

Fee - Based Library Services in Private University Library Challenges and Prospect

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Abstract

The article discussed issues on fee-based library services in private university libraries - challenges and prospects. It is limited to the need for fee-based library services in university libraries, challenges of fee-based university library services and solutions to the challenges of fee-based university library services. The study is limited to Private University Libraries in Anambra State-Nigeria. The private university libraries are:-Madonna University Library-Okija Campus, Tansian University Library-Oba and Paul University Library-Awka all in Anambra State. The findings from the study are quite revealing. It was discovered that fee-based library services are already in existence in the three(3) private universities understudy though at a very low level. It was also discovered that the library are already rendering book binding services, photocopying services, internet connectivity, computer typesetting, membership registration fees and over-due book charges. There is no written fee-based library services policy on ground in the three(3) private university libraries. This has resulted in the half-hazard organization management of the existing fee-based library services. The library staff runs the fee-based library services like ordinary library services. It has resulted to the inability of the library management to give proper account and take proper decision on the operations and guideline of fee-based library services.

Keywords: Fee-based Services, University Library, Information Marking.

Introduction

Information provision is becoming a difficult commodity for libraries to provide to it's users. This is due to poor financial support to libraries by government and other stock holders. This has brought about the need for libraries to introduce multiple source of financial backing so as to meet up with the new trends in educational, social, technological and research in our society today. These developments have resulted to the need for fee-based library services in our libraries especially private university libraries.

According to the dictionary of library and information science fee-based services is an information services provided by a library or information broke in exchange for monetary payment. The nature of library determines the type of services they render in relation to the reads of the clients. The concept of fee-based services is now practical globally. Obodoeze (2007) state that fee-based library services would help library users appreciate the services being rendered by libraries and information centres. This shows that fee-based library services will brast the image of both libraries and librarians since patronage will be high.

Statement of the Problem

The economic recession that ravaging many parts of the world in general and Nigeria in particular has brought about poor funding of agencies both public and private which include libraries at all level. The university library is the heart of all universities are seriously affected by this financing constrains that they are now facing challenges like poor financing, lack of technical and ICT compliances, manpower, infrastructures like internet connectivity. These challenges have succeeded in making the university libraries almost non-functional. When the government at all levels find it very difficult to finance government owned university libraries, one wonders what will happen to private universities. The question is how can these challenges be surmounted? This brought about the need for alternative source of revenue which is believed to be **Fee-Based Library Services**. The challenges that will emanate with fee-based and possible prospects is yet to be determined hence the need for this study.

Scope of the Study

The study is limited to fee-based library services in private university libraries - challenges and prospects. It is

limited also to the need for fee-based library services in university libraries, challenges of fee-based university library services and solutions to the challenges of fee-based university library services.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives that guided this study are to:-

1. Finds out the policy frame work for establishing fee based libraries.
2. Ascertain the need for fee-based library services in Private University Libraries in Anambra State-Nigeria.
3. Identify the challenges facing fee-based library services in Private Universities in Anambra State-Nigeria.
4. Proffer solution to the challenges of establishing fee-based library service in Private University Libraries in Anambra State-Nigeria.

Area of Study

The study is limited to Private University Libraries in Anambra State-Nigeria. The private university libraries are:-Madonna University Library-Okija Campus, Tansian University Library-Oba and Paul University Library-Awka all in Anambra State. Anambra state is chosen because it is the state with one of highest number of private universities. Also public universities are excluded because their philosophy is at variance with this investigation. While private universities operate on a total cost recovery basis with profit motive, the public universities aims at partial cost recovery with no profit motive.

Significance of the Study

The research will be of immense benefit to library management, librarians, library patrons and researchers. The library management will have a turn around in the finances with the introduction of fee-based library services and this will put an end to frequent financial demand to the university authority. Their financial increase will again bring an increase to the acquisition of information materials by the library management.

With fee-based library services, library patrons will have the needed informational materials made available to them both in quantity and quality. Librarians will also benefit from fee-based library services since the library will be equipped with needed instructions and materials needed for affective service delivery. Researchers will use the findings of this research as a base for further research thereby enhancing research and scholarship.

Literature Review

It is evident from literature that in this digital era that any students at the higher level who intends to better achieve and go further in academics should have the ability to explore the library services in both traditional and digital ways will enable them has more advantages in the educational world (Oghenetega, 2014). The relationship existing between the university and the library is symbiotic and has far reaching implication on the nation's educational programmes. Bok(2003) stated that for libraries prices of books and journals are rising relentlessly, thereby imposing demands for library management to sit up. As a matter of fact, fee-based library services has become important considering the fact that funding for library resources and infrastructure has remained very low thereby necessitating the need to argument by charging fees for certain services. Moreover, libraries need to be self-sustaining, financially; hence the importance of fee-based services will now stand as a policy.

In the same development, charging of fees in the library helps to improve the standard of library service to users. Furthermore, value is usually added to any services that has a price tag, so fee-based services in library is institution and among the community of users thereby increasing opportunities for improved usage. Okeke(2013) citing (Anyaku and Nwosu,2010).

Challenges of Fee-based in Academic Library services

The dwindling finances or financial crisis all over the world have intimately led to the inability of libraries of any type to sustain their services and even institute new programme like e-current awareness services, e-SDI services, mobile phone services, even common rover services in their library. In this note, Nwofor(2009) reported that librarians have not been prepared to make the economics of generating these needed funds from library services to support the dwindling library finances. Some school of thought are afraid of university management's decision against it, other remained indifferent of the possibility of its success. The researchers supported fee-based in library services. Furthermore, another growing problem to fee-based services in libraries is the upcoming changes in the information profession. Believably, the advent of computers with their wide applications to information storage and retrieval brought a profound change to librarianship.

It has been noted that fee-based services in Nigerian academic libraries have not gone beyond user

registration fees, levying charges for lost or over-due books and photocopy charges (Obodoeze, 2007). According to Ifidon (2005) further reported that even the existing fee-based library and information services in Nigeria are not well and adequately managed. She stated further that library staff offers fee-based services just as routinely as any other ordinary library services, not maintaining the records of the transactions in such a way as to assist management in their decision making process. Pitiably, where fees are charged, there is little or no planning element to make it contribute meaningfully to library development.

Research Method

The research method used for this study is the library survey which is an integral part of the social survey. Two sets of question were designed for the university librarian and the library patrons. One of the questionnaires was administered to the three (3) Private Universities Operational in Anambra State-Nigeria. The university librarians were to address policy issues like sources and financial support to libraries, services rendered that are fee-based, extent of patronage and fee based services, challenges of fee based services and possible solutions to the challenges. The three (3) university librarians returned their question are perfectly completed.

For the library patrons, the registered library users are 6500 for the three(3) private universities bulk 20% of the registered libraries users for the three(3) private universities were used all totally 1300 library user sampled and used for the study. 1170 registered users responded positively, that is 90% of the users respondents returned the question. The response rate was high because the research assistant collected them at the spot. The questions addressed are the second questionnaires are willingness to pay for needed information, challenges encountered in the process of using fee-based library services and possible solutions to the challenges.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from the study are quite revealing. It was discovered that fee-based library services are already in existence in the three(3) private universities understudy though at a very low level, especially Madonna University Library, Okija campus. It was also discovered that the library are already rendering book binding services, photocopying services, internet connectivity, computer typesetting, membership registration fees and over-due book charges. There is no written fee-based library services policy on ground in the three(3) private university libraries. This has resulted in the half-hazard organization management of the existing fee-based library services. The library staff runs the fee-based library services like ordinary library services. It has resulted to the inability of the library management to give proper account and take proper decision on the operations and guideline of fee-based library services.

It was discovered that the library users are prepared to pay for any qualitative information made available to them in the library provided such is made available timeously and in a conducive environment. The challenges facing fee-based library services includes lack of existing policy framework on fee-based, management bottle neck, insufficient fund and lack of basic skills needed for the operation of the fee-based library services. The challenges according to suggestion made by both the university librarians and library patrons are as follows; lack of provision of policy framework on fee-based library services, provision of initial funds for the take off of fee-based library services, No orientation as the operations of fee-based services for librarians and library staff.

Recommendations

Based on the finding of this study, the following recommendation on how to improve the fee-based library services are made

- i. Immediate provision of policy of framework for the operations of fee-based library services for all universities and in particular private universities in Nigeria. This will again serve as an operational guide to the day to day fee-based library services.
- ii. Initial budget to be made available by the university authority to enable the library management take off with the fee-based library services.
- iii. Proper feasibility study should be carried out an fee-based library services so as to know all it takes to start and its operational exercises will be carried out, the use of other professional like accountants to perform the cost-study, identify real cost and developing a price system.
- iv. Re-training programme be organized for library staff on the issue of information marketing so as to enable them avoid the mixing up of library service with fee-based library services. Staff will be trained in the area of business skill of and a fee-based services department mapped and staffed managed by libraries with entrepreneurial skills. In addition to this the library patrons should be given serious orientation on the operations of fee-based library services especially what they stand to gain if in place.
- v. Fee-based library services should not be seen as a purely profit oriental services rather it will aim at partial recovery with little or no profit motive.
- vi. For the risk of losing users to the cybercafés, very low charges should be imposed on internet services

- rendered in the academic library.
- vii. Information and communication technology equipments should be installed in the library to help attracts both potential and actual users to the library

Conclusion

A fee-based library service has been in place in many university libraries but in an unorganized and unprofessionally manner hence defeating the essence of fee- based library services. Fee-based library services came to be as a result of poor funding of libraries, advanced nature of a needed information by the patrons and the introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the disseveration of information. It is therefore very necessary that the university management with the university librarians comes up with defined Policy Frameworks that will enhance the operative of the fee-based library services. Library patrons are ready to base for an effective and efficient in information services delivery for assignment, teaching and research.

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