# Software selection and acquisition in Nigerian University and Special Libraries: The way forward

OGHENEVWOGAGA BENSON **ADOGBEJI**

SYSTEMS ANALYST / NETWORK ADMINISTRATOR

DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, ABRAKA, NIGERIA.

Email : benadogbeji@yahoo.com


Onohwakpor, J.E.

Delta State University Library, Collection Development Librarian

Email: ordejoe@yahoo.com

and

Anie Ozioma Syvester

Delta State Polytechnic Library, Ozoro, Delta state, Nigeria.

Sylveyo3@yahoo.com

## Introduction:

Almost forty years now when Nigeria University and Special Libraries have embarked on automation, there are still challenges in software selection and acquisition. The world is growing in a geometric progression in the area of the application of Information and communication technology, even Nigeria but there are still some challenges in the University and special libraries in regards to software selection and its acquisition. It is obvious as noted and also reported by other scholars that software selection decision in the libraries is basically based on the report from others through conference on what they feel and heard that the software could offer. There has not been thorough system analysis to ascertain what is needed in library software before its selection and acquisition in some Nigeria University and Special Libraries.

Tiamiyu (2000) observed that libraries in most developing countries have low or lack the knowledge and or experience in automation. He found out that the greatest obstacles to library

automation is the scarcity of internal library manpower with the requisite computer knowledge and experience to plan, analyses, evaluate and implement / operates an automated library systems. As a result the libraries depend solely on vendors of computer systems for both the hardware and the software selection. Such expertise recommend, design and implement an automated system, this not advisable because without adequate understanding, input participation of library staff in the automation project, the library would end up with an inappropriate automated system. In situation where the libraries are even having competent and experienced staff in such area, politics, sentiment and self interest would not even let them allow such staff to participate thereby losing such staff to oil or the banking industries.

Most libraries do not hold on to software selection process before its acquisition. Ifidon (1999) and Fatoki (2002) reported that most of the Nigerian libraries do not strictly hold on to automation guidelines such as : information gathering, funding, employing library system manager or analyst who will be involved in the automation process like the selection process or the development process, planning, assessment needs, requirement specification of the library, systems selection and data conversion. Even at the selection stage, the experienced staff are not even informed or involved in the selection process or giving pre-system analysis of what should be needed before the acquisition hence in most cases within a short time of the acquisition of the software, it becomes obsolete or have some limitation therefore being unable to meet up with what is expected. Tedd (1984) also noted some reasons for computer based systems as reported by Boss in 1972 on the scope of computer systems in the planned British library, which consists of:

1. To provide a better service at lesser or no great a cost.
2. To give added benefits at lesser cost.
3. The provision of online access (by users and staff) to a library's catalogue.
4. The ability to access much more information via the online search services than would have been possible via printed sources.

5. The ability to produce easily management information such as the average cost of new books, etc.

Nevertheless, Tedd (1984) equally noted that software acquisition as noted by Boss, which discovered that most libraries adopt the Turkey method of software acquisition. This he described as the method in a supplier is:

1. Responsible for the necessary hardware, software installation and maintenance.
2. No computer experts are required on the part of the library staff.
3. There is usually a firm contract price and a predictable delivery date.
4. The library has control over the computer system.
5. Because the software as been installed and tested, the performance is usually reliable.

Looking at the importance of library computerization, it is considered so pertinent that every library must be involved. The selection and acquisition process as reported by others as stated above are not strictly be followed in some libraries in Nigeria. It becomes necessary that software acquisition that is known as in-house monitored computerized software should be adopted by libraries. In this practice, a computer firm will be contracted to develop the software but the library being involve in giving the expert some details that may be needed for expansion in the future but in most cases in Nigeria, no staff is involve even in the selection process or engaged in the developmental process. The issue now is what is the way forward, hence this study.

**Methodology**

The researcher used questionnaire to gather data from seven automated University and special libraries in three geo-political zones of Nigeria. These includes South – South (The petroleum training institute library, Effurun, John Harris Library, University of Benin), South – West ( Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan, Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Kwara state library board and the University of Ilorin

library) and North – North ( Human        Rights Commision library, Abuja)

**Summary of findings**

**Table I: Software used among the surveyed libraries**

| Name of Library | Software used | Number of software used |
|---|---|---|
| Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan | CDS/ISIS, TINLIB | 2 |
| National Human Rights Commision library, Abuja | TINLIB, CDS/ISIS, X-LIB | 3 |
| Petroleum Training Institute Library, Effurun | GLAS and X-LIB | 2 |
| Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, O.A.U, Ile-Ife | TINLIB | 1 |
| John Harris Library, University of Benin | SLAM | 1 |
| Kwara State Library Board, Ilorin | X-LIB | 1 |
| University of Ilorin Library, Ilorin | TINLIB, ALICE | 2 |

The study reveals that the Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan has used the CDS/ISIS and TINLIB software, Human Rights Commission Library has used CDS/ISIS, TINLIB and currently using X-LIB. Similarly, the Petroleum Training Institute has used GLAS and

.

now using the X-LIB software while the Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University has used TINLIB and the Kwara State Library board is using X-LIB . The University of Ilorin library used TINLIB before a change to ALICE                         software

**Table II: Mode of software decision**

| Mode | Yes | % |
|---|---|---|
| The Institution management imposed the software on the library | 3 | 435 |
| The head librarian consented to conference, seminar, and workshop report on the software | 4 | 57% |
| There was preliminary systems analysis study before the purchase of the software | 0 | 0% |
| **Total** | **7** | **100%** |

The study reveals that out of the seven libraries considered, three based their decision of software selection and acquisition on the management decision of imposing the software on them. Four of such libraries based their decision on what is heard about the software during conference, workshop or seminar while none of the libraries based her decision on systems analysis. For a library or any organization to have the best output in software to be used, there must be thorough systems analysis of what is needed before selecting the software in question as this will be able to reduce the limitations that may come up within a short time, thereby creating room for future expansion even before the purchase of the said software.

**Steps to software selection**

According to Komoski (1995), there are seven processes for responsible software selection.

1. Analysing needs, including the differentiation between needs and objectives. In this case, there is need to analyze what is expected in a software which must be in line with the library objectives. This is an area that many libraries in Nigeria do not take time to delve into.

2. Specification of requirement: This implies that the specification of the requirements for the software must be specified by the library concern especially before or at the time of software development.

3. Identifying promising software: The library must be able to identify the promising library software, which must be able to address the various library operations especially the catalogue, acquisition, circulation and report generating etc.

4. Reading relevant review. The intending library that wants to buy the software must read other relevant literatures and act on the usage by knowing more from the libraries that have used them, especially the area of prospect and difficulties.

5. Previewing the software with intended user group. Any library that want to select a software must involve the intending user group, as the users will be acquainted with the difficulties and how flexible the software is, thereby making useful suggestions for the improvement of the software.

6. Making recommendations on software for purchasing: After the previewing of the software, recommendations can be made for its purchase when the software has been test run and thoroughly evaluate to meet with the library needs and objectives. The things needed to be search for are:

- The selector of the software must be able to select the most desirable software after a systematic evaluation of all alternatives in terms of the library / the Institution objectives.

- The selector must also be able to establish a method of rating each alternative against the selection criteria.

- The selector must be able to evaluate the relative importance of each selection criterion.

7. Getting post – use feedback: This is the stage whereby one needs to determine the compliance or discrepancy between the library objectives and the actual user performance. The post –user feedback can be of significant to a library's systematic process of software selection, purchase and use.

**Recommendations:**

The researcher seeing that the libraries change from one software to another even within a short time of committing fund into it and there is no preliminary systems analysis of what is needed in the library software before its acquisition, therefore suggest the way forward that:

1. The libraries should keep to software selection process or guidelines as even reported by Komoski (1995), Ifidon(1999) and Fatoki (2002).

2. Each university and special library should employ at least a system analyst,/ network administrator or any computer literate person that has good understanding of the library operations that could be of help even before the selection and the acquisition of library software

3. The library involve in automation should allow the system analyst / network administrator to participate in making useful suggestions on how the best software could be developed or selected and acquired for the library.

4. There should be fund for maintenance when the need arises.

5. Staff and user training must be taken seriously

6. There should also be a nearby library that makes use of such software in case of difficulties or there should be maintenance contract with the vendor to attend to their difficulties.

7. Before the acquisition of the software, the library must make sure that the following among others must be in place:

   - The software must be able to work on standalone computer as well as a network system.

   - It must be developed for that type of library – small or large library

   - It must have contained all the needed modules: Acquisition, circulation, catalogue, report among others.

   - It must support graphics and be able to run well on the operating systems that it installed.

- It must meet up with all the library specification and transactions.
- There must be room for expansion. That is creating additional fields when the need arises without necessary calling the vendor or the developer. For instance if the edition created ends in 31st edition, there should be room for the systems analyst to create additional field to accommodate such.
- The software must be flexible and easy to use.
- It must be menu driven and easy to manipulate and navigate
- The software must support multi-access and must pass through evaluation test. That is testing the software to ascertain if it could withstand the purpose for which is purchased for.
- There must be local maintenance agents that

will readily available in case of difficulties.
- The library software must be upgradeable and upgraded to work with popular operating system that may be needed in near future.

**Conclusion:**

As revealed in this study, it is pertinent that the Nigeria University and Special libraries engage the services of systems analyst, network administrator and information scientist in addition to the traditional librarian in order to move forward in library automation. This becomes necessary as many libraries have lost much fund to automation but no fruitful report in addition to the fact that the world is dynamic and information management is also dynamic as such one need to change to the new trend of global information management. It is therefore advisable that the libraries should keep to Software selection steps or process.

## References:

ADOGBEJI, O.B.(2005) Software Migration in selected University and Special Libraries in Nigeria. M.Sc. Dissertation (Unpublished)

FATOKI, O.C. (2002) Trends and standards in software selection in Nigerian Libraries. gateway Library Journal: Vol 5, No 1 and 2 pp 4-5

IFIDON, Sam E. (1999) Essentials of African University Library Management Lagos: National Library Press pp 22 – 35.

63, 67, 72.

KOMOSKI, P. K (1995) Seven steps to responsible software selection ERIC Digest, P. 4

TEDD, L (1984) An introduction to computer – based library systems 2$^{nd}$ edition. New York. John Willey and sons. Pp 6-7.

TIAMIYU, M.A. (2000) Developing Automated Library Systems in Developing Countries: Issues and strategies In: Bisi Ajibola and Tiamiyu (ed) Library Auitomation for the Information age (concepts, technologies and strategies) pp