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CONTENTS

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EDITORIAL

Our readers will recall the prayer of the former Editor-in-chief in his editorial remark in the first issue of *The Nigerian Cataloguer* that he hoped that successive editorial boards would be able to sustain the Journal. This second issue is an answer to the prayer. It was a great effort to realize the production of this issue of the Journal.

A number of manuscripts were submitted for review but only the ones featured in this issue were eventually considered for publication. We appreciate all contributors whose articles were published for considering *The Nigerian Cataloguer* as a medium for communicating their intellectual musings.

We salute the commitment and candour of our erudite reviewers whose opinions have guided the decisions of the Editorial Board in the last few years. We are grateful.

Akinniyi A. Adeleke

Chairman,

NLA Cataloguing, Classification & Indexing Section

For: Editorial Board

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Evolving Union Catalogue for Nigerian Libraries

- Akinniyi A. Adeleke & Aderonke Asaolu..... 1

Preservation of Non-Book Materials in Broadcasting Stations Libraries in Lagos and Oyo States of Nigeria

- Anyaogu Uluocha..... 17

Realities of Information Management in a Networked Environment

- S. O. Bello & M. Kamba..... 41

Cataloguing Practices in the Digital-Age: Analytical Review

- Jonathan N. Chimah & Christian Orji..... 61

Mentoring in Cataloguing: Bridging the gap between the Young and the Adult

- L. O. Aina..... 80

Challenges of Learning Cataloguing and Classification in Library Schools in Southern Nigeria

- Samuel O. Ogunniyi & Kenneth I. N. Nwalo..... 89

EVOLVING A UNION CATALOGUE FOR NIGERIAN LIBRARIES

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Abstract: The environment where computers communicate with each other has made resource sharing and collaborations easier and smoother among libraries. The environment has assisted libraries to develop cooperative strategies to maximize the opportunities of the Internet and its burgeoning applications to meet the ever-changing needs of library users. Creating and maintaining Union Catalogues is one of such strategies that have been adopted by libraries across the globe. However, a Union Catalogue is non-existent in Nigeria, although there had been past efforts in the direction by the National Library of Nigeria. This paper proposes a Virtual Union catalogue model for the development of a National Union Catalogue for Nigeria. The model requires that participating Libraries have OPACs and that their library management software be Z39.50 compliant. With a well-coordinated steering committee in place, the paper concludes that it is possible for Nigerian libraries to achieve more quickly a Union Catalogue than it took some developed countries because of the networked environment.

Keywords: Union catalogue, Resource sharing, Cataloguing, OPAC, Nigerian libraries, Nigeria.

I. INTRODUCTION

The advent of the Internet and its applications has revolutionized the access and sharing of information among libraries and library users. Thus, a new environment commonly referred to as networked environment where computers communication is created. In this new environment there is a wide generation and proliferation of data beyond what a single library could process or manage. Hence, libraries develop strategies to maximize the opportunities and overcome the challenges of the evolving environment to meet the ever-changing needs of their patrons through sharing and collaborative practices.

Creating and maintaining Union Catalogues is one of the collaborative techniques that libraries across the globe have adopted to share resources most especially bibliographic data. A Union Catalogue is a combined library catalogue describing the collections in a number of libraries. Reitz (2007) defined a union catalogue as “a list of holdings of all the libraries in a library system; or of all or a portion of a collection of a group of independent libraries indicating by name and/or location symbol which libraries own at least one copy of each item”.

Hanson (1981) traced the etymology of the term *union catalogue* and asserted that it was derived from *Katalogos* (catalogue) in Greek and *Unio* (common) in Latin. According to Lynch (1997), union catalogues transcend the normal functions of a single collection catalogue, in not only bringing

together works by the same author or about the same subject, but also by bringing together multiple instances of the same work (perhaps described differently by different institutions) for the user searching the database. Union catalogues have been created in a range of media, including book format, microform, cards and more recently, networked electronic databases.

Although there had been large print union catalogues especially the American National Union Catalogue Pre-1956 Imprints which was completed in 1981, giant electronic union catalogues which are facilitated by the new electronic environment have replaced them. The environment has made resource sharing and collaborative/cooperative work easier and more interesting.

In a paper titled "the development of union catalogues in Iran", Chelak and Azadeh (2010) reviewed literature and sequestered the benefits of a union catalogue both to the library and its users. Some of the isolated benefits to the library include:

- provision of facilities for improving the speed of cataloguing;
- increase in the supply of quality bibliographic and authority records;
- development and maintenance of mutually acceptable standards;
- development of a document supply service;
- development of joint collections, printed and electronic;
- links to document suppliers and electronic journals;
- use of shared resources;

- ongoing discussion, planning and programming among participating libraries;
- production of a national bibliographic network; and
- reduction in acquisition and cataloguing expenses.

For library users, accruing benefits include among others:

- confirmation of the existence of an item;
- accurate known locations for an item;
- confirmation of availability of the item at the known locations;
- speedy retrieval of needed information; and
- single search interface for multiple sources.

From personal experience as a cataloguer, use of union catalogues helps immensely to remove duplication of efforts or re-inventing the wheel; and above all, it has reduced tremendously stacks of uncatalogued books in libraries.

II. UNION CATALOGUES IN NIGERIA

Though information technology has extended the opportunities for libraries to rethink on the old practices related to acquisition, storage, organization and dissemination of information and knowledge, library institutions in Nigeria are yet to sufficiently exploit these prospects especially in the aspects of resource sharing and collaborative projects. This is due to the fact that they lack the where-withal to tap into the opportunities of the network environment in the areas of:

- small internet bandwidth;
- overdependence on foreign Internet Service Provider (ISP);

- poor electric power supply;
- lack of relevant skills and expertise to use ICT-based resources;
- shrinking library budgets;
- incessant work-to-rule situations;
- lack of necessary tools to function in new work environment;
- inadequate infrastructure for resource sharing;
- inconsistent government policies to drive and support cooperative initiatives;
- unplanned proliferation of educational institutions; and
- mismanagement and corruptive tendencies in all strata of Nigerian polity.

There had been collaborative/cooperative efforts among libraries in Nigeria; which had been spear-headed by University Libraries (Anasi and Ali, 2012). Such efforts for resource sharing were first introduced by Professor John Harris, a University Librarian of the University College, Ibadan through courier services between the libraries of the University of Ibadan and University of Benin and later extended to University of Lagos (Osundina, 1981).

The Committee of University Librarians of Nigerian Universities (CULNU) later introduced several other initiatives in attempts to develop Nigerian university libraries. First of such initiatives was the introduction of inter-lending and cooperative acquisitions through delivery and pick-up services in the 1980s. Since membership was voluntary, only a few libraries participated and the initiative comatosed when the vehicles servicing it broke down (Ikem and Nwalo, 2002).

Another CULNU initiative was the Nigerian Periodical Index in which all participating libraries were expected to index local periodicals on a cooperative basis and forward the index to the University of Jos for editing and publication (Agboola, 2003). The initiative suffered the same fate as the first due to lack of commitment to the project on the part of the participating libraries. Ikem and Nwalo (2002) reported yet another CULNU effort to promote cooperative acquisition by planning joint acquisitions of African government publications, an initiative that equally failed.

The failure of these arrangements led to CULNU's recommendation to the National Universities Commission (NUC) to develop a national university database system in which participating universities were expected to contribute their research information for sharing through a national gateway hosted by the NUC (Okeagu and Okeagu, 2002). Unfortunately, the initiative was still at the proposal stage as at the time of preparing this paper even after more than a decade of the recommendation. Several other cooperative initiatives of CULNU suffered setbacks; and Ikem and Nwalo (2002) identified gross under-funding; vast distances separating libraries, and lack of proper planning as some of the reasons for the failures of the efforts.

It is evident from the above that cooperative initiatives among Nigerian libraries have not gone beyond document delivery, sharing of periodical index and consortia access to electronic journals. Initiatives like cooperative cataloguing,

creation and maintenance of union catalogues and sharing of catalogues are yet to be explored. The reasons for this shortfall are not different from the generalized obstacles to resource sharing and access to information identified by Edem (2010) which include:

- lack of finance;
- lack of well developed ICT infrastructure;
- lack of requisite skills to use ICTs;
- faulty formation strategies;
- unstable power supply, and
- low level conversion of local content for national and international access.

These obstacles are very much similar to the ones that bedeviled the CULNU efforts.

According to Ajegbomogun, Oduwole and Agboola (2008), the only serious effort at compiling a union catalogue in Nigeria was the one sponsored by the National Library of Nigeria in cooperation with Nigerian university libraries in 1970. In this initiative, cooperating libraries were expected to contribute to the development of the catalogue by sending to the National Library a copy each of the catalogue cards produced in their libraries. Although nothing much came out of the effort (Ajegbomogun, et al, 2008), it was a good pointer to the possibilities of cooperative cataloguing in Nigeria.

Harnessing the opportunities created by the rapid evolution of digital technologies promises to expand and deepen the possibilities of cooperative/union cataloguing in Nigeria. The author is optimistic that the establishment of a comprehensive ICT-enhanced bibliographic control system in the Nigerian

library institutions would provide the required platform for the development of a national union catalogue for Nigeria libraries. With this optimism, this paper attempts to propose a model for evolving a national union catalogue for Nigeria.

III. UNION CATALOGUE MODELS

There are two common models for the delivery of union catalogues in practice: physical and virtual models. The physical union catalogue is the model in which records from multiple sources are incorporated into a single database. This centralized arrangement requires that all members send their catalogue records created based on accepted standards to the server of the union catalogue database. In this database, the records are merged and each library's codes are added to the existing records. Users send their requests via the internet to this database and receive the search results from the same database.

The major arguments in favour of a central union catalogue, according to Dekkers (1997) include:

- central access point for users;
- platform for service cooperation, such as document supply;
- platform for agreement of bibliographic standards; and
- effective management.

A centralized union catalogue is typified by the OCLC WorldCat project (<http://www.oclc.org/worldcat/>) that collects bibliographic data from libraries all over the world into the OCLC Union Catalog.

For a country like Nigeria where development of libraries is still at a low ebb, the centralized union catalogue model might be challenging because the process involves “some amount of manual work with respect to exporting of new/updated records from the OPACs and making them available on a computer server accessible over the network or in transferring them to remote computer server” (Jayakanth, Sharada and Minj, 2007). This is a challenge because only a few libraries have OPACs in Nigeria; while majority are still battling with the retrospective conversion of their card catalogues to electronic format and many do not have regular internet access and those who have do not enjoy regular power supply to exploit it.

The virtual union catalogue is a means of providing union catalogue services in an environment where each library has its own database and retrieval interface. In this model each catalogue remains a distinct entity but can be treated as a single source by the end user. Such a catalogue is not maintained in a single location but is created in real time and eliminates the need for record storage as well as expense of loading and maintaining access to a central catalogue (Gould, 1999).

The virtual or distributed union catalogue links disparate catalogues through Z39.50 protocol. Z39.50 is a client-server protocol for searching and retrieving information from remote computer databases (Jayakanth *et al*, 2007). According to Dempsey and Russell (1997) it is “a network protocol which specifies rules that allow searching a range of different databases and retrieval of records via one user interface.” Using

Z39.50 protocols, local catalogues are connected to each other by their servers and the users can search each catalogue in turn or simultaneously. The virtual union catalogue is characterized by:

- library collection from different libraries;
- connection of member libraries via the internet;
- no single location to host distributed library collection; and
- the use of a common search form.

Sahoo (2002) highlights some of the advantages of a distributed union catalogue which include:

1. local resource centres have full control (design and management) over their collection;
2. information retrieval is current and dynamic;
3. it eliminates a lot of factors that could constitute additional cost such as:
 - redundant data storage;
 - maintenance cost of central data storage location; and
 - total downtime of the system.

Similarly, Gatenby (2002) suggests two other advantages for the virtual union catalogue.

1. It supports multi-target searching. From a single user interface an identical searcher can search multiple targets even when they are dissimilar in platform, database system or database model.
2. It facilitates searching based on abstract concepts. The use of concepts, such as "title" enables each server to map to its actual structure. The client does not need to know the database field. The tag of the title field in bibliographic databases often differs but Z39.50 ignores these differences and knows them as

title. Because common standard record formats are exchanged, e.g. MARC or XML/DC, it is possible to combine the results from diverse databases.

These advantages give the virtual union catalogue mode an edge over the centralized union catalogue model.

Since libraries, especially academic, are implementing diverse library automation packages: proprietary or freeware, the virtual union catalogue model could be suitable to the development of a national union catalogue for Nigeria. The reason is that majority of the recently developed library software packages are internet-based and Z39.50 compliant; the two features that are germane to resource sharing in networked environment.

IV. UNION CATALOGUE MODELS

Rather than just emerging, a union catalogue, like any other sustainable technology-based system, should evolve. To evolve, it requires a procedure for selling the idea and wooing support from prospective participants who might not feel any obligation to key into the project. Moreover, the outcome of the procedure is expected to lead to a union catalogue that should exhibit some of the attributes highlighted below:

1. It must be based on pre-existing machine readable OPAC records.
2. It must primarily be a vehicle that supports research.
3. It must be free at point of use.
4. It must not require authentication for resource discovery or known item searching.
5. It must be hospitable to technological developments.

6. It must be coherent, managed, extensible, robust resource sized to cope with demand.
7. It must return reliable search results.
8. Provide quick responses to all users.
9. It must include bibliographic records of appropriate quality.

For these to be achieved, Chelak and Azadeh (2010) asserted that there must be:

- clarity in the goals of the project;
- readiness of member libraries to participate in the project;
- stable and specialty management with appropriate skills;
- continuity of the project; and
- use of the union catalogue to render services like inter-library loans (ILL), resource sharing, document delivery, and others.

It is advised that the process must be gradual and systematic comprising the following steps:

- convening a forum of interested parties including professionals, institutions, agencies, organizations, etc with similar goals and mandates;
- appointing a steering committee/taskforce to drive the project;
- identifying a champion among members of the steering committee to coordinate the business of the committee. The champion does not necessarily have to be a head of an institution but somebody who is influential and has the charisma and character to attract support to get major stakeholders involved in the project.
- Setting feasible terms of reference for the

committee. These should include precise and unambiguous technical and administrative details with achievable timelines and milestones. The terms should spell out the assignments of the committee which may include among others:

1. recommendation of a physical and technical architecture to establish a framework for the union catalogue;
2. identification of existing OPACs that are web-based, machine readable and Z39.50 compliant;
3. to organize seminars, conferences, workshops, trainings, etc to promote the opportunities and benefits of union catalogues to researchers and libraries;
4. to compile and distribute from regularly a list of Z39.50 compliant library automation packages. This is necessary in order to guide selection and implementation of suitable library packages.
5. To identify experts who may render technical support services to libraries at reduced rates in the areas of ICT implementation and management.
6. To conduct research regularly and report its findings in order to improve the delivery of the national union catalogue.
7. To monitor compliance to standard cataloguing standards of practice to ensure the quality and integrity of the union catalogue records.
8. To encourage the inclusion and visibility of local contents in the union catalogue. This is necessary because the national union catalogue can serve as window to the cultural heritage of a country; thereby promoting heritage tourism.
9. To liaise with other national and international institutions and agencies with similar mandates to compare notes and learn best practices.

10. To perform such other functions that would promote the use of union catalogues for Nigeria.

V. CONCLUSION

The paper has established that there are no union catalogues in Nigeria although past efforts had been made in that direction by the National Library in conjunction with University Libraries. Failure of the attempts was attributed to lack of planning and weak infrastructure to drive the initiatives. However, the good news is that recent advances in ICT development have heightened the prospect of a distributed union catalogue for Nigerian libraries. With a well-coordinated implementation committee comprising willing professionals, it is possible to achieve quickly a national union catalogue that took most developed countries longer time by harnessing the opportunities provided by the internet and its burgeoning applications. Therefore, Nigerian libraries should be encouraged to select and implement library software packages that support Z39.50 protocol in order to stimulate the speedy development and effective use of union catalogues; thus mitigating the diversity in the automation software adopted by various libraries.

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