being offered an offer lower by 50%-90%. Chadwell (2011) adds that most libraries justify consortial membership costs by arguing that they realize savings through consortial deals for journal packages or databases.

II. RATIONALE

The recent economic crisis in Kenya has led to higher education institutions be compelled to make major reductions in their budgeting. The Library budget has to be approved through justifications of the benefits of a service or a product. Subscription to KLISC has to be justified through membership benefits. Kenya has over 600 institutions but only 112 are KLISC members, not all the information providers are members. Very few studies have been done in Kenya on the contributions of KLISC to its member institutions. KLISC also seems to concentrate more on academic libraries; 62 out of 112 are University libraries.

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

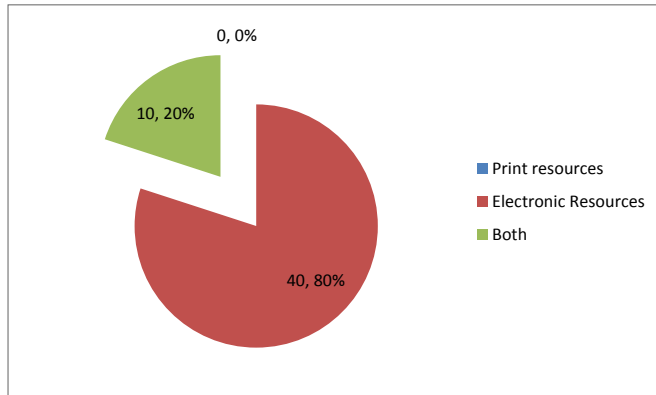
- i. To assess the contributions of KLISC towards access to information resources.
- ii. To identify challenges faced by KLISC members in relation to access and use of the information resources.

IV. RESEARCH METHODS

To assess the contributions of KLISC in expanding access to information resources, descriptive survey design was used. Descriptive survey is a method of collecting information by interview or administering questionnaires to a sample of individuals [9]. The design utilizes both elements of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. The population included in the study comprised of postgraduate students from Faculty of Theology and the university librarian. Purposive sampling was used to select the university librarian. A sample of the postgraduate student was selected using simple random sampling. A sample of 51 respondents was used; the university librarian and 50 postgraduate students.

V. RESULTS

A. Information Resources Consulted by Respondents

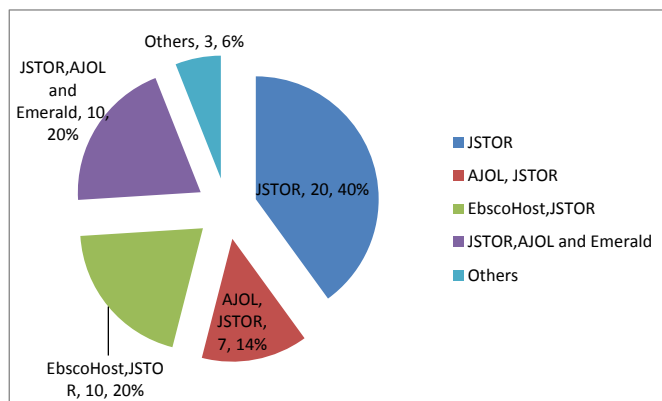


Source: Field data (2018)

Fig. 1: Information Resources Consulted by Respondents

The study sought to find out the information consultation behaviour of the students and it emerged that 10 respondents consulted both print and online resources available in the Library. This translated to 20% of the total respondents. The remaining 40 students or 80% of the respondents used online resources which are provided to them through the institution's membership to KLISC. None of the respondents consulted print materials only. This is evident that majority of the Theology postgraduate students are familiar with the KLISC's resources and actually use them for their studies. The familiarity was said to be due to the marketing of the resources done by the library staff. The university librarian indicated that, "we market the KLISC's subscribed resources through: orientations, organized training, in class during the Information Literacy course which is a common Unit to all the students in the St. Paul's."

B. Online Databases Used



Source: Field data (2018)

Fig. 2: Online Databases Used

Fig. 2 above shows usage of different databases accessed through KLISC. The Fig. 2 indicates that JSTOR is the most popularly used database in the Faculty of Theology. 20 students representing 40% of the total respondents consulted JSTOR. JSTOR has 140 Journal databases on Religion, hence the popularity. 10 respondents representing 20% of the total respondents consulted JSTOR, AJOL and Emerald. Another 10% or 10 respondents consulted both JSTOR and EbscoHost. 7 respondents representing 14% of the total respondents preferred AJOL and JSTOR while the remaining 3 respondents representing 6%, used other databases such as Sage, Ebrary Ebooks, and Cambridge University Press. The library catalogue has a customized search box that enables students to search across all the journal databases relevant to their search. Most theology students will get results from most of the above mentioned databases and majority do not find the need to do their search in other databases not listed among the results. There are other databases that also deal with Theology related subjects but are not used / highly used, such as De Gruyter, Gale Cengage Learning, Oxford Journals etc. From the Fig. 2 above, only 7 databases are consulted out of 58 databases available through KLISC.

C. Contributions of KLISC's Information Resources

TABLE I: CONTRIBUTIONS OF KLISC'S INFORMATION RESOURCES

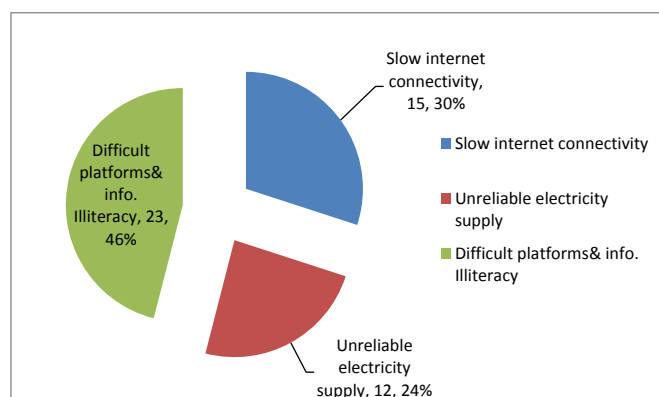
A	Convenience of access to resources	8
B	Timely completion of assignments	0
C	Up-to-date information	0
D	A&B	0
E	A&C	32
F	A,B&C	10
G	B&C	0
Total		50

Source: Field data (2018)

The study's main objective was to assess the contributions of KLISC in expanding access to information resources. Table I above shows the contributions of KLISC's information resources to respondents. 8 respondents who translate to 16% of the respondents reported that KLISC's resources were only conveniently accessed but did not provide up-to-date information nor contribute to their timely completion of assignments. 10 respondents, who represented 20% of the respondents, indicated that they were conveniently able to access KLISC's databases, get up-to-date information which contributed to their completing their work in time. The remaining 32 or 64% were able to conveniently access KLISC's information resources and were able to find very recent information resources.

The university librarian reported that through Workshops and trainings organized by KLISC, the staff get more equipped with knowledge on how to promote the usage as well as manage usage statistics of the databases subscribed to. These workshops have contributed to the knowledge base of the library staff.

D. Challenges



Source: Field data (2018)

Fig. 3: Challenges

Finally, the study also sought to identify the challenges experienced by KLISC's members. According to the Fig. 3 above, 46% of the respondents found the databases' platforms difficult to navigate as they were information illiterate. This represented 23 respondents. Slow internet connecting was reported as a challenge as well as unreliable electricity supply. This represented 30% and 24% respectively. The librarian also reported some of the challenges experienced, i.e. communication inadequacy between the publishers of these databases and the institutions, funding and inadequate marketing. Some major changes would take place in databases that the institution was not aware of.

VI. RELEVANCE / IMPACT ON POLICY AND PRACTICE

The study shows how KLISC resources and services have contributed to the member libraries as well as the challenges faced. This knowledge may help more Universities embrace the use of consortia and also the development of measures to handle the challenges that are identified.

The study provides information that may assist in formulation of guidelines for resource sharing among all libraries in Kenya as well as contribute to the existing body of knowledge. The information in this study may be useful to researchers who would wish to conduct a study on resource sharing in Kenya.

VII. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that KLISC has enabled the member libraries to have access to up-to-date information resources. However, these institutions only utilize a few of the databases. Also, some of the core databases are subscribed to separately resulting to the members incurring more costs or giving up on the databases. EbscoHost is an example with some of the databases that are subscribed to separately, e.g. ATLA. Also, most of the subscribed databases are rarely used; some due to irrelevancy while some users have low level of awareness about the existence of some databases.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study therefore recommends that KLISC together with the information managers promote the consortium services and products in Kenya and also create awareness of the various databases to information users. The members should also be made aware of what their subscription fee covers and the various databases they might be required to subscribe to separately should they need them. The membership requirements should also be revised to accommodate other institutions which are not yet members. Information illiteracy is a challenge that the study identified and this can only be tackled through frequent information literacy trainings done to library patrons. KLISC can collaborate with the information managers and librarians to have these trainings in institutions frequently, for both staff and students.

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