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RE-ENGINEERING LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES: NEW POTENTIALS FOR UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper presents some critical variables for the re-designing, re-constructing and re-building of library and information services in Nigerian Universities to meet the challenges brought about by ICT, globalization and the convergence of roles in the Universities. The paper posits that quality education and research can only be achieved through strong partnerships between libraries, academics and the university managers. Major organizational restructuring and strategic planning have been advocated.

INTRODUCTION

Libraries are a critical part of any educational institution. They provide vital resources, facilities and services to learners, teachers, scholars and practitioners. With rapid advances in technology, particularly in the way information is stored, accessed and disseminated electronically, libraries and librarians are developing new approaches and are playing an even more strategic role in universities. The university community is in demand of access to scholarly materials for teaching or research, publishing new research outputs, disseminating them to new communities, embarking on collaborative projects with colleagues in other institutions, providing students with new types of study materials and evolving new learning environments. These activities involve high technology, which directly involve or have bearing on the library. Not only will the library feel the impact of the new technologies, but it will also need to assume a strong leadership role in order to guide the adoption and implementation of this technology.

Engineering is the activity of applying scientific knowledge to the design, building and control of machines, roads, bridges, infrastructure etc. Re-engineering of the library and information service would therefore refer to redesigning and re-building of those variables that are components of re-constructing new service roles and re-defining the library and information service profession in Nigerian Universities. Without doubt, these most important factors which determine whether libraries are

able to meet the challenges they face are the skills and expertise of librarians, the strength of librarian's relationship with top management, the quality of the libraries' collection, funding and the implementation of a guided strategic development process. These factors are basic inputs for re-designing. Library and Information policies, standards and intuitional frameworks guiding the library profession are the engines that graft the design and would need re-building. Monitoring, implementation and evaluation are control measures that cement the emergence of platforms for service delivery. This paper discusses the need for Nigerian University libraries to re-design, re-build and control (re-engineer) library and Information service roles

Nigerian University Education and Re-Engineering

On the African continent, the need for strategic planning in higher educational institutions was not felt until in the 1990s when the universities and other higher institutions were at the precipice resulting from deteriorating quality education, inadequate funding accessioned by the downturn in national economies, staff and student unrest. The panacea, according to government circles and the World Bank was the development of strategic plans by higher institutions, increased investment in higher education, cultivation of centres of excellence and the creation of modern information centres. In Nigeria, the government through theNational Universities Commission (NUC), sensitized all universities and their stakeholders on the need to produce strategic plans by circulating documents on strategic plans to the Universities. More recently, donor agencies began to tie access to grants to the production of strategic plans.

Quality and quantity control are terms that have been the focus of management concern in recent years. The first implies an ultimate state of being, and the second seems to refer more to the processes of getting there. In library literature it would appear that the terms quality and effectiveness are being used to refer to the same thing: achieving a quality of service that satisfies to a high degree the information and research needs of faculty, students and other users. Generally, one common thread that runs through all strategic plans whether in industry or in non-profit organizations is quality In industry it is the quality of product, while in higher education it is the quality of teaching, research and the values attached to the institution. Typically, measuring user's satisfaction has been one of the ways libraries have always determined the quality of service offered to its patrons. Since the 1990s academic libraries have

adopted the Total Quality Management (TQM) principles from the industrial sector in measuring quality of service. In application of this principle, emphasis is laid on the customer, his wants and likes. Services must be seen to be satisfactory to customers (faculty, studentsand other library users).

A good starting point in assessing the quality of library service is to do a SWOT analysis i.e. attempt should be made to identify (1) strengths (what the library currently does well) (2) Weaknesses (what the library's current problems are) (3) opportunities (forecast possibilities for the future), and (4) threats (external pressures that could worsen in the future). The goals here being to leverage strengths, take advantage of opportunities; and address weaknesses that may easily be put right. In this way, the library will be able to discover and address factors affecting quality of service. Strategic planning similarly requires us to continually measure our performance, adjust activities to be able to arrive at our goal which in this case is quality service. Embodied in the institutional strategic plan should be provision for financial support for the core business of the university i.e. teaching, research and community services. Without adequate financial support quality will be compromised. Unfortunately, even with institutional strategic plans in place, University libraries in Nigeria remain grossly under funded. The ten percent hitherto allocated to library development has since 1999 ceased to come from government.

The question is how can the goals of quality teaching and research as contained in our Universities strategic plans materialize when the massive funds needs to bring our libraries up to date and maintain them are not forthcoming? Financial support for library resources and for capacity building is a sine qua non.

Variables for Re-Engineering
The Library Nomenclature

In recent times, university libraries provide a range of information services that demand that new names be adopted. Even though most still have the library services, alternative names tend towards converged services between content and technology. The shift from just library or library services is greater toward such designations as:

implications for library operatives. Undoubtedly then, the position which libraries occupy within organizational structure, their involvement in the processes of university administration and the relationships that they are able to forge across a diverse group of departments will to an extent determine what they are able to achieve, their ability to make the necessary changes, and their flexibility to respond to adapting needs. The status and visibility in the library are therefore critical and librarians must work hard to guarantee this. A typical organogram of University libraries is represented in Fig. 1.
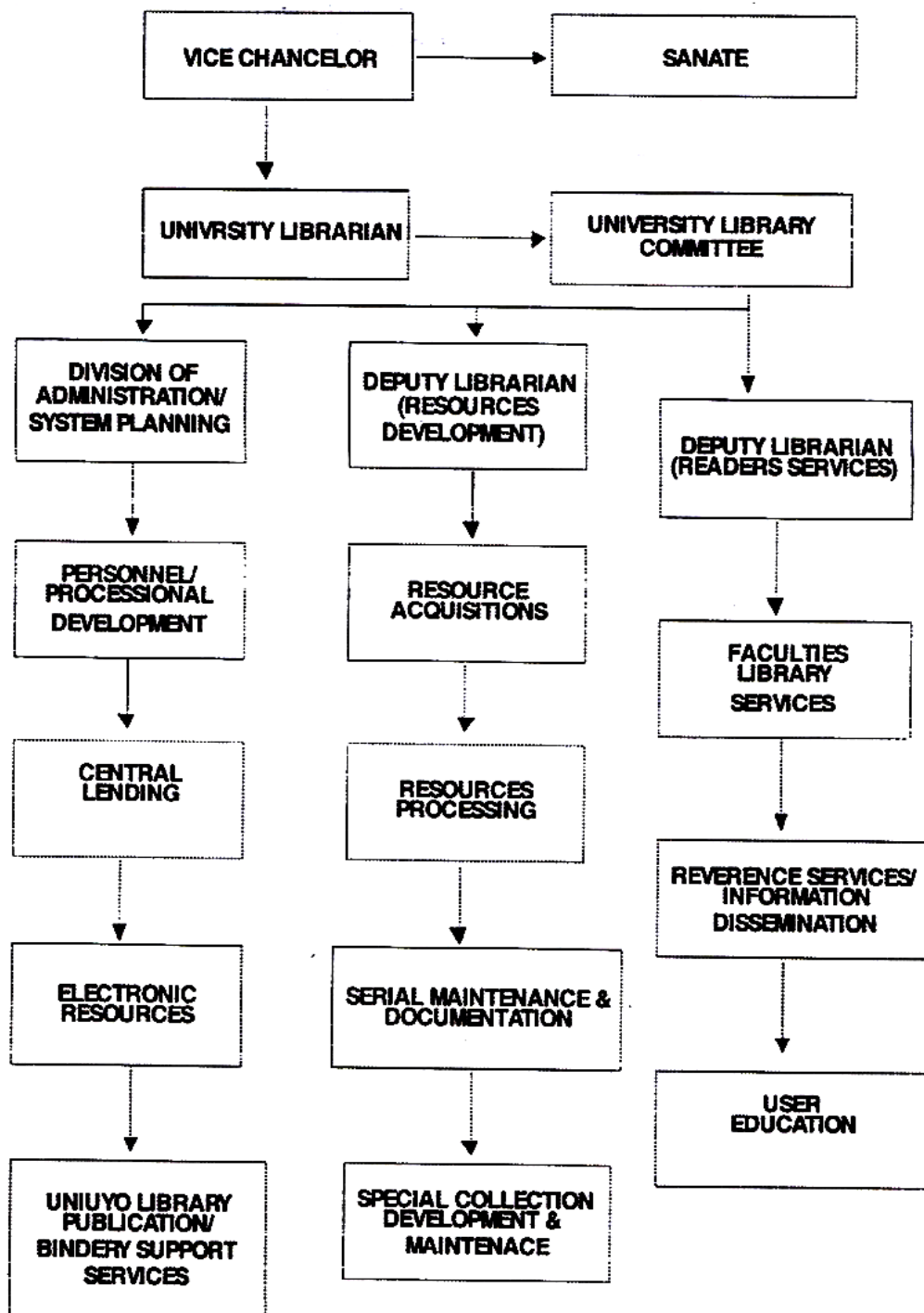
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DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATION/ SYSTEM PLANNING

DEPUTY LIBRARIAN (RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT)

DEPUTY LIBRARIAN (READERS SERVICES)

PERSONNEL/ PROCESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

RESOURCE ACQUISITIONS

FACULTIES LIBRARY SERVICES

CENTRAL LENDING

RESOURCES PROCESSING

REVERENCE SERVICES/ INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

SERIAL MAINTENANCE & DOCUMENTATION

USER EDUCATION

UNIUYO LIBRARY PUBLICATION/ BINDERY SUPPORT SERVICES

SPECIAL COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT & MAINTENACE

Fig. 1: ORGANIZATIONAL CHART OF THE UNIVERSITY OF UYO LIBRARY

Fig.2: Library and Information service
The Integrated entity and its divisional responsibilities

Collection Development	Promotion & Consultation	System Development& Networking Services	User Education & Information Literacy Training
* Library administration * Ordering, management, and circulation of periodicals *Data transfer and update of library database *Allocation and management of annual library budget *Inventory, maintenance and management of library collections	* Circulation of diverse information resources * Reference services and technical support * Planning and implementation of user education activities *Assessment of information technology knowledge / skills for the campus employees * evaluation and promotion of new application software and information systems * Maintenance of the standard for the campus wide information environment * Facilitation of information sharing and components with off campus partners.	*planning, building and managing the campus wide network * Research development and promotion of new network applications 8Maintenance of network facilities *Application, maintenance and management of pubic computer resources *research and development of network	* Library Orientation of freshmen * Teaching of use of Library and information retrieval as general studies programme * Continuous training for information handling skills and Information literacy acquisition

Developing Library Services to Meet Changing Needs

Much of what librarians do now is invisible to the average member of the university community. Users now access information remotely and electronically and without an appreciation of the library's behind – the-scenes role. The challenge for library is not only to develop new and innovative services, but also to communicate what they are doing better, and to users who may not always physically enter the library building. Figure 3 shows priorities for service development which are clearer ways of presenting the library and its services, showing exactly where and how they are well placed to contribute and encourage colleagues to actively seek their input in developing new initiatives to assist research and teaching. Figure 3 is a representation of the sum of priorities of librarians across the Commonwealth Universities in rank and order. Fig. 3 (pg. 21).

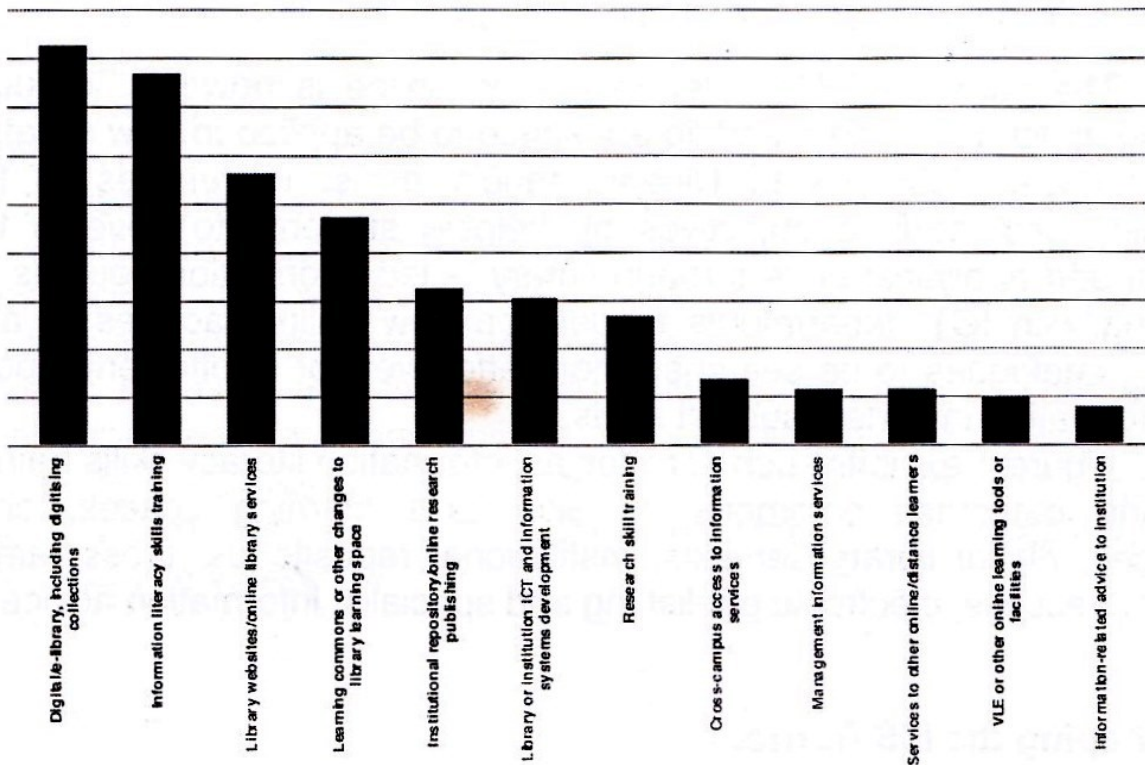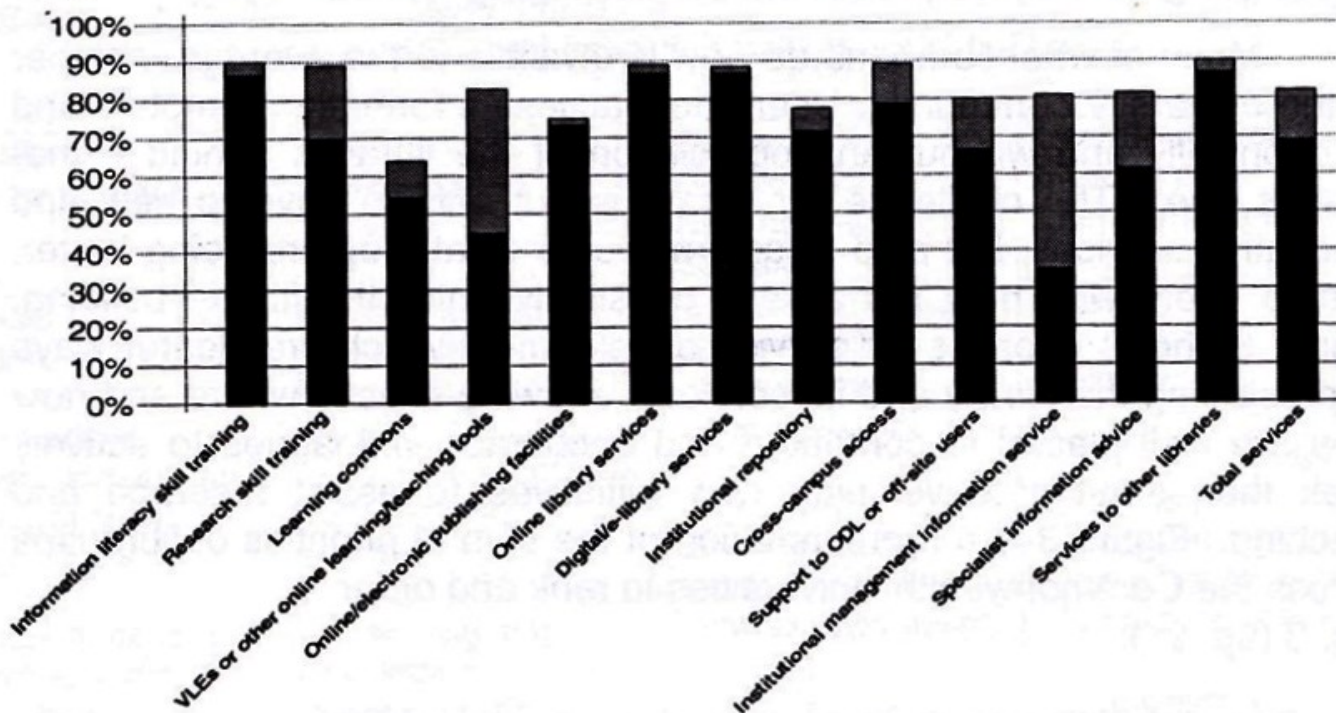**Figure 3: Priorities for service development, relative importance**

Figure 4 shows information related services to universities provided jointly or exclusively by libraries in commonwealth Universities.

Fig. 4: Information-related services provided and by whom

The Migration of greater resources online is however, gradually freeing up librarian's time and library space to be applied to new initiatives and services. Libraries in Nigeria should assist universities in their teaching and learning objectives by helping students to develop their critical and analytical skills through library - led information courses and working with ICT departments to develop new online facilities to allow library catalogues to be searched more effectively or to offer entry points for information in certain subject fields.

Figure 4 exhibits such services as information literacy skills training, learning outcomes commons as alternative learning spaces, online services, digital library services, institutional repositories, cross-campus network access, electronic publishing and specialist information advice.

Re-Shaping the LIS Curricula

The skills that librarians need for a modern library have changed and are continuing to change fast. In addition to greater ICT skills, librarians are now required to be teachers and to be actively involved in the development of student learners, exploring new pedagogical methods in the process. Bringing complex cross-departmental or cross-institutional

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projects to fruition, such as large-scale repositories or digital libraries, requires project management skills. Leadership is critical to ensure that libraries have a strong voice in the development of institutional strategy and policy. Large Scale collaborative investigation and multidisciplinary teams. spanning institutions means that the services of dedicated information specialist are required.

Major trends that must emerge in the curricula of Nigerian library schools are:

(a) Addressing broad information environments and problems
(b) Increasing the infusion of ICT
(c) Structuring specialization in Major LIS areas
(d) Targeting specific user populations

Conclusion

Positioning our institutions of higher education to be able to face the challenges brought about by ICT, globalization, knowledge proliferation, etc require substantial funding of the library. Anything short of this will mean that the institutional goals and objectives as specified in the strategic plans will remain largely on paper. In this this article, I have described a real case of reengineering a university information service organization. The experience tells us that the obstacles to the change [process are not technological, but organizational, and they demand major strategic planning and tactical management. It is our hope that the experiences and insights identified herein will significantly improve the probability of success by others and create avenues for future research and initiatives that will lead to improvements in this critical area of information services.

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