

# Assessment of Resource Sharing Activities Among Libraries in Zambia

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## **Abstract**

**Purpose** -The study assessed the state of resource sharing activities among libraries in Zambia.

**Objectives** - The study objectives were to establish the state of resource sharing activities obtaining among libraries in Zambia, to ascertain the challenges faced by libraries in resource sharing and to establish whether a policy framework on resource sharing existed in Zambia.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A survey method was used to collect data from selected libraries in Zambia through self-administered questionnaire and interviews.

**Findings**- The findings of this study revealed that the state of resource sharing between libraries was unsatisfactory due to the following factors inadequate funding, lack of a unified national union and institutional framework to promote resource sharing among libraries. Further, the study identified lack of awareness and sensitization on the importance of resource sharing among libraries and limited education and training among librarians as other forms of obstacles to effective resource sharing.

**Originality/Value**-This is the first in-depth research on the study on the state of library cooperation in Zambia looking at the aspect of resource sharing activities among libraries. It allows researchers and relevant stakeholders to investigate, compare and come up with effective strategies to promote resource capacity in libraries in Zambia

**Keywords:** Consortia, Library, Networking, Resource sharing, Zambia.

## I. INTRODUCTION

According to Adam and Usman (2013), no library by result has any hope of being self-sufficient in this information age. It is neither possible nor feasible for a library irrespective of its size, to be self-reliant in terms of collection. Due to the exponential growth and the increasing cost of information resources, it is difficult for a library to acquire all the documents, which are required by the users of a library. Resource sharing embodies a wide range of physical, intellectual and conceptual resource on the one hand and a body of people with library and information needs on the other hand. Available studies have merely looked at aspects of library cooperation, which have tended to emphasize objectives of library co-operation, materials and the process. For instance, (Chifwepa, 1991) conducted a study which looked at the state of library cooperation among agriculture libraries in Zambia. Chisenga and Chelemu (1983) on the other hand conducted a research which looked at the state of library interlending in Zambia in particular document supply which targeted libraries along the line of rail. Resource sharing on the other hand takes a much broader view to include a wide range of physical, intellectual and conceptual resources on the one hand and a body of people with library and information needs on the other hand. In Zambia very little activity and research has been conducted about resource sharing. However, the Zambia Library Consortium (ZALICO) was formed through a memorandum of understanding for the sole purpose of maximizing accessibility of their information resources to the Zambian clientele, as well as achieving cost-effectiveness in the procurement and distribution of such resources (Sekabembe, 2002). The Consortium seeks to facilitate nationwide cooperation in the mobilization, documentation, access to and

distribution of, information resources in the country through ICT application. According to Shachaf (2003), the importance of resource sharing in libraries cannot be over emphasized. Studies conducted by Okeagu and Okeagu (2008); Edem (2010); Omekwu (2006) and Nwalo (2008), have shown that the global information explosion, the cut in library budgetary allocations, the rising costs and complexities of information resources as well as the need to provide the user community with optimal access to needed information make resources sharing initiatives indispensable. In Zambia there has not being any research to assess the status of resource sharing activities amongst libraries.

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

According to Shachaf (2003), the importance of resource sharing in libraries cannot be over emphasized. Studies conducted by Okeagu and Okeagu (2008); Edem (2010); Omekwu (2006) and Nwalo (2008), have shown that the global information explosion, the cut in library budgetary allocations, the rising costs and complexities of information resources as well as the need to provide the user community with optimal access to needed information make resources sharing initiatives indispensable. In Zambia there has not being any research to assess the status of resource sharing activities among libraries. Available studies have merely looked at aspects of library cooperation, which have tended to emphasize objectives of library co-operation, materials and the process. For instance, (Chifwepa, 1991) conducted a study which looked at the state of library cooperation among agriculture libraries in Zambia. Chisenga and Chelemu (1983) on the other hand conducted a research which looked at the state of library interlending in Zambia in particular document supply which targeted libraries along the line of rail. Resource

sharing on the other hand takes a much broader view to include a wide range of physical, intellectual and conceptual resources on the one hand and a body of people with library and information needs on the other hand. This study therefore looks at the state of resource sharing and networking activities among libraries in Zambia and proposes some strategies to promote these activities

### III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main aim of the study was to assess the state of resource sharing activities among libraries in Zambia. The specific objectives were:

1. To establish the factors that affect resource sharing activities in Zambia
2. To ascertain the challenges faced by libraries in resource sharing
3. To establish whether a policy framework on resource sharing exists in Zambia

### IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature was reviewed in relation to the state of resource sharing amongst libraries in Zambia. The literature review indicates that there has never been a study of this type done in Zambia and that studies in this area are overall limited.

#### A. *The need for Library resource sharing*

Islam (2012) states that the main assumption guiding resource sharing is that there is no library that can provide for all the needs of its clientele. For this reason, resource sharing is used to obtain materials not available in one library from another library. Resource sharing is definitely one important area in library service that cannot be over emphasized, its serves as a panacea to a lot of library problems

#### B. *Current trends in resource sharing*

Krubu and Osawaru (2011), state that globally, with the invention of Information and Communication Technology, libraries now use various types of technologies to aid the services they render. Everyday new technological advances affect the way information is handled in libraries and information centers and resource sharing is no exception

#### C. *The role of bibliographic utilities in resource sharing*

According to Lynch (1997) some certain tools are to be developed first for effective resource sharing through network preferably using Internet. These include databases, Union lists, Union catalogues, Online Public Access Catalogues (OPAC) sharing and metadata harvesting and Electronic publications and multimedia. Langley, Gray & Vaughan (2003) report that effective resource sharing involved two major elements. One is resource and the other is player. First is there has to be resources to share and then there should be needy players/collaborators for exchange. They further state that library consortia, professional associations and universities play a major role in creating and sharing resources electronically.

#### D. *Library Consortia*

The contribution of consortia activities cannot be overemphasized. Consortia support resource sharing and provides services to users through programs in cooperative acquisition, access to electronic resource, access to physical collection, enhances interlibrary loan, and document deliver (Nwalo, 2008). Consortium of libraries is well known for sharing of resources all over the world. Information explosion, emergence of Internet and particularly World Wide Web as a new medium of information storage and gateway make the consortium of libraries come more into sight

than before. Nwalo (2008) reports that Africa as a continent has many libraries distributed among the nations but the levels of understanding and practice of library consortium, resource sharing and networking vary from region to region because of the different levels of Information Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure. Although the idea of co-operation has been in existence for many years, library consortium is still at its infancy in many countries in developing world like Africa. A study by Chisenga and Chelemu (1996) on the state of interlibrary lending operations in Zambia reports that existing activities were concentrated on the two highly urbanized provinces, the Copper belt and Lusaka. They found out that interlibrary lending schemes operated on an informal basis, lacking any form of co-ordination, in the absence of any rules or regulatory code. Earlier on Chifwepa (1991) in his attempt to propose a strategy for cooperation among agricultural libraries in Zambia conducted a study to investigate agricultural library cooperation in Zambia. The study identified a number of barriers namely Inadequate personnel and human resources, lack of a clear policy or legislation, conflicts among institutional missions, goals and objectives, lack of tools for cooperation (Union catalogues).

### ***E. Institutional framework***

For any meaningful collaboration to take place a formal agreement needs to be in place. This section presents literature for the need to formalize resource sharing activities.

Tonta (2000) in explaining the formalized arrangement of resource sharing made by International Federation of Library Association (IFLA) stated that this arrangement is a common feature of collaboration between two

or more libraries especially when the geographic and political borders separate the participants. For resource sharing to be successful, there should be mutual objectives, joint decision-making processes and continuous improvement for all participants.

## **IV . METHODOLOGY**

A survey design method design was used to collect data. The target populations were 41 past and present member libraries of the Zambia Library Consortium (ZALICO) drawn from the following towns Livingstone, Monze, Lusaka, Kabwe, Kitwe and Ndola and stakeholders involved in Library activities. At the time of the study there were no available statistics on the exact number of libraries in Zambia, though the Zambia Library Service estimated the figure to be in the range of about 1000 spread across the country. In view of this, not all libraries could be included in the study. Therefore, a purposive sampling technique was used to choose a sample size of 41 libraries that are past and present of ZALICO according to the records obtained from ZALICO secretariat. This sample included sixteen (16) academic libraries comprising university and college libraries drawn from public and private funded institutions; two (2) school libraries i.e. Libala High School and the International School of Lusaka; seven (7) public libraries and eleven (11) special/research libraries. Thus, the total number of respondents was forty-one (41). The study also captured 7 key informants for the interviews. In view of this a number of considerations were taken into account to choose the sample. The basic criteria were that the libraries at one time were members or were currently members of the ZALICO. The libraries were manned by personnel with the necessary library studies qualifications and had the necessary ICT infrastructure to support

resource sharing activities. The data collection instruments used in this study were self-administered questionnaires, interview guide and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with seven key informants namely the current president of LIAZ, the Administrative Assistant at ZALICO secretariat, the Director National Archives of Zambia, One senior member of the teaching staff from the UNZA and Evelyn Hone College Departments of Library and Information Studies respectively, the Director at ZAMREN and last but not the least the PERI country coordinator in Zambia. Qualitative data which were collected from open-ended items in the questionnaire were analyzed thematically using content analysis, as themes and sub themes emerged from the data. The quantitative data which were collected from closed-ended items in the Questionnaire were analyzed by the use of descriptive statistics in form of percentages and frequencies. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to enhance the analysis.

## V. RESULTS

### A. *State of Resource Sharing*

To establish the factors that affect resource sharing activities in Zambia, respondents were asked to indicate their views on the overall state of resource activities among libraries in Zambia, Using a four-point Likert rating scale. This comprised 1= Very good, 2=Good, 3= Average, 4= satisfactory 5=Unsatisfactory. Figure 4 below indicates that;

Of the 36 respondents 26 (72%) thought that the state of resource sharing activities among libraries in Zambia was average. Key informants unanimously stated that the state of resource sharing among libraries in Zambia was unsatisfactory. Most of the interviewees stated that Union catalogs and, Union lists to enable

libraries Know what was available in other libraries were non-existent

### B. *Factors influencing resource sharing*

The second objective of the research was to ascertain the challenges faced by libraries in resource sharing. The data obtained from key informants revealed that a number of challenges affected effective resource sharing among libraries such as lack of sensitization, poor funding, lack of a policy to regulate library services in Zambia, poor Internet bandwidth lack of well-developed ICT infrastructure a lack of requisite skills in ICT among others. The interviews also revealed a number of issues influencing resource sharing among libraries. It was revealed that Libraries do not have the basic infrastructure to initiate cooperative programs

TABLE 1  
Challenges to Resource sharing

RESPONSES	YES (%)	NO (%)
Inadequate Funding	72.2	27.8
Passiveness	75.0	25.0
Lack of Skilled manpower	36	64
Limited Internet access	47.2	52.8
Inadequate ICT infrastructure	66.7	33.3
Inadequate resources to share	75.0	25.0
Lack of awareness	72.2	27.8
Geographical distance	94.4	5.6

### C. *Institutional Framework*

On whether a policy framework on resource sharing existed in Zambia, the

respondents were asked to state whether their libraries had a written policy on library resource sharing. The majority 21 (59%) of the respondents said they did not have one, while only 7(19%) of the respondents said yes and 8(22%) were not sure. The results reveal that majority of libraries in Zambia have no written policy on library resource sharing Though from the interviews some informants felt that maybe some aspects of policy guidelines were covered in some collection development policies of respective libraries.

In the absence of written policy libraries were asked if they had a memorandum of understanding agreement with libraries, they shared resources with. Of the 36 respondents 7(19%) said yes and 20(56%) did not have one. It was established further from the interviews that usually these agreements were not effective because they were not legally binding. The case in point being the ZALICO memorandum of understanding.

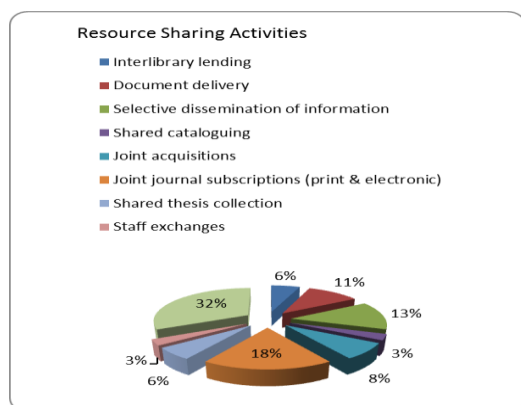


Fig.1: Resource sharing activities

## VI. DISCUSSION

The present study on the state of resource sharing activities among libraries in Zambia has revealed that overall the existing state of resource sharing activity among libraries in Zambia was unsatisfactory. A fundamental obstacle to the attainment of this activity was lack of adequate resources. Library

collections are inadequate in most of the libraries and even where collection is adequate it remains underused. Lack of qualified staff prevents the proper development, either of document collections or of user education programs, and even where this is not a problem, librarians often have to struggle with inadequate finance, cumbersome organizational structures and a lack of basic legislative support. The study revealed that 72 percent of the respondents said that the state of resource sharing among libraries in Zambia was unsatisfactory. These results were further augmented by responses from the interviewees who stated this was so due to inadequate funding to libraries. Similar results were reported by other investigators for instance Tanvir (2005) reported that in West Africa resource sharing between University libraries is very low. The low rate of interlibrary loan activity is also exemplified by a study which was conducted by Rosenberg, (2005) on University libraries in Africa, of which it was found that interlibrary lending (the main, if not the only, form of resource sharing practiced), was minimal, especially in-country and within Africa. Inadequate funding has been ranked as the greatest impediment to resource sharing among libraries in Zambia. Results indicate that 72.2 % of the respondents attributed lack of funding to be the major challenge to resource sharing among libraries in Zambia, similarly in Nigeria Ikem and Nwalo (2002) also identified gross under funding as one of the challenges of resource sharing. In this study it was revealed that there was no policy framework to support resource sharing in Zambia (69%) percent of the respondents indicated that they did not have a written policy which gave guidelines on library resource sharing. This situation was compounded by lack of a library act to support library activities in Zambia Ranganathan (1960)

shares this opinion but adds that the compelling reason for library legislation is the distribution of the financial burden of the maintenance of universal library service among the various levels of taxation, federal state and local in the light of the tax burden pattern of the country. Mittal (1996) went further to argue that the three elements of library legislation are structure, management and finance. Furthermore (Chifwepa, 1996) in his advocacy for library legislation in Zambia indicated that it was an urgent necessity in that it gave a specific institution a legal mandate to oversee the development of the libraries and their operations were of the view that even if they had policies or MOU's, so long as they are not backed by law it would be difficult to enforce them.

## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study makes the following recommendations:

- It is recommended that LIAZ/ ZALICO should be pro-active in making sure that the designated "national libraries" reclaim their roles as focal points for national bibliographic control. Necessary resources should be sought that these libraries develop the respective national Union catalogs and the national bibliography.
- The problem of inadequate funding of libraries has affected the libraries effective participation in resource sharing activities. A National Advisory Board with Government representation should be created to oversee resource sharing activities. This will be tasked with the responsibility of lobbying for funds
- I.C. T's and the Internet present a number of possibilities for library

resource sharing. Despite the challenges presented in the research for library to adequately harness these most of the libraries had Internet connectivity. Therefore, this research proposes that a National Virtual Library should be created. This will act as the national focal point of the nation's bibliographic output. Standardized software can be sourced to link the websites of these libraries. For a, start University libraries can start this project under the supervision of ZALICO in conjunction with ZAMREN.

- In order to spearhead the establishment of regional resource sharing networks. Co-ordination committees need to be created in each sector for example Academic libraries should have its own network with the University of Zambia as a focal point. Special libraries could have a network and National Institute for scientific research as a national focal point etc. etc.
- Capacity building training programs need to be organized under the auspices of ZALICO to equip library staff.
- It is recommended that LIAZ and ZALICO should be proactive in formulating a policy which will provide guidelines on library resource sharing.
- It is recommended that the leading institutions in librarianship education in Zambia namely the University of Zambia and Evelyn Hone College should re-evaluate their respective curriculum to accommodate the syllabus on library resource sharing which they have sidelined over the years

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