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Co-operation between the libraries at Mzumbe University (Tanzania) and Agder University College (Norway): an overview for the present and the future

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Abstract

Institutional cooperation between Universities in the north and those in the south has also promoted cooperation between respective libraries. This is a logical direction given the central role academic libraries play in enhancing cooperation in other academic activities such as research development and learning resources. The cooperation between Agder University College (AUC) library in Norway and Mzumbe University library in Tanzania is a good example of how such cooperation can enhance the capacity of a south institution library to deliver services to users. The experience of this cooperation has shown that success in realizing the intended objectives depends amongst other things, on the model of cooperation. In particular a participatory model of cooperation involving interaction between the policy makers and the operational staff of the institutions

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based on equal partnership and understanding, contributes towards the achievement of intended goals. Such cooperation should be further enhanced given the increasing global needs of delivering quality educational programmes and researches.

1. Introduction

This paper reviews the co-operation between the Agder University College (AUC) library of Norway and Mzumbe University (MU) Library of Tanzania. The review focuses on the model of collaboration, the main activities undertaken, and impact of the collaboration, especially on Mzumbe University.

Globally, any university is faced with great challenges in developing an efficient university library. The importance of adequate library services for effective performance of researchers, lecturers and students are evident and must be facilitated by the concerned institution. Development of library services depends on sufficient grants to secure adequate and competent library staff, up to date electronic equipment and systems, satisfactory allowances for purchase of books, journals and access to electronic and full text resources. No library, neither in Tanzania, which is a developing country nor in Norway which is a developed world is self sufficient. All libraries need to draw on resources outside the individual library. This may be for internal procedures such as reuse of catalogue data or to give users access to a larger amount of information than the one available locally.

These challenges are evident for the Mzumbe University and Agder University College libraries. Both libraries depend on close relations and cooperation with libraries and librarians – on regional, national and international basis. While the libraries in Norway are part of a closely connected national network sharing resources, there is no developed national library policy in Tanzania securing national cooperation and national resource sharing. Therefore, bilateral cooperation becomes even more valuable. Tanzania has to face therefore, the challenge of developing a national library policy, securing national cooperation and national resource sharing.

Edmonds (1986) defines library cooperation as "reciprocally beneficial sharing of resources, developed or pre-existing, by two or more bodies". One of the main applications of library cooperation is the maximization of resources for each library, so that by uniting efforts and resources each library can obtain instruments and render services which would otherwise be impossible to offer. Library cooperation between institutions becomes indispensable in the context of the global information explosion. The North-South imbalance in library resources demands resource sharing between libraries. As Seal (2003:37) puts it "If we as professionals are to serve our own patrons and at the same time ensure the free flow of information to the citizens of the world". Our dual role as librarians then, is to promote, participate in, and enhance systems of library cooperation in sharing the limited resources available.

This paper discusses some experience of the collaboration between MU and AUC. The paper is divided into four parts, including this introduction. Part two discusses the major components of the collaboration while part three discusses some of the achieved outcomes. Part four gives what are seen as future challenges for the collaboration.

2.   The Collaboration
2.1   The Origin and Objective of the Collaboration
The co-operation between Agder University College (AUC) and Mzumbe University (MU) dates back to 1990. The co-operation is an outcome of the major agreement between the Government of the Kingdom of Norway and the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania on the support to IDM, now MU within these areas:
-   Joint research, teaching, consultancy
-   Staff exchange
-   Workshops and seminars
-   Joint publications
-   Printing, library, Electronic Data Processing (EDP).

Now the co-operation is organised in professional clusters: local government, entrepreneurship, gender, ICT and library.
The cooperation between the libraries which was established in 1993, was initially confined to limited exchange of literature (journal articles) through fax, limited book acquisition in cluster areas and staff exchange. Later the collaboration involved the initial automation of the MU Library, according to a joint proposal prepared by the library directors.

The overall aim of the collaboration has been to support the upgrading of Mzumbe's library, which has been facing a number of challenges including:
   a) The high cost of books and periodicals;
   b) A need for better access to bibliographic data;
   c) Increased demand for materials not held locally;
   d) Advances in equipment and new information technologies, especially computer networks.

Globally, each academic library is aimed at developing its collection. As argued by Spoor (1980:49) "One major objective of an academic library must be to develop a collection which satisfies the needs of its users, and to which these users have access. Traditionally, the responsibility for building the collection has rested with the acquisitions section of the library while the circulation section has had responsibility for ensuring good access". Thus both libraries at AUC and MU have this important objective of developing their collections to satisfy their patrons.

Collections in libraries are developed for specific purposes. Gorman and Miller (1997), argue that, "Library collections are developed and managed for the

purpose of supporting a variety of user needs, for instructional and research activities, as well as for recreational needs".

Therefore, both libraries being academic libraries have an important role of supporting the research, teaching and consultancy functions through collections – printed or electronic.

The challenges at AUC and MU are universal. But the basic conditions for developing and running a library are quite different in the two countries. While the library at AUC is a modern, well equipped library closely connected to the national library system, the MU library faces more profound challenges regarding lack of resources and a national library infrastructure.

The MU library has about 38,000 book titles, covering the subjects that are relevant for the University curriculum. The library subscribes, even though irregularly to about 40 journal titles. All these are insufficient to satisfy the needs of the library clientele.
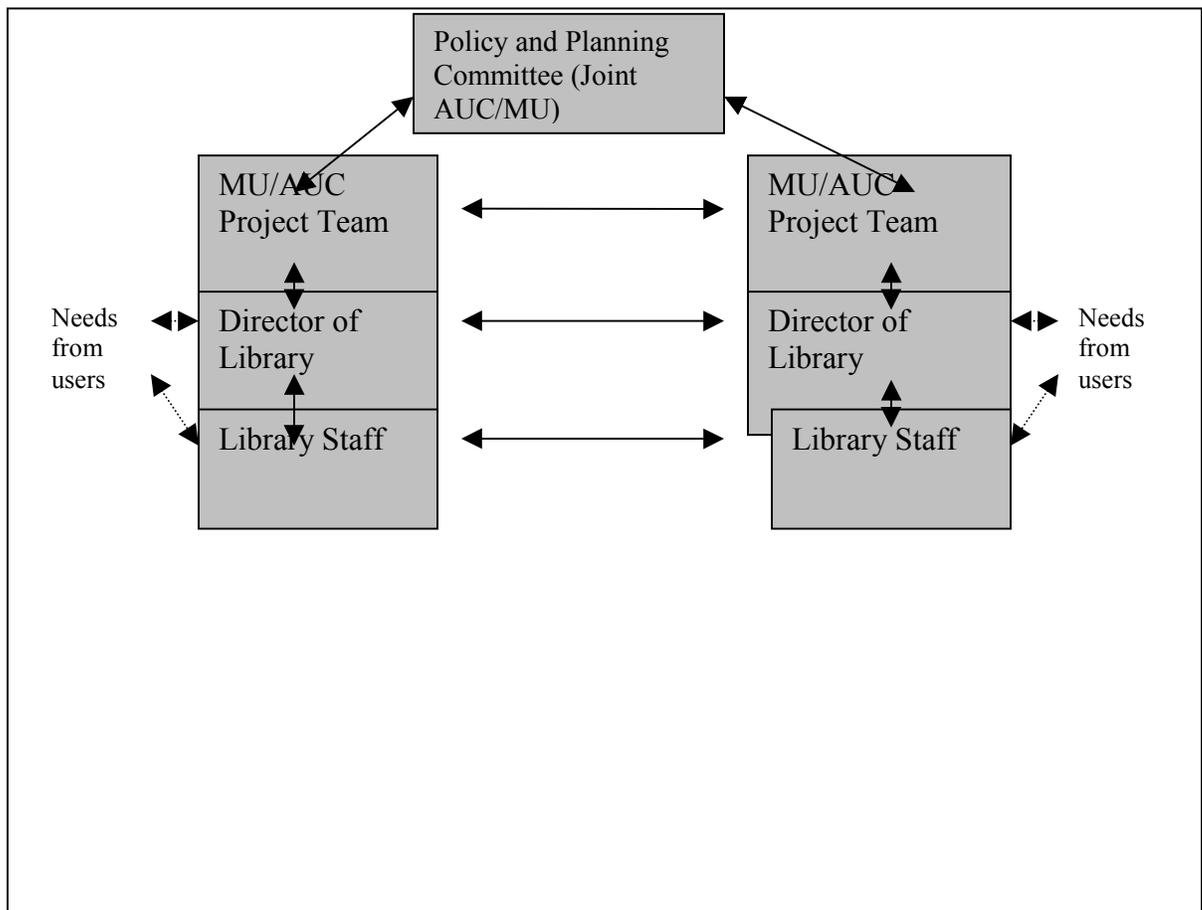
In the light of the above challenges, the co-operation between these two libraries focuses on providing professional and efficient library services to academic staff and students at Mzumbe through the interchange of activities, which include as argued by Rodriguez, (2003, pp.19-20), "The interchange". Where the cooperation takes the form of interchange in which two or more institutions participate and one of them enjoys the resources or goods that the other has. The exchange includes the following activities:

- Exchange of materials like publications that each institution produces that are of interest at the other library. Documents involved are those for enriching the collections permanently, as well as those which are temporarily overcoming the deficiencies of a collection and complement the resources available for users.
- Personnel. - In this category, collaboration of personnel, on many occasions, are shared by one or many libraries where joint activities are organized, and some staff from one library facilitates training of other staff in another library, to broaden their knowledge.
- Information for staff. – This kind includes information that one administrator has about some equipment and new information technologies. An example of this exchange is information on the acquisition of library automation systems. This type of exchange develops a more efficient administration because the information flows to those who need it the most.
- Bibliographic. – Sharing of bibliographic resources has to be practiced through the library cooperation, where efforts to acquire and exchange of bibliographic materials has to be carried out.
- Users. – A reciprocal agreement has to be initiated, whereby a user from one library can use the resources of another library as if they were local.

2.2   The Model of Collaboration

The Model of collaboration between the MU and AUC libraries is built in the framework of collaboration of other main components in the MU/AUC collaboration. Essentially, the model provides for decentralization of activities, in which the component coordinators (Library Directors) from the two institutions are given mandate to formulate collaboration activities within their cluster, based on the resources allocated. The plans and budgets are then approved by the Policy and Planning Committee of the collaboration, which consists of the top officials (Vice Chancellor/Rector, Deputy Vice Chancellor /Vice Rector and project managers) from the two institutions. This model allows initiatives and innovations as seen fit by the stakeholders.

Figure 1: Model and Structure of Collaboration (Source: Author)

Inputs into the collaboration are based on demands as made by users. These may input through the library staff or the Director of the library. Through consultation between the Library Directors, and basing on the available resources, joint activities for a given year are proposed, discussed and agreed upon. These are then submitted to the respective MU/AUC Project team for integration into the agreed collaborative activities for the year. The overall joint

activities and budget are then approved by the Policy and Planning Committee before implementation starts.

2.3   Major activities and their impact

The main activities of the collaboration are divided into two categories; those under library cooperation and those under library improvement support. These two are briefly reviewed below.

2.3.1 Library Cooperation Activities

Acquisition of Literature
The library collections are built to support various academic needs of the university community. Mzumbe University library has been receiving some support from the Government of Norway in addition to the allocated budget by the Government of Tanzania. This support has enabled acquisitions of general books and journals in support of the university curriculum as well as cluster journals and books for the current research cluster activities. The research literature support has been on entrepreneurship and business development, local government research, research on gender and development, research on information and communication technology and other researches not falling under specific clusters.

In order to support the core activities during the three years period (2003-2005) and through the library support, Mzumbe University has planned to acquire literature as follows:
- Subscription to 600 book volumes and 50 journal titles in each year.
- Subscription to 8 journal titles per cluster programme for each year. This activity will be covered for a period of three years period from year 2003 to 2005.
- Subscription to 15 book titles per cluster programme for each year from 2003 to 2005.

Under the collaboration programme, there has been some facilitation of information exchanges through fax, and e-mail. Both libraries have been receiving publications including books, journal articles and research reports emanating from cluster research activities.

In-house training
In this era of development of Information and Communication Technology, where the availability of scholarly information via the Internet is vast, it has become essential to provide training and provision of some library instruction on how to search the Internet scholarly databases, for MU library staff, students and academic staff.
Since both libraries for MU and AUC operate in the era of Information Technology, each library plans ahead for a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for its staff. Under the CPD the MU library arranges with its partner to

carry out an in-house training on a yearly basis, where the two libraries cooperate in facilitating training of MU library staff, students and academic staff on library issues and information search.

It is through this in-house training that creation of awareness on different aspects is expressed. For example awareness about the access to electronic databases which provide full text information free of charge under the Programme for Enhancement of Research Information (PERI)/International Network for Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) was created. This opportunity came about in 2002 when the MU was given a chance to access free of charge to these academic databases. However, such unique opportunity would be underutilized by the academic staff and students if there is lack of awareness and knowledge on how to use these facilities.

In year 2003 the MU library in collaboration with the Agder University College (AUC) conducted its first kind of training for students and academic staff. The training aimed at creating awareness of electronic resources available in the Internet, as well as introducing library patrons to important electronic resource providers such as the EBSCO online, Ingenta journals, ECO, ERIC, AJOL, and Emerald. Also, training was provided to users on searching strategies/techniques while using the Internet.

The acquisition by MU library of Mikromarc library software through AUC library, also created a need for its staff to undergo some training on how to apply and maintain the software. Through support from AUC Library, in 2003 training of MU library staff on the new Mikromarc library software application for automation of the library catalogue and circulation activities within the reader services department was conducted.
A computer based training program, namely Boxicon Learning Model, has been installed, and training in the use of electronic resources has been conducted. A total of 200 students from different MU programmes have so far been trained. The course evaluation indicates that, students who attended the training found it useful.

Staff Exchange Visits
An important basis for the co-operation is a mutual understanding of culture, economic conditions and way of life of each partner. A clear image of what the libraries look like, how services are organized, how the culture in the library is, is of importance. Long distance partnership is a challenge, even today with good internet-connections. Study-tours and visits are basic ingredients of the co-operation.

Since 1993, there have been more or less regular staff exchange visits between the two institutions. MU library staff has been paying study visits to the AUC with the objective of learning on the daily activities done at the AUC library, like the online cataloguing, online acquisition of books from publishers, and studying further on the use and maintenance of the Mikromarc software system. These

exchange visits aim at building MU staff working capacity in relation to ICT and other skills and knowledge which in turn are expected to be imparted to other MU library staff so that library services are improved.

Through the years of cooperation, 4 librarians/library directors from MU library have visited AUC, and 4 librarians/library directors from AUC library, have visited MU mainly for the purpose of training its MU counterparts on the usage of the library software, Internet searches and Compact Disc – Read Only Memory (CD-ROM) databases applications. In 2004, one librarian/ ICT expert visited the MU library for the aim of training the counterparts in the activities pointed out above. Similarly, in 2003 the two libraries jointly conducted a three days seminar for MU librarians, academic staff and administrative staff on the use of electronic resources. A course in the use of the Mikromarc library software application for key library staff was also conducted.

The library directors and library staff have participated in workshops and conferences involving academic staff from all the clusters as well as invited guests from Norway and Tanzania. Library topics have been part of the program, which is important for the integration of library use in research and studies.

2.3.2   Library Improvement Support

Application of Internet resources, E-mail facility

Application of the Internet within the library is one of the activities which has been facilitated through the Norwegian Agency for International Development (NORAD) and through the Library improvement support plan under the major cooperation activities between the two institutions. Under the NORAD support grant, the library has been able to install the Internet facilities based on satellite transmission and a local network. It is through this network that the patrons are able to access to various web-based information for their own use. The patrons access Internet facilities within the library, computer center, students' laboratory and staff offices. Electronic mail has been working since 2,000, this allows fast and cheap communication for the patrons.

In the light of the positive experience with Internet usage we now want a large percentage of students to make use of the Internet facilities. This increase can only be realized through seminars which will teach students on how to search scholarly information from the Internet resources. Unfortunately this requires additional computer hardware and IT skills for the information educators as well as availability of power all the time.

Improvement of ICT

The progress of an ICT and automation of library activities depends on the implementation of the ICT plan of the University which started since 1999.

Under the library support activities, the library has been able to acquire seven computers and one Dell Windows NT Server between 2002 and 2004, under NORAD support.

Under the same NORAD support the University intends to purchase twelve more computer terminals for the library. This activity is due for implementation this year 2005.

__Automating the Library Catalogue and Circulation activities__

Automation/computerization of various tasks in any organization setting as Underwood and Hartley (1993:9) point out "is carried out for data management objective, whereby computerization aids the retrieval of records from a database, producing a report, and the processing of some statistical data". Automation/Computerization of library material is therefore, important for several reasons. To mention some:

- To organize in-house information and make available for retrieval and thus increase efficiency in the information provision,
- Make information available outside the institution,
- Statistics for management purposes can be easily obtained,
- Improve utilization of the collection with automated circulation procedures.

As mentioned earlier, MU library through the collaboration, has acquired Mikromarc software system. This has facilitated computerization of its currently acquired library stock and past records from 1989.

3. Impact of the cooperation
The fact that the library co-operation is an active part of a broader co-operation between the two institutions is of great importance, as it strengthens the integration with other cluster activities, and increases the awareness and acceptance of the importance of the library at the top level in the institutions. The acceptance of the importance of a professional library is also influenced through the cooperation at AUC.

A review of the co-operation between AUC and MU was carried out by an independent team in 2003 for the Norwegian Embassy in Tanzania.
The report states that the co-operation seems to have been successful with the main concrete results connected to the strengthening of research capacity and improved research methodology, production of joint publications, upgrading of library and ICT facilities. Further it stresses that the library co-operation has an important impact on the quality of research – both through the general increase of standards, but also through the actual co-operation within and between the clusters. Through this co-operation awareness about library-matters among academic staff has been increased.
The report emphasizes the necessity of close coordination for ICT and library facilities to maximize use and training.

As indicated in Section 2, the main aim of the collaboration was to support the upgrading of Mzumbe university library so that it could provide better services to lecturers and students. This would contribute to increased quality of teaching, research and consultancy. AUC has assisted MU in purchasing library books and subscriptions to journals, thus adding to the library current stock of literature. Of particular importance is the support provided to cluster research which has involved graduate, doctoral and post-doctoral works. AUC staff through collaboration with their MU counterparts has also given lectures and short courses in library science at MU.

The library now has 9 Personal Computers, all of which with internet connectivity. MU has access to a vast number of electronic journals. Library staff have been upgraded and trained in ICT-skills for library use. Cooperation with AUC in the library sector has been instrumental in upgrading facilities.

The assistance on ICT from Agder has enabled Mzumbe to have the equipment and the know-how to make its students computer literate. This is no mean achievement given the short period of time used to introduce ICT. The computer literacy will make graduates of Mzumbe of highly marketable on the job market in Tanzania. The introduction of ICT at Mzumbe has been carefully planned and the main elements of the plan are set out in an ICT Plan for IDM [1]. The plan which covers the period from 2001-2005 emphasizes the parallel goal of building the network, (which had more or less been achieved by March 2003) and training of all students in computer literacy. The main aim will be to mainstream the use of ICT into all the University's activities. The assistance on the Computerization of the Library catalogue has significantly improved the library resources management and assists users to retrieve information required faster than the manual catalogue usage.

4.   **Future challenges**
Despite the significant achievement made in the AUC/MU Library cooperation, a number of challenges still exist. As a new university, Mzumbe needs to maintain a competitive edge by offering quality education and also producing quality research and consultancy. Adequate library support is contingent to reaching these results.

Due to limited resources, training particularly of undergraduate students continues to be dependent on basic textbooks and other reference works. The library presently cannot offer students with suitable services. Students still have to compete for few library copies of required text books for basic courses. There is therefore need to give higher priority to filling the knowledge needs of the undergraduates.

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[1] Furuholt B., Nesland L. and Ørvik T., "*Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plan for IDM*", Research Report No.28, Kristiansand and Mzumbe, February 2001

The ICT infrastructure for the MU Library is still low, because some of the targets as far as ICT improvement is concerned have not yet been reached. For example the library network which was completed in 2002 is not yet fully utilized, because among the 19 network points, only 9 provide connection to the computers and Internet. There is a need to increase the number of terminals connected to the Internet for students use to access scholarly information within the library. This is critical given the rapid expansion of student population which has lead to limited Internet search when one compares with the students and staff population of 2,390 and 412 respectively, to number of computer terminals available for users within the library.

Experience that has been attained through the 12 years of collaboration has built a better foundation for development of MU library for many years to come. However, the major challenge is to develop further plans for collaboration that secure support from different funding agencies.

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