

An Assessment of the State of Readiness for Library Automation in Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Library Yola and Ramat Library, University of Maiduguri

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Abstract

This is a survey research carried out to assess the state of readiness for library automation in Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Library Yola and Ramat Library, University of Maiduguri. The study sought to ascertain the sources of their funding, available personnel and infrastructure on ground for automation. Questionnaire, interview and observation were used to collect data. The sample of the study was 27 professional librarians. 8 were from Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Library, Yola; 19 were from Ramat Library, University of Maiduguri. The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. The study found that: there was poor funding, and lack of/inadequate infrastructure and personnel for the purpose of library automation in both universities. It concluded that the two federal university libraries were not adequately ready for library automation. Hence, it recommended among others that, Vice-Chancellors should release enough funds to their respective university libraries for automation, Internet facilities and connection to the National Virtual Library of Nigeria.

Keywords: Assessment, Readiness, Library automation, University.

1. Introduction

Molhot (1978) agrees that before the introduction of computers to library services, librarians have been undervalued and their work tread as routine while their skills go unrecognized and under-utilized. The use of computers in performing library tasks has changed readers' perception of the role of librarians. Camber (1974) opines that those libraries, which have initiated a mechanization programme, have attracted attention within the library profession and have enhanced their reputation accordingly. Communication experts have said, "The world is a global village". This can only be possible with the library situation where resources of each other can be shared no matter the distance through the Internet. Summerhill (1994) Reid (1996) and Mcurdo (1998) have all stressed the importance of resource sharing through the Internet.

Before the introduction of computers into library operations in Nigeria, libraries and information centers had to manually manage their information resources. Such laborious practices tended to delay information processing and service delivery. The ineffectiveness of information services at that time, gave rise to the desire to automate the functions and services of libraries to provide better names for information management.

According to Mohammed (1990), computers were introduced to library services in Nigeria in late 1970s. Such libraries at that time were mainly those that belonged to multi-national organizations like International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Ibadan and some multi-national oil companies, but not university or public libraries. Despite the immense benefits of automation, the pace among libraries in Nigeria is still very slow because of the poor economic climate, poor state of information infrastructure, shortage of technical manpower and misplaced priorities. Oketunji (1999) opines that information technologies found in libraries in Nigeria at the present can be divided into three categories: computers, storage media and telecommunications. That was why many attempts by Nigerian Libraries to automate their functions and services failed because of the poor state of telecommunication and the attendant high cost of computer hardware and software.

There are myriad problems in the way of library automation in Nigeria. However, the World Bank loan of 120 million U.S. dollars to the education sector provided the needed impetus for university libraries that adopted common library application software like The Information Navigator for Library Management (TINLIB). TINLIB is library application software of the Information Management and Engineering Limited, London (TINMAN). It is modular application software comprising of Cataloguing, Circulation, Acquisition, Serials, Database Administrators and Report Generator to take care of the library's word processing needs. Radlow (1986) succinctly stated that automated processing, storing and retrieving of data have become so impressive that records can now be kept indefinitely and accessed in seconds.

A review of the libraries studied shows the University of Maiduguri is a second-generation university established in 1975. The Library was established in 1975. It assumed the present name in 1976. It started with a few books it inherited from former North East College of Arts and Science (NECAS) Library. At the end of November 2004, Agaja (2004) stated that the Library had a total of 296,968 volumes and 500 periodical titles on current subscription. The Federal University of Technology Yola was established by the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in 1980 as one of seven of its kind throughout the country. It belongs to the third generation of universities in Nigeria. The University Library, which was established in 1981, operated in a temporary building until on 3 October 1990, when it moved to its permanent building and was, renamed Ibrahim Babangida Library. The Library has an optimum capacity of 750 readers and a book stock of 50,000 volumes. As at 2003, the library had a book stock of 27,000 volumes and 6,585 volumes of journals (University Prospectus 2003). The study therefore assessed the state of readiness for library automation in Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Library Yola and Ramat Library, University of Maiduguri.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Planning library automation will involve proper feasibility study of the project to avoid waste of time, money, energy and to ensure the success of the project. In spite of its inherent benefits, library automation is a capital-intensive venture. This is because of the high cost associated with computer hardware and software. No project can succeed without a prior feasibility study. Wilson (1988) observes that computers however cost money – they are a capital charge on the organization's resources and they have standing maintenance and personnel costs associated with them.

It is this capital charge on the organization's resources that makes computerization programmes a capital-intensive venture. The adoption of any automation system in the library should be based on a wide range feasibility study, which will determine the adequacy of the programme. In light of the fact that there are now new hardwares and softwares used for library automation it becomes imperative for institutions to determine whether they have adequate sources of resources to operate library automation. Unless this is done, there are bound to be problems here and there. It is against these backdrops that these researchers assessed the state of readiness for library automation in Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Library Yola and Ramat Library, University of Maiduguri.

1.1.1 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

- (i) To find out sources of funding library automation in Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Library Yola and Ramat Library, University of Maiduguri
- (ii) To ascertain whether there are adequate human and material resources for library automation in Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Library Yola and Ramat Library, University of Maiduguri.

1.1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions were asked to guide the study:

- (i) What are the sources of funding for sources of funding library automation in Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Library Yola and Ramat Library, University of Maiduguri?
- (ii) Are there adequate human and material resources for library automation in Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Library Yola and Ramat Library, University of Maiduguri?

2 Methodology

The survey research method was chosen as appropriate for the study because of its advantages over other methods to unearth facts through the use of documents, records, questionnaire and interviews. Tuckman (1978) sees survey method as a particularly useful technique in education, as it is in public opinion polling. According to Wiersman (1985), the survey research deals more with questions of what is, rather than why it is so. This method was chosen because it is the best that can enable the researcher to take an in-depth study of the state of readiness for library automation in Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Library Yola and Ramat Library, University of Maiduguri.

The population of the study constitutes all professional librarians in Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Library Yola and Ramat Library, University of Maiduguri. A sample of the study was 27 professional librarians. 8 were from Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Library, Yola 19 were from Ramat Library at University of Maiduguri. The research instruments used for this study were questionnaire, interview and direct observation. In each of the libraries visited, observations were made. In order to facilitate the data collection at the two University Libraries, the researcher wrote letters to the respondents and sought the permission of the University Librarians to administer the interview questions to them and their System Librarians. Simple frequency counts and percentages were used in the analysis of data collected. Tables, frequencies, raw figures and percentages were used in the presentation of results thereby making interpretation and inference from them to be easy. Completed and received questionnaires were treated in the analysis and the results were reflected in the findings.

3 Data Analyses, Results and Discussion

The main purpose of the study was to assess the state of readiness for library automation in Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Library Yola and Ramat Library, University of Maiduguri.

Research Question 1: What are the sources of funding library automation in Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Library Yola and Ramat Library, University of Maiduguri?

See Table 1

Out of seven (7) questions asked to find out the respondents' knowledge of funding library automation and out of several alternative sources of internal and external sources, they chose only three as indicated in table 1. Six out of eight or 75 percent from IBB and 10 out of 19 or 52.6 percent from Ramat Library said initial funds from the National Universities Commission in Abuja, Nigeria. Three out of eight or 37.5 percent from IBB and 2 out of 19 or 10.5 percent from Ramat Library said their respective university libraries' votes were used. Education Trust Fund (ETF) provided alternative source of fund. This was agreed by 7 out

of 8 or 87.15 percent from IBB and 12 out of 19 or 63.1 percent from Ramat Library.

The only viable source of funding library automation in the two libraries evident from the data collected is the ETF. It remained the most viable source of funding library automation system in Nigerian University Libraries.

Research Question 2: Are there human and material resources for library automation in Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Library Yola and Ramat Library, University of Maiduguri?

See Table 2

Table 2 gives the list of available personnel and equipment for effective library automation in the two university libraries studied. From the available statistics of personnel and equipment on ground in each of the two libraries studied, the libraries may have to update their equipment and give priority attention to personnel training if they want to succeed in their libraries automation.

3.1 Findings

From the data gathered and analyzed so far, it is evident that there was poor funding, inadequate infrastructure and lack of personnel for the purpose of library automation in Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Library Yola and Ramat Library, University of Maiduguri.

3.2 Discussion

The findings of this work with respect to research question one revealed that the only viable source of funding library automation as identified in research question one in the two libraries is the Education Trust Fund (ETF). And there was poor funding of library automation in the two libraries. Keim (1985) did not support wholeheartedly that lack of funds is the bane of library automation. He agreed that though release of funds by Management was necessary but that failure of most automation programmes were interplay of management indecision and lack of proper planning with the little money available at the disposal of the libraries.

The finding for research question two shows there were no qualified personnel and infrastructure on ground to handle library automation in any of the library studied. Although there were many computer literate librarians in all the two libraries, yet none of them was trained on specialized library software. Without properly trained personnel in the studied libraries, no meaningful computerization programme can succeed.

3.3 Conclusion

At the end of the study, the following conclusions were drawn: library automation was not adequately funded by two authorities of the libraries studied. Education Trust Fund (ETF) remained the only viable source of funding the library automation in the two university libraries. There were no properly trained personnel to handle computerization in any of the libraries. As such, it could be concluded that the two libraries were not adequately ready for library automation.

3.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research and the conclusion therefore, the following recommendations are hereby made:

- i) Vice-Chancellors should release enough funds to their respective university libraries for automation, Internet facilities and connection to the National Virtual Library of Nigeria.

- ii) Vice-Chancellors should support their libraries' automation. They should support personnel training because computers on their own do not work and cannot solve any problem without human beings. Human development should be paramount in their minds.
- iii) Staff training is an expensive venture; therefore, if success must be achieved, in the automation of the two federal university libraries staff must be trained to do the job.

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Table 1. Sources of funding library automation in Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Library Yola and Ramat Library, University of Maiduguri

Sources	IBB Librarians	% Response	Ramat Librarians	% Response
Initial Funds by National Universities Commission	6	75	10	52.6
University's Library Vote	3	37.5	2	10.5
Alternative Source: ETF	7	87.5	12	6

Table 2: Personnel and Infrastructure for library automation in Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Library Yola and Ramat Library, University of Maiduguri

S/N	Professional/Equipment	IBB	Ramat
1.	Professional Librarians	3	1
2.	Para-Professional Staff	2	3
3.	Computer Analyst	1	0
4.	Computer Programmer	0	0
5.	Database Manager	1	0
6.	Computer Operators	0	4
7.	Number of PC's Available	5	5
8.	Number of Computers networked on the Internet	0	19
9.	Fax Machines Available	0	0
10.	Telephone Lines Available	2	1
11.	No of CD-ROMs Available	5	5
12.	No of Scanners Available	1	1
13.	Number of Printers Available	1	2
14.	Number of UPS Available	1	1

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