

DEVELOPING A NATIONAL LIBRARY CONSORTIUM IN ZIMBABWE: LESSONS LEARNT FROM OTHER COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the main lessons learnt from other countries to aid in accelerating the development of library consortia in Zimbabwe. The study explored the development of library consortia in southern Africa, other parts of Africa and countries outside Africa. The study used a survey research method as a single research design. The survey design allowed for methodological pluralism. The study sought to generate knowledge on the experiences of other countries in developing library consortia for nationwide access. The main research question driving the study is “What lessons can Zimbabwe learn from the successes and challenges of library consortia in southern Africa and elsewhere to construct a model that will support the country’s national development agenda?” The research sites for this study were academic libraries subscribing to the Zimbabwe University Library Consortium (ZULC) and the College and Research Library Consortia (CARLC). The researcher selected 10 members from the ZULC and five members from the CARLC as research sites. The lessons drawn from other countries were used as the basis for developing a library consortia model for Zimbabwe. Lessons on library consortia developments with regard to experiences, challenges and opportunities have been drawn, and an integrated multifaceted model is suggested for Zimbabwe to develop a national consortium providing for nationwide access. The study recommends that there should be a special investigation into the establishment of the general consortium, involving representatives from public, school, and other special libraries. Developing and consolidating structures for connecting the library consortia are necessary to ensure the effective and successful operationalisation of the federated model.

Keywords: access to information and collaboration; development; library consortia; resource sharing

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The world over, the twenty-first century has seen libraries evolving new strategies to overcome numerous challenges, for example, underfunding and increasing costs of library resources (Chisita 2017). Dong and Zou (2009, 1) attribute the rise of library consortia to the information explosion, escalating costs of reading material, strict budget allocations, and the increasing demand for improved service. The development of several models of library consortia in different parts of the world provides lessons for Zimbabwe on how to develop a library consortium with provision for nationwide access to information to support learning, teaching and research. There are lessons that Zimbabwe can draw from the experiences of other countries in southern Africa, other parts of Africa and outside Africa. The key factors that contribute to the success of interlibrary cooperation and the realisation of the above-mentioned benefits include funding, commitment, shared goals, and vision. Okeagu and Okeagu (2008, 252–256) state that library cooperation has to be based upon four prerequisites, namely common will, common goals that are simple and convincing for paymasters, organisational structures which help in crossing organisational boundaries, and the existence of an agreeable and efficient agent or agencies.

The importance of library consortia cannot be underestimated considering the dynamics in the global information landscape. Katsirikou (2003) noted that library consortia will become even more important in the future by assisting libraries in implementing and managing the process of change. A library consortium imbued with a deep understanding of how each of its members copes with various issues in the information and knowledge age is better positioned to overcome challenges (Hirshon 1999). Hormia-Poutanen et al. (2006) state that there are numerous models for consortia in developed countries. Library consortia progress from one model to another as members strengthen their association through a common agenda and a desire to widen participation in consortia activities. Hirshon (1999, 125) grouped library consortia into different categories, depending on the function and structure. Library consortia models have their merits and demerits, as well as their differences and similarities. Ghosh, Biswas, and Jeevan (2006, 600–603) concluded that each library consortia model has its advantages and disadvantages after studying library consortia in India. They noted that there was no single best model for a consortium but recommended developing eclectic models.

Sheshadri et al. (2011, 368–378) states that globally the number of existing library consortia has grown steadily in the last decade of the twentieth century since the pioneering days. The list of organisations listed on the International Coalition of Library Consortia's (ICOLC) website represents international, national, regional, statewide, and also other initiatives. O'Neill and Gammon (2009) explored the history of consortia and revealed that collaborative and cooperative efforts in collection development among libraries started hundreds of years ago. The same author states that later in the twentieth century, economic, social and technological changes instigated growth of consortia and

enabled libraries to work efficiently in a collaborative manner for collection building. The role of the Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL) and the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) in supporting the development of library consortia in Africa has centred on building capacity to use, manage and communicate research information (Mapulanga 2012, 253–255).

Olden (2015, 143) states that during the nineteenth and twentieth century the colonialists established subscription libraries disguised as public libraries because they provided exclusive library services to the white settlers who were willing to pay. The author argues that public libraries in southern Africa used subscriptions as a way to discriminate against the disadvantaged Africans. The significant era in the development of libraries in southern Africa include the colonisation, post-colonial and post-independence era. Olden (2015, 144) states that the modern public library was established at different times in different parts of Africa, for example, the establishment of the Gold Coast Library Board in 1949 in Ghana, and Tanzania's Tanganyika Library Services Board in 1963. The major breakthrough in the growth of the formal public library was initiated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Gardner 1971).

UNESCO's involvement in the development of libraries in West Africa began in 1953 with the conference on public library development in Africa, in Ibadan, in Nigeria. It was a momentous event, which led to the development of the first professional association called the West Africa Library Association (WALA) (Kigongo-Bukenya 2009, 21–45). Udoumoh and Okoro (2007) describe academic libraries as the nerve centres of the university. This description represents the critical and tripartite role that academic libraries play in supporting the teaching, learning and research needs of the university (Samea 2015). The author acknowledges the critical role of the academic library in supporting the educational and research goals, and in providing the tools needed for faculties, students, administrative staff and the community (Samea 2015). Okojie (2010, 404) noted how librarians relied on their parent institutions to provide adequate funding for libraries. The author highlighted the extent to which libraries depended on their parent institutions up to a time when the economy of most African countries began to take a downturn from the late 1970s, resulting in cutbacks in every sector, including the library and information sector.

However, Mavodza (2014, 93) noted that libraries in Zimbabwe were facing acute technological and funding challenges and these challenges were affecting their endeavour to provide for the information needs of the academic communities. In 2006, in a study on funding of university libraries, Kavulya (2006) concluded that there were three key sources of funding, namely funding from a parent organisation, user fees, and donor funding and income generation. An example is the ZULC that pays for e-resources collectively for its members at negotiated rates through the INASP's Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERI). This benefits its members through access to full-text journal resources, databases and backup support for document delivery. In

2014, the ZULC had 15 full members (all of which are universities), and six affiliate members, which include colleges and polytechnics (Chikonzo 2014).

Mabuto and Tendai (2015) argue that university libraries in Zimbabwe are developing from humble beginnings that are characterised by meagre resources. The authors cite the Great Zimbabwe University library which was established in 2000 with an initial collection of 481 volumes. The collection has since grown to 17 500 volumes and a subscription to over 10 000 electronic journals as at October 2013. Munatsi described the College and Research Libraries Consortium (CARLC) as “... a grouping of government college and research libraries whose mission is to act as the chief catalyst in the overall development of member libraries through leadership, support, motivation, research and advocacy including championing access to electronic information resources and technologies” (Munatsi 2009). Polytechnics are government libraries since they are under the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development. The CARLC is viewed as one of the most important consortia in promoting the interests of government libraries (Mavodza 2014).

CONTEXTUAL SETTING

The contextual setting for the study is Zimbabwe. The study focused on library consortia in Zimbabwe namely, the ZULC and the CARLC. The ZULC dates back to 2001 when seven university libraries came together to create a platform for resource sharing among members. Ndlovu (2011) traces the origins of the ZULC to February 2000, when the various university libraries conglomerated to discuss ways of cooperating as one group. He states that after discussions, a funding proposal was written to the Open Society Institute of Southern Africa (OSISA) for the formation of university library consortia. Bhukuvhani, Chiparausha, and Zuvalinyenga (2012) explain how university libraries in Zimbabwe obtain cheaper access to electronic resources through special consortial arrangements. Chisita (2017) argue that the development of the ZULC and the CARLC is a response to economic challenges pertaining to resource sharing and to improving the quality of academic library services. They comprise universities, polytechnics and colleges in Zimbabwe. While the ZULC has developed into a full-fledged consortium subscribing to e-resources, the same cannot yet be said about the CARLC, which has to grapple with the complexities of the digital era. In other words, these consortia also need to cooperate with each other to fight increasing costs (Chisita 2017). The overall development path of library consortia in Zimbabwe can, however, be better envisioned when correlated with the country’s national development agenda.

Zimbabwe’s development agenda has been driven by the desire to correct socio-economic imbalances emanating from Company rule (British South African Company) in 1890, and the Rhodesia Front’s UDI (unilateral declaration of independence) from 1965 to 1979. The country therefore embarked on several development programmes.

These include the Transitional National Development Plan (1981), the First Five-Year and the Second Five-Year Development Plans (1982–1990), the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP), the Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST), the Short Term Economic Recovery Programme (STERP 1 and 2), the National Economic Reform Programme (NERP) (2003), the Millennium Economic Recovery Programme (MERP), and the current Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET), from 2013 to 2018 (Matutu 2014). Zimbabwe's national development is anchored on a trajectory for long-term development known as "Vision 2020: Zimbabwe's vision is to be a united, strong, democratic, prosperous and egalitarian nation with a high quality of life for all Zimbabweans by the year 2020" (Zimbabwe Vision 2020 1996).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The development of library consortia is a universal trend and Zimbabwe is no exception to this phenomenon. Library cooperation among public, school and special libraries in Zimbabwe is characterised by basic interlibrary loans (ILL), while in academic institutions such as universities and colleges, cooperation is manifested through library consortia, namely the ZULC and the CARLC. Library consortia have the potential to contribute immensely to national development through providing users access to information. Currently in Zimbabwe, only academic libraries are organised into library consortia, while the public and school libraries are excluded (Chisita 2017).

The problem is that without drawing lessons on the development of library consortia from other countries, it would be difficult to develop and implement suitable library consortia models for nationwide access to electronic scholarly content. Zimbabwe desperately needs a library consortium model with the capacity to provide for nationwide access to information. This scenario has created and perpetuated separate development among all libraries and this is likely to undermine national development since access to information is critical.

Zimbabwe can draw lessons from other countries within and outside Africa, so that it will be able to develop library consortia models that will resonate well with the country's ZIMASSET blueprint with regard to human capital development. Access to high quality information by researchers, scholars and citizens is a critical component for national development, hence the need for a vibrant national library consortium. The success of ZIMASSET cannot be accomplished without a high quality human capital base and hence the need for research on innovative library consortia models. The successful implementation of national development programmes will continue to rely on a well-defined and supported national information education architecture which includes libraries as special vehicles for providing nationwide access to information.

AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The study aimed to examine the experiences of other countries within southern Africa, other parts of Africa and outside Africa with regard to best practices in modelling library consortia, challenges, and opportunities in developing library consortia library cooperation in Zimbabwe.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- a. What lessons can Zimbabwe learn from the successes and challenges of library consortia in southern Africa and elsewhere to construct a model that will support the country's national development agenda?
- b. How can lessons drawn from library consortia in southern Africa and elsewhere be used to construct a model for Zimbabwe?

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY

The lessons learnt will be used as input in the development and implementation of a suitable model for national development. From the lessons learnt, the research study will also recommend practical ways to improve the development of library consortia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sheshadri et al. (2011, 368–378) state that globally the number of existing library consortia has grown steadily in the last decade of the twentieth century since the pioneering days. O'Neill and Gammon (2009) explored the history of consortia and revealed that collaborative and cooperative efforts in collection development among libraries started hundreds of years ago. The two authors stated that later in the twentieth century, economic, social and technological changes instigated growth of consortia and enabled libraries to work efficiently in a collaborative manner for collection building. Johnson (2006) states that academic libraries have sought collaborative approaches to enable them to cope with the increasing demand on academic and research libraries' dwindling budgets caused by a constant increase in the production of information characterised by a significant increase in the production of scholarly journals. Chisita and Abdullahi (2012) emphasise the importance of collaboration among librarians and libraries as a strategy for survival in the knowledge-driven dispensation.

Library consortia in different parts of the world are in different stages of development, and their development varies from one country to another. While the history of library consortia in Europe can be traced to the twentieth century, in Africa it is the second half of the twentieth century that marks a significant stage (Bostick 2001). The need for affordable resource sharing and technological innovations in information transfer,

without obstacles, stirred up the need for consortium formation (Dzandza and Alemna 2011).

Library consortia have become a common feature of academic institutions because of their capacity to provide platforms for seeking joint solutions to problems. Library consortia in developed countries play a critical role in supporting learning and teaching and research activities in their countries. Library consortia differ with regard to the services they provide and their systems of governance. For example, some exist as legal entities with proper systems or structures of governance, while others depend on voluntary and informal structures of governance. This section will review the literature on lessons learnt from library consortia development in southern Africa, other parts of Africa and countries outside Africa.

The researcher also explored library consortia development in China and this provided practical experience on how to align library consortia with national development. China has strong bilateral relations with Zimbabwe and these relations date back to the war of liberation in the 1960s (Chigora and Chisi 2009). The researcher included China because it provides classic examples of library consortia initiatives which have contributed towards national development. Dong and Zou (2009, 1) trace the development of library consortia in China to the last two decades of the twentieth century. Initial cooperation was confined to academic institutions. Dong and Zou (2009, 1) state that large-scale regional consortia were achieved in the 1990s and that cross-regional consortia and national consortia began to gain popularity after 2000. The two authors cite the China Academic Library and Information System (CALIS) and the China Academic Humanities and Social Sciences Library (CASHL) as the two most influential and successful academic library consortium projects in China.

Dong and Zou (2009, 1) noted

- the disparity between the city and provinces with regard to the development of library consortia,
- that the regional, cross-region, and national consortia are a manifestation of China's drive to modernise its information infrastructure,
- that access to the world's intellectual heritage in digital format has been widened through library consortia initiatives for global collaboration, and
- that library consortia are engaged in resource-sharing activities to optimise the usage of information.

Library consortia development in China is supported by the national government through national policies that prioritise library development. Dong and Zou (2009, 2) state that China's national library consortia have had profound effects on national information resource sharing. The authors state that China's national library consortia has helped in supporting nationwide access through its unified open interfaces which integrate web-based resources of members nationwide through networks.

The United Kingdom is Zimbabwe's former colonial power and the two countries have strong diplomatic relations that cover socio-economic development including education and libraries. In the United Kingdom, types of library consortia are regional, discipline-based, and national, and are constituted and managed in different ways. Library consortia include traditional types consisting of a defined group of libraries working together to enhance services for users through, for example, procurement of library resources, staff training and development, and reciprocal access agreements.

Ball and Friend (2001) bemoaned the disparities in the distribution of library purchasing consortia across the United Kingdom. The authors noted that there was a lacuna between higher education libraries and other libraries with the former having a well-developed regional infrastructure of purchasing consortia covering virtually all eligible libraries. The models of library consortia are similar to those found in other parts of Europe, for example, regional, national and subject-specific models. The development of library consortia models in the United Kingdom has been influenced by similar factors as those found in Australia and the United States of America. In developed countries, the state plays a critical role in supporting library consortia development. The patterns of development and models of library consortia in developed countries are shaped by the country's level of economic development and information needs.

The development of library consortia in Hungary gathered momentum after the collapse of communism in the 1990s (Csajbók, and Vasas 2012). The authors state that Hungary's library consortia include those organised around specific vendors, for example, EBSCO and ProQuest, and those supported by the national government. The latter includes orientation towards the European Development Fund (FEFA), Electronic Information Services (EISZ), Hungarian Scientific Research Fund (OTKA), and Social Renewal Operative Programme (TAMOP). Csajbók, Szluka and Vasas (2012) state that at the time of regime change the government realised that economic expansion could only be possible through human capital development. Libraries benefited from government support in the drive to transform the economy to make Hungary globally competitive. Government funding enabled libraries to develop library subsystems, accessible databases, the building of information infrastructure, the enlarging of collections, and continuous professional development. In 2014, Hungarian libraries formed a consortium led by the National Széchényi Library (NSZL). This consortium has been able to embark on the ELDORADO project to provide a novel service model and infrastructure environment in the digital library field. This project aims to broaden access to scholarly communication to support teaching, learning and research. Access to electronic scholarly communication was further boosted by Hungary's membership in the EIFL project in 2009. This project has helped to strengthen the activities of library consortia in contributing towards national development. Partnerships provide an alternative source of funding for library consortia that have always relied on state support (Csajbók, Szluka, and Vasas 2012, 337).

Goudar and Narayana (2004) argue that the development of library consortia in India was precipitated by the escalating prices of journals, the geometric growth of scholarly publishing and uncertain foreign exchange rates that put the already shrinking budgets of Indian libraries in steep decline. This prompted libraries to develop consortia for resource sharing, exchange, cooperative acquisitions and capacity building. Bansode (2007) and Moghaddam and Talawar (2009) investigated the growth of library consortia in India. The authors traced the development of library consortia to the 1980s when networking of libraries began and consortia were in an embryonic stage. India's large number of library consortia reflects the dynamism and complexities of its growing economy. India is a developing country and the development of its library consortia is characterised by the adoption of different models depending on subject and function, such as purchasing and geographic location. The various types of library consortia are testimony to the country's endeavour to respond to the dynamic local and global information landscape. Library consortia have been developed to provide for the needs of the world's biggest higher education sector and growing commerce and industry.

Verzosa (2004) explains that formal library cooperation in the Philippines began in the early 1970s with the establishment of five academic libraries for interlending and catalogue-sharing activities. The library consortia in the Philippines share common objectives with regard to cooperative collection development, coordinated purchasing, interlibrary lending, shared cataloguing, cooperative cataloguing and building of online union catalogues or virtual catalogues, sharing of human resources, promotion of professional development, sharing of expertise on library automation, networking, digitisation, managing digital information assets, and collective lobbying on national and international issues such as pricing and copyright (Fresnido and Yap 2014).

Networked library consortia of the United Arab Emirates have provided local libraries with an opportunity to conduct library activities effectively and economically with a united voice in various activities, including interlibrary lending, collaborative development of resources, pooling of journals, subscriptions to journals and databases, union catalogue of resources and providing a central place for manpower training and centralised negotiations with database vendors (Sheshadri et al. 2011, 368–378). Sheshadri et al. identified the networks and consortia based on disciplines, geographical location, sectors and activities. The UAE Health Libraries Consortium (UAEHLC) is a national level consortium founded in November 2006 to strengthen the relationship between the National Medical Library and the libraries of healthcare institutions affiliated with the UAE's University Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences (Sheshadri et al. 2011).

Lor (2015) acknowledged the existence of libraries in Africa before the advent of European colonisation. He stated that libraries first made their appearance on the northern fringes of the African continent during the first millennium BCE, for example, the ancient Library of Alexandria and the Meroitic and Ge'ez scripts which bear testimony to a thriving ancient civilisation. This section will examine the development

of libraries in Africa. Olden (2015, 143) acknowledges the existence of the Library of Alexandria in ancient Egypt as an epitome of civilisation in the pre-Christian era in Africa. However, the author opines that Western and Islamic conquest resulted in the superimposition of inappropriate foreign models of library development, with reference to current public libraries.

Ojedokun and Lumande (2005b) highlighted the technical and financial challenges faced by academic libraries in southern Africa as they grappled with adapting to e-resources and the integration of local information into the global information infrastructure. Echezona (2010, 1–14) states that the challenges faced by academic libraries in Africa include underfunding, low bandwidth, and misperception of the library as the centre of academic scholarship. Generally there is a negative perception of librarians and their contribution towards the development and preservation of institutional scholarship according to the Association of African Universities (AAU 2005). In South Africa, the academic library has always aimed to uphold the educational mission in the university that it serves (Neerpuh 2013). The author further notes that the perception that the academic library played the role of a support service was understandable before the information era.

The proliferation of ICTs has precipitated the possibilities of innovative interlibrary cooperation projects as evidenced by academic libraries combining their efforts through various cooperative electronic networks in order to widen access to electronic information sources economically (Ojedokun and Lumande 2005a).

A consortium can achieve high discount rates of subscription in electronic resources from the most famous databases and electronic resources' publishers (Al-Obaied-Allah 2008). Library consortia are commonly formed to negotiate this joint purchase and subscriptions (Burke 2010). By the advent of the twenty-first century many developing countries moved towards the associated federated digital libraries, with common objectives to minimise electronic resources subscription costs, to achieve better negotiations with international publishers and to prevent duplication (Abdul-Awwal 2008).

The development of library consortia in West Africa is centred on developments in higher education where the demand for information to support learning, teaching and research is always high (Etim 2006). Ford (2016, 9) notes that the rapid expansion of universities in Africa exacerbates existing challenges in terms of funding and ensuring that standards are maintained in higher and tertiary education. The author argues that the proportion of people going to university has risen steadily across the world over the past 50 years.

Corleley (2011) states that the Consortium for Academic and Research Libraries in Ghana (CARLIGH) has been instrumental in helping member institutions to set up institutional repositories and to widen access to electronic content. CARLIGH also negotiates access to electronic resources for its members, and solicits support for training programmes to enhance the professionalism of the staff (Corleley 2011). This

was achieved with support from other institutions. Asamoah-Hassan and Frempong (2008) list the following as challenges for library consortium development in Ghana:

- securing a buy-in from management to support subscriptions to e-resources;
- the lack of funding to ensure full subscription to all databases;
- the slow rate at which members pay their share of costs to e-journals;
- the low bandwidth and poor electricity supply;
- inadequate training and poor infrastructure to develop and maintain institutional repositories and promote local e-content; and
- copyright and network security issues.

Bozimo (2011) reported on the formation of the Nigerian University Libraries Consortium (NULIC) and the challenges relating to strategy and underfunding. Attempts at enhancing library cooperation among universities have resulted in cooperative acquisition, the production of an index to Nigerian theses and dissertations, the production of an index to Nigerian periodicals, the establishment of reference libraries in selected university libraries, the setting up of reference libraries, and the formation of consortia to provide access to electronic resources. At the beginning of 2001, the EIFL encouraged libraries to form a consortium for cooperative purchasing and it also provided several workshops on developing a consortium and access to e-resources. It was through the support from EIFL that the Consortium of Nigerian Libraries (CONLIB) was formalised to promote library cooperation (Okeagu and Okeagu 2008).

Otando (2011) states that libraries in Kenya came together in 2002 to create the Kenya Libraries and Information Services Consortium (KLISC). Otando (2011) stated that developing the KLISC was also supported by INASP with its commitment to fund electronic journals sourced through the first phase of the PERI and the drive towards self-sustenance. The KLISC is Kenya's national library consortium that was established in 2003. The establishment of the KLISC was facilitated by support from the funding of electronic journals in the first phase of the PERI to share costs (Otando 2011).

Mwiyeriwa and Ngwira (2003) described how Malawi established its own Library and Information Consortium (MALICO) in 2002. Shafika (2007) stated that the MALICO was established as a consortium of organisations that combine talents and resources to promote and deliver library and information services for Malawi and the global community. Its members participate in the acquisition and delivery of relevant electronic resources. The MALICO aims to offer leadership in library cooperation, training and development, mechanisms for improved access to information, and a capacity for members to respond to the information needs of the country (Shafika 2007).

Taole (2008) states that before 1975, library cooperation in South Africa was conducted on an ad hoc basis and that it was only when the Inter-University Library Cooperation (IULC) was formed that effective ways to improve resource sharing were sought. A framework resulted in the development of five academic library consortia

in South Africa. Coetzee and Weiner (2013) state that resource sharing and realising economics of scale were key stimulants in the development of library consortia in South Africa. The pattern of library consortia in South Africa is dependent upon its level of industrialisation, as well as the expansion of the higher education and research sectors. The consortia reflect the adaptation of European and American models, which range from sectoral to regional and subject-specific models.

The ZULC dates back to 2001 when seven university libraries came together to create a platform for resource sharing among members and the community in general. Ndlovu (2011) traces the origins of the academic library consortia in Zimbabwe to February 2000, when the various university libraries conglomerated to discuss ways of cooperating as one group. He states that after discussions, a funding proposal was written to the OSISA for the formation of university library consortia. This marked the genesis of the first sectoral library consortia representing universities, and colleges and research libraries in Zimbabwe.

According to the minutes of the first working group for the ZULC, dated 27 February 2002, the library consortium was launched against a background of declining economic standards, for example low budgets and a rising cost of living. Sahu (2006) highlighted that the conventional model of scholarly communication, based on journal publication, has been unsuccessful in democratising access to information accessible and usable especially for the developing world owing to high subscription fees. Africa, including Zimbabwe, has not been spared from the effects of high subscription fees for scholarly publications which are beyond the reach of many institutions (Kusekwa and Mushowani 2014). The formation of library consortia was as a result of the realisation of the inherent advantage in exploring common needs, the need to broaden and widen access to research, study and information, and the desire to provide quality services amidst low purchasing power (Ojedokun and Lumande 2005a).

Bhukuvhani, Chiparausha, and Zuvalinyenga (2012) explain how university libraries in Zimbabwe obtain cheaper access to electronic resources through special consortial arrangements. An example is that the ZULC pays for e-resources collectively for its members at negotiated rates through the INASP-PERI project.

The other library consortium is the CARLC. This library consortium was formed at a workshop for librarians that were held at Mont Clair, Nyanga, in 1999. The Consortium currently covers polytechnics, teachers' colleges, and the libraries of the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education. Libraries in technical, academic, college and research institutions qualify to be members of the CARLC upon payment of a subscription fee. There is not much written about the CARLC and this inspired the research to study its operations.

Chikonzo (2014) states that academic library consortia in Zimbabwe share best practices and drive each other to further improve the access to resources in member institution's institutional repositories. She states that one way of boosting institutional repositories is through incentivising researchers to upload content.

The concept of development studies emerged as a post-World War II challenge designed to assist poorer countries to catch up with the richer countries in terms of economic development (Greig, Hulme, and Turner 2007, 43). There are various theories that can be applied to achieve socio-economic development. These theories have their weaknesses and strengths as will be expanded below. The role of the academic library in facilitating access to information to support learning, teaching and research is critical to the success of national development programmes.

The Human Capital Theory was developed by social scientists who believed in the immense potential of return on investment on education. The interest in human capital development was premised on the idea that the most productive course to national development of any society would be possible through the advancement of its human capital development (Becker 1993; Denison 1962; Schultz 1982). The Human Capital Theory is driven by the assumption that there is a correlation between an educated population and a productive population. Education contributes directly to the growth of the national income of societies by enhancing the skills and productive abilities of employees. The Human Capital Theory is premised on the notion that the education system, and the patterns within it, can best be understood as investments in increasing economic returns and in enhancing the place of individuals in the competitive labour market (Zengeya 2007).

Conspicuous by its absence, and yet indispensable to ZIMASSET's success is the support of a robust national information system to service and accelerate the achievement of cluster outcomes and outputs. Access to the kind of scientific and research development information needed by the lead institution ministries and their respective research sections cannot simply be assumed without purposeful interventions. This presents an ideal opportunity for Zimbabwe's library consortia to become the kind of development partner that ZIMASSET calls for. The national licensing for access to electronic resources in conjunction with the ministry responsible for ICT, for example, could ensure the outcome of improved ICT standards and utilisations, and the output of establishing a national high performance computer centre (ZIMASSET 2013). The library consortia can contribute also to the modernisation of public sector agencies through various initiatives including education, awareness, advocacy and networking. Access to information underpins all facets of ZIMASSET and the national development agenda.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study used a literature survey, since the focus was more on generating descriptive data on development of library consortia in southern Africa, other parts of Africa and outside Africa (Onwuegbuzie and Leech 2004). The researcher chose the qualitative design because of its capacity to reach where quantitative methods cannot reach. Ochieng (2009) described some of the strengths of the qualitative approach as:

- the data and the analysis are “grounded” in and reflective of reality;
- it provides in-depth data because the data can deal with intricate social phenomena;
- ambiguities are effectively dealt with; and
- alternative explanations are provided.

The researcher chose this approach in order to highlight critical issues for consideration in developing library consortia for Zimbabwe. In spite of its weaknesses, the researcher added the qualitative approach because it has the potential to dig deeper into the research problem, and in this way complement the quantitative approach.

The research sites for this study are academic libraries subscribing to the ZULC and the CARLC. The researcher selected ten members from the ZULC and five members from the CARLC as research sites. The ZULC was established in 2001, and in 2015 it had 15 member institutions (ZULC 2015). The research sites for this study were identified through contacts made during participation in the annual conferences of the Zimbabwe Library Association (ZIMLA) and through purposive sampling techniques. These two steps provided the basis for selecting the research sites. The main aim of the sampling process is to get a representative sample. The sampling size affects the generalisability of the research (Connaway and Powell 2010). The sampling procedure for the research study was guided by the basic characteristics of a population, objectives of the study, and data analysis and credibility. Sample design helped the researcher to choose part of the population as the target population. The study used a purposive sampling technique because the sampling procedure provided for the choice of informants because of the special qualities they possess. Such a technique affords the researcher the freedom to choose the informants who will be able to provide the information because of their knowledge and experience (Flick 2009). The researcher utilised a purposive sampling method in order to focus on specific characteristics of a population that are of interest, and to make it possible for the researcher to answer research questions. The researcher excluded some research sites from the study because of time and financial constraints. The researcher used a purposive sample as such a sample involves the selection of units based on personal judgement rather than randomisation. The research sample was derived from the sampling frame consisting of a list of units making up the research population.

The study used interviews, questionnaires as data collection tools, and collected documents from the institutions relevant to the topic of investigation. Questionnaires and interviews are often used together since the former provide evidence of patterns among large populations, and the latter produce in-depth insights into participant attitudes, thoughts, and actions (Kendall 2008). The researcher relied on interviews, questionnaires and observation as data collection tools.

MAIN LESSONS LEARNT TO ACCELERATE DEVELOPMENT OF LIBRARY CONSORTIA IN ZIMBABWE

The following sub-sections highlight the findings of the study with regard to the main lessons learnt from southern Africa, other selected parts of Africa and outside Africa. The findings are based on the study's research questions.

Southern Africa

At a time when library budgets go down, it is prudent for libraries to cooperate with one another, to pool resources to overcome financial constraints, and to satisfy the information needs of member institutions. Okojie (2010) encourages university libraries to network, collaborate and build consortia in order to leverage on the benefits of bulk purchasing of electronic materials and licenses, and to train staff in the use of electronic resources.

The adaptation of common library standards and protocols, for example, the adaptation of INNOPAC Millennium by library consortia in Lesotho and South Africa improved resource sharing among participating libraries in southern Africa (Taole 2008). Common library standards and protocols ensure interoperability of systems.

Developing partners like the EIFL and INASP are more comfortable working with library consortia rather than individual libraries. For example, in South Africa, the southernmost library consortia were formed during last decade of the twentieth century through the support of the EIFL and INASP. The main idea was to overcome challenges of poor funding. Library consortia should develop sustainable ways of self-financing because reliance on donor support has its disadvantages. Sustainability of the activities of library consortia in Zimbabwe is important and it is incumbent upon the ZULC and the CARLC to lobby government for grants. Continued reliance on external support for the sustenance of library consortia is a short-term solution. This lesson is drawn from South Africa. Through partnerships library consortia have also been able to provide opportunities for continuous professional development to equip members with knowledge and skills to effectively and efficiently manage library resources.

The ability to enhance inter-consortia cooperation through national platforms is critical for successful library consortia. For example, in South Africa, the South African National Library and Information Consortium (SANLiC) plays a key role in regulating and rationalising operations to prevent duplication of effort. Such a consortium with a national focus at the operational and strategic levels is critical with regard to rationalising funding, licensing of e-resources, providing training in e-resource management, negotiating skills and licensing principles, and leveraging a better alternative to negotiable agreements (BATNA) when engaging publishers for e-content licensing. SANLiC provides experienced professionals from among the members who regularly

and gladly share expertise with fellow librarians who are new to the world of online resources.

Okojie (2010) recommended the importance of utilising modern information and communication technologies to share resources on a wider scale, through investing in adequate infrastructure and standardisation of library management software, for example, the use of the Z39.50 standard or protocol for interoperability. ICT-driven networks are useful in leveraging scholarly communication for the benefit of researchers. This can be achieved by mobilising local resources and partnering with other international organisations.

Lessons from Other African Countries

This section highlights lessons on library consortia development drawn from Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria. Universities are key components in stimulating the developments of library consortia to overcome resource shortages and to improve inter-institutional cooperation, as evidenced by the CARLIGH in Ghana, and the KLISC in Kenya. Library consortia should move towards conducting research, self-sustenance, continuous professional development and income generation, as evidenced by Ghana (CARLIGH) and Kenya (KLISC).

Library consortia can serve as special vehicles for strengthening networks and engagement with key stakeholders to develop a national library of electronic theses and dissertations to widen access to scholarly communication. This can be achieved by mobilising local resources and partnering with other international organisations. For example, the AAU and EIFL have helped the KLISC in Kenya, the CARLIGH in Ghana, and the Nigerian University Libraries Consortium (NULC) in Nigeria to develop e-resource projects (Okeagu and Okeagu 2008).

The creation of vibrant library consortia with proper systems of governance and clearly-defined membership structures, and policies that are well-defined and practical will help to ensure that the information needs of stakeholders are being met and expectations of stakeholders are also fulfilled. It is the responsibility of national government to provide financial support to sustain the operations of library consortia such as the SANLIC, KLISC and CARLIGH.

Lessons Learnt from Countries Outside Africa

Library consortia in the United Kingdom, China and India value collective strategic leaderships to achieve collective goals. Such library consortia support learning, teaching and research through innovative collection development programmes and innovative programmes to build human and institutional capacity.

Webster (2006) states that in the United Kingdom, library consortia have structures consisting of a constitution, governing boards' constitution, administration or steering committees, technical teams and user groups. Examples include the Joint Information

Systems Committee (JISC), Southern Universities Purchasing Consortium (SUPC), the Consortium of Academic Libraries in Manchester (CALIM), and the Higher Education Purchasing Consortium in Wales (HEPCW).

In China, successful library consortia do rely on their viable structures and systems of governance as evidenced by the CALIS, the CASHL, the Regional Library Network (CRL), and the Shanghai Information Resources Network (SIRN). Such consortia exist as legal entities since they can sue or be sued. Furthermore, successful consortia have demonstrated that some degree of subordination of local autonomy to the general good was required to enable long-term commitment for the benefit of all the consortium members. This can be evidenced by the working groups for library consortia in China, the Philippines, the United Arab Emirates and India.

Members of consortia should be aware of their obligations relating to finance, commitment, accountability, governance, the pursuit of common goals and how to evaluate the outcomes of their ventures. There is a need for African libraries to establish endogenous mechanisms to foster participation in consortia building, for example, capacity building, ICT infrastructure development, institutional information policy development, and adherence to bibliographic standards as reflected by the library consortia in China, India and the United Arab Emirates.

The experiences of library consortia development in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), India, China, and the United Kingdom (UK) confirm that the successes of library consortia depend upon adequate funding, effective and efficient systems of governance, adaptation of new technologies and strategic thinking.

How the Main Lessons from Other Library Consortia can Benefit Zimbabwe

The following points are a consolidation of the previous sections and sub-sections to produce the main lessons that Zimbabwe can learn from library consortia developments in southern Africa, other African countries, and countries outside the continent to the development of its consortia to underpin its national development programmes.

Finance

The involvement of the state in supporting library consortia development through grants is crucial. The lack of state funding for the ZULC and the CARLC has resulted in international organisations filling the gap, and in the ZULC and the CARLC embarking on innovative but short-term projects to sustain their activities. Reliable support from the government will contribute to Zimbabwe's library consortia development as a whole, and over the long term. Okojie (2010) proposed that African governments should be encouraged to enact legislative frameworks that facilitate the development of libraries. Currently the Library Development Fund in Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya, mandates university libraries to spend 10 per cent of their recurrent budget on library

development, which is a good practice that should be encouraged. It is crucial to note that while international support is critical, it does not provide long-term solutions and financial sustainability. This lesson is drawn from South Africa, Malawi, and Ghana.

Structure

Zimbabwe is best served by a multi-sector or federal structure with a national coordinating committee (NCC). Such a structure with properly formalised governance systems should also exist as a legal entity. This structure will integrate all types of libraries and share information resources among them. A multi-sector library consortium has more benefits since resources are accessible and used for the benefit of all. India also provides an example of a successful library consortium in the form of the Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET), which has effective structures of governance. In Africa, Kenya's KLISC, Ghana's CARLIGH and the South African SANLiC are good examples with features of a multi-sector or federated library consortium and a cost-sharing model that accommodates academic and non-academic libraries. This lesson is drawn from South Africa, Kenya, China, Australia and the United Kingdom.

Governance

To ensure the success of the proposed multi-sector or federated library structure there needs to be proper systems of governance, provision for funding, and a sound legal basis. It is critical that a library consortium should exist as a legal entity because of ownership of properties, and engagement in contractual obligations with vendors and publishers. The legal basis and policies on membership, administration, ownership of assets, open subscriptions, e-content licensing and access should be aligned with the structure of the consortium, for example, there should be special or ad hoc committees to deal with strategic and operational issues. This lesson is drawn from library consortia in South Africa, Zambia, Malawi, and China. Goodluck (2012) stated that the issue of governance was critical since it is key to the success of the library consortium.

Functions

The library consortia examined in this study perform a variety of critical functions, namely cooperative collection development and processing of information, inter-lending, document delivery, licensing of electronic content, digitisation and managing databases. Creating opportunities for resource sharing is the *raison d'être* for library cooperation. Library consortia require members to adhere to common standards and protocols to ensure the interoperability of systems and to contribute resources to achieve common goals.

In Zimbabwe, compliance should be enforced by the NCC comprising representatives from university councils, the Ministry of Higher Education and other key stakeholders.

This lesson is drawn from South Africa, Lesotho, Botswana, Ghana, Nigeria, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and China.

Special Features

The ZULC and the CARLC should venture into innovative projects, such as content generation, institutional repositories, content licensing, and education.

E-Content Generation

Academic library consortia in South Africa, Malawi, Ghana and the United States of America encourage members to establish publishing departments, and to engage in the digital distribution of publications or research outputs by faculties and students. Some have established partnerships with university presses and scholarly societies to leverage e-scholarly communication.

Institutional Repositories

It is imperative for the two consortia to develop institutional repositories to capture and leverage local content as reflected by ZULC members.

Research and scholarship resources should be managed in such a way that there is a return on investment (Rieger 2012, 27–26). Furthermore, the management of institutional repositories should change the mindsets of policymakers so that they value intellectual capital and resource sharing.

E-Content Licensing

Library consortia must build capacity in e-content licensing to enable access to e-resources from licensed databases. Members of library consortia will gain from licensed content since it will be available to authenticated users anytime and anywhere. E-content licensing is also linked to the concept of a National Site License (NSL), which is mainly a single site license operational among various publishers and vendors. This lesson is drawn from South Africa, Kenya, China, and India.

Education

Library consortia can play an important role in supporting the education of its key stakeholders, for example students, researchers, and lecturers. Research conducted by Oakleaf (2010) showed that library consortia contributed towards quality education with regard to student success, student achievement, student learning, student engagement, faculty research productivity, faculty teaching, service, and overall institutional quality.

These lessons are learnt from, among others, Hungary, India, the United Kingdom, the Philippines, United Arab Emirates, and African and southern Africa countries, which can be consolidated and used to produce a model for accelerating the development of Zimbabwe's consortia to underpin its national development programmes.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Library consortia play a critical role in facilitating equitable access to information. The development of library consortia in different parts of the world serves as a source of instructive lessons that can be studied and applied in order to accelerate library consortium development in Zimbabwe. The lessons learnt from southern Africa, other parts of Africa and outside Africa provide practical lessons on how to develop library consortia with regard to governance, structure, financing and management of resources to support access to scholarship.

Lessons from China, Hungary, the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates prove that library consortia are critical in facilitating affordable access to information in the modern interconnected digital world. There should be a concerted effort among library consortia to invest in modern technology and build capacity for fast and reliable search infrastructure for federated repositories and searches for the benefit of the scholarly community. Lessons on efficient systems of governance and service for library consortia and provision for state funding are useful for Zimbabwe's national development trajectory. The other alternative sources of funding would include public-private partnerships (PPPs), for example, mutual partnerships with key stakeholders. Lessons on best practices are useful in developing an eclectic model of library consortia that best suits Zimbabwe to underpin its national development agenda. Partnerships are important raising resources for the sustainability of digital infrastructure with regard to Internet connectivity. China and the United Arab Emirates provide successful examples of mutually beneficial partnerships.

Lessons drawn from India, China, South Africa, and the United Arab Emirates indicate that the state or government is a critical stakeholder in the development of library consortia. The ability to participate and engage global development partners, for example, EIFL, INASP and OSISA, is critical for the development of library consortia. Library consortia should not work in isolation but cooperate and collaborate with different stakeholders. Partnerships with commercial Internet service providers (ISPs) and National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) are critical in enabling affordable access to Internet connectivity. The model of library consortia to be adopted should be determined by local socio-economic conditions and interests of key stakeholders.

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