ISSN 0307-4803

NEW LIBRARY WORLD

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY

Volume 98 Number 1134 1997

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Feature article

Automating a large library in Nigeria: the story so far

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Abstract

The University of Ibadan Library is the first largest library to automate its library services in Nigeria. It is now a focal point for library automation in the country. Highlights the span of library automation in this library and also reflects the impact of the World Bank Book Project started in 1991 in research and teaching in the university.

New Library World
Volume 98 · Number 1134 · 1997 · pp. 106–110
© MCB University Press · ISSN 0307-4803

Introduction

Many Nigerian libraries started thinking about automation in the late 1970s. Feasibility studies were carried out but nothing came out of the reports submitted because of lack of funds. Some small research libraries, however, were able to automate their services. Examples of these are:

- The International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Ibadan started automating its library service in 1970s using the BASIS software. IITA is the largest agricultural research library in the country and was one of the first libraries to automate its library services.
- The Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru, Jos.
- The International Livestock Centre for Africa (ILCA).
- The Federal Institute for Industrial Research (FIIR), Oshodi, Lagos.
- The Nigerian Institute for International Affairs (NIIA). The NIIA is a leading social sciences research library not only in Nigeria but also in Africa.
- The British Council Library, The United States Information Service (USIS) Library and the libraries of some commercial banks and finance institutions.

The National Library of Nigeria, the chief library in the country, focal point of library legislation and representing the country's interest in world library organizations, has so far only automated the compilation of the *National Bibliography of Nigeria*.

It was only in 1989 that the World Bank came to the rescue of the 30 federal universities in Nigeria by providing funds for the purchase of current books and journals and new equipment (including microcomputers and their accessories) to enable these institutions to benefit from modern technology and trends in research that their counterparts are enjoying globally.

University of Ibadan Library System

The University of Ibadan is the oldest and largest university in black Africa, established in 1948. The University of Ibadan library system consists of the Kenneth Dike Library (formerly known as the main library) a branch Library, the Latunde Odeku library of medicine located in the College of Medicine about 8kms away from the main campus, five faculty

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libraries and about 21 departmental unit libraries. The library system serves an estimated student population of about 17,000 and about 2,000 staff. Because of its unique collection of Africana and other research materials, it is a focal point for research in the country and is visited by staff of other Research Institutes both in the country and abroad. It has a collection of about 560,000 volumes.

The collection and its processing

In addition to the main library collection of books and pamphlets located on open access to readers, there are also a number of special collections available to readers. These include the following, which are on closed access.

Africana collection

These are materials published by Africans in Africa or about Africa. They are very rich in African history, culture and anthropology. In recent times, however, emphasis has been placed on Nigeriana.

Arabic books, maps and manuscript collection

This collection is rich in basic source material for the study of Nigerian and African history as well as general materials related to Islamic subject and religion in Africa. There are many original and unique manuscripts of local importance which are also supplemented by extensive microforms on the subject. Private papers of eminent Nigerians are available; also, more than 5,000 maps on West Africa, Africa and Nigeria. Most of these are historical in nature.

Publications ordinance collection

When the library was established in 1948, it was made a legal depository for all books published in Nigeria. This was before the National Library was established. This library still receives a copy of such materials from the National Library.

Government documents collection

These are documents emanating from the Federal Government and all the State Governments in the country, with special emphasis on publications of the former Western State of Nigeria.

Nuclear science collection

This library is a depository for the United States Government Atomic Energy Commission.

Rare book collection

The library maintains some rare books which include several works on Africa.

Staff publication collection

Monographs, books and articles published by the staff of the university are collected and preserved.

Theses collection

A collection of theses on Nigeria and theses submitted for higher degrees at the University of Ibadan since the 1950s are housed in the Theses room.

Kenneth Dike Library

Ekpenyong (1993) observed that journal subscription in the Kenneth Dike Library decreased from 3,626 titles in 1982 to a mere 317 titles in 1988 and that book acquisition decreased correspondingly from 17,000 volumes in 1977 to fewer than 2,000 volumes in 1990. This decline was a result of both global inflation and the economic malaise through which the country was passing.

In 1989, however, the World Bank came to the rescue of Nigerian federal universities with the allocation of $120M for the purchase of current books, current journals and new equipment to enhance research in these institutions. The World Bank books (WBBs) started arriving in 1992 but, unfortunately, the current journals were not received until November 1994. Table I shows the current state of the library collection from 1991 - 1994 as some of the WBBs started coming in.

Tables II-V show the impact of the World Bank Book Project (WBBP) on the currency of collection of the Kenneth Dike Library in the 1990s. A total of 16,643 volumes were received from the first tranche of the WBBP by June 1994. The second tranche is now being expected. Of the 16,643 volumes received 10,173 volumes have been processed and their records are already in the Kenneth Dike Library database. Unlike books, the current journals did not come in until November 1994 (Table I).

Current journals came into the Kenneth Dike Library through two main sources:

(1) The World Bank Book Project (WBBP).
(2) The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

Through their contribution the current journal subscription has been increased to 748 new titles as of February 1995. Faculty and

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Table I Kenneth Dike Library acquisitions, 1991-1994

Item	1991	1992	1993	1994	Total
Books and monographs	1,348	1,784	6,082	11,554	20,775
Government documents	2,613	1,582	628	702	5,525
Publications ordinance	4,067	4,892	3,816	2,015	14,790
Maps	3	6	–	–	9
Manuscripts	20	20	10	35	85
Journals	–	–	–	168	168
Total	8,051	8,284	10,544	14,474	41,352

Table II World Bank Book Project (first tranche)

Item	Number of volumes	Date received
Books received	16,643	16 June 1994 (last batch)
Books processed	10,173	As of 31 January 1995

Table III Broad subject analysis of World Bank books processed and in circulation

Broad subject area	Titles	Volumes
Agriculture, forestry and veterinary medicine	319	667
Education	104	223
Humanities	670	1,619
Pre-clinical sciences	52	101
Medicine	1,018	1,218
Science and technology	1,493	2,926
Social sciences	820	1,394
Law	148	276
Total	4,624	8,414

Source: University of Ibadan Kenneth Dike Library (1994)

Table IV Journals received from the WBBP and AAAS as of June 1995

Source	Current titles received
World Bank Book Project	641
American Association for the Advancement of Science	107
Total	748

students alike are now trooping to the library to carry out their studies and research.

The first classification scheme used in the library was the Bliss Classifications Scheme. In 1974, however, the scheme was changed to the US Library of Congress. Some of the active Bliss collection were reclassified into LC but about 90 per cent of the pre-1974 collection is still in Bliss.

Table V Broad subject analysis of journals received under the WBB Project (as of March 1995)

Broad subject area	Titles
Agriculture, forestry and veterinary medicine	70
Education	30
Humanities	60
Pre-clinical sciences	20
Medicine	100
Science and technology	100
Social sciences	80
Law	30
Total	490

The branch library, the Latunde Odeku Medical Library, uses the National Library of Medicine Scheme to classify its materials, while the Faculty of Law Library uses the Moys Classification Scheme to classify law books.

Other processing tools used in the organization of materials include the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rule II for bibliographic description and the Library of Congress Subject Heading as thesaurus.

History of automation in the University of Ibadan library system

As the wave of library automation swept round the world in the late 1970s, the University of Ibadan was not left behind. A library automation committee was set up in 1977 to look into the possibility of automating the library. Members included academic staff from the Department of Computer Science, staff from the computing centre and the library. Feasibility studies were carried out and reports submitted to management. Unfortunately, nothing could be done then because of lack of funds. The library, however, succeeded in producing an automated serials catalogue in 1978.

The catalogue of serials in the library

A definitive step towards automation was taken in 1987 with the resuscitation of the Library Automation Committee.

In 1990, the Kenneth Dike Library acquired an IBM PS/2 model 80-111. It was agreed that automation should be done in phases (integrated approach). The creation of the University of Ibadan Library database was made the priority. Database creation was

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started in February 1992 using the UNESCO Mini Micro CDS/ISIS as software. Only current books received were entered into the database. Prior to entry of data in 1992, it was observed that the Mini Micro CDS/ISIS did not follow the MARC II standard for machine-readable data. Input by the systems analyst took care of this problem and international standards of entry such as the AACR2 for bibliographic description and MARC II for machine-readable data were strictly adhered to. Although the Mini Micro CDS/ISIS is a one-user system and therefore not adequate for our needs, we were able to modify and use it for a start while shopping around for suitable software.

In April 1993, an appropriate software, the IME's TINLIB, a multi-user software, was purchased and installed. It is a user-friendly software. Records already in the Mini Micro CDS/ISIS were downloaded into the new software by September 1993.

Retrospective conversion

In 1994, it was decided that only the post-1974 records should be retrospectively converted (i.e. the Library of Congress records) to machine-readable data. To effect this, therefore, and also to enhance processing of new books, the LC CD-MARC was purchased and subscribed to.

The following preparatory steps were taken to effect retrospective conversion:

- It was decided that stock of the post-1974-1991 collection should be taken. The shelf list catalogue was cross-checked with the books on the stacks to ensure that the books were physically on the shelves. Those on the shelves were examined to see if they were physically fit and well circulated. Uncirculating books or less circulating ones were weeded out from the collection.
- Books that were physically damaged as a result of usage were withdrawn and their records sent to the collection development unit for recording.
- It was also decided that the pre-1974 stock in Bliss should only be retrospectively converted when they were about to be borrowed. This exercise entailed a lot of work and casual workers were employed to match the records in the shelf list card catalogue to the actual books on the shelves. Cards for books not found physically on the shelves were withdrawn and assumed to be lost.

The Library Automation Committee decided that the entire automation project should be completed in three phases:

(1) Phase 1: Database creation:
   - Current books.
   - Retrospective conversion (re-con). Phase 1 is at an advanced stage.

(2) Phase 2
   - Setting up of the circulation module.
   - Linking the faculty libraries to the main library.

(3) Phase 3
   - Setting up the acquisitions module.
   - Setting up the serials module.

As of June 1995, the first phase is still in progress. Only 10 per cent of the retrospective conversion has been done. It is only when about 70 per cent of the re-con has been done that the circulation module/*OPAC-Online Public Access Catalogue* can be made public. Meanwhile, the acquisitions module has been introduced. Items placed on order are now in the database. This will enable faculty and students to know what books are on order. There is also a proposal to introduce the serials module very soon.

Current state of automation in the Kenneth Dike Library

At present, there are 20 microcomputers in the Kenneth Dike Library. Of these, 13 have been installed and the remaining seven will be installed soon. The library system has a local area network (LAN) of 13 microcomputers running on a novel netware. The main server is a Gateway 2000, IBM 486-compatible (4D × 2 - 66 P model) with 32MB RAM and 22 gegabite hard disk. An equally powerful IBM-compatible 386 PC with 8MB RAM and 1.02 gegabite hard disk serves as a back-up. Other accessories include five printers, two laser jet printers and three dot matrix printers.

Other electronic library resources

In addition to the creation of the database (in preparation for the *On-line Public Access Catalogue, OPAC*), the library has two towers of six CD-ROM drives (12) and two towers of four (eight) CD-ROM drives loaded with the databases. Currently, there are 13 databases on CD-ROM. Apart from the Library of Congress CD-MARC (which is the library's working tool), the others are all donations from the AAAS and the Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Co-operation (CTA), in The Netherlands. Databases donated by

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CTA are mainly in agriculture. The following databases are available in the library on CD-ROM.

From the CTA:

- AGRIS
- TROPAG & RURAL
- CAB ABSTRACTS
- POPLINE.

From the AAAS:

- LIFE SCIENCES ABSTRACTS
- SOCIAL SCIENCE INDEX
- PAIS
- COMPENDIX PLUS
- APPLIED SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY INDEX
- CTA/CIMMYT GERMPLASM BANK
- CIARL BASIC RETROSPECTIVE SET 1962-1986
- ERIC
- LC- CD-MARC – on subscription.

The library is involved in literature searches for both students and faculty. Document delivery is also available free for some databases. Table VI shows the statistics of data in the database as at February 1995.

Staff training and services provided

Staff training in automation is an ongoing process in the Kenneth Dike Library. About 40 per cent of staff are now computer-literate. Training is still going on, especially in computer-assisted information retrieval.

Table VI Statistics of database input as at February 1995

Item	Number in database
Current books (donations prior to WBBs)	2,185
Current books – WBBs	10,173
Books ordered (acquisitions)	12,673
Total	28,042

In addition to retrospective literature searching, a selective dissemination of information, or current awareness, is available in some databases. This allows the user to receive new references to works in his subject area automatically as they are added to the database to keep abreast of current developments in his field.

Conclusion

It is worthy of note that, of all the 30 Federal University libraries in Nigeria, the Kenneth Dike Library is leading in the automation process. It is now a designated focal point for training other university personnel in Nigeria on library automation. The National Universities Commission (NUC) has recognized this and is designating the Kenneth Dike Library as a training ground for others.

It is believed that by the turn of the century the dreams of the Kenneth Dike Library will be realized as the OPAC will be available to the public and, through Internet, the catalogues of remote libraries both within and outside the country will be accessed conveniently.

It is proposed that before the OPAC is introduced to the university community, a continuing training/instruction programme should be mounted in the Kenneth Dike Library for faculty and staff to teach them ways of navigating the OPAC and the other databases available on CD-ROM.

References and further reading

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