

FUNDING UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES: THE WAY OUT*

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Ghana has five functioning universities. These are the University of Ghana, Legon; Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi (KNUST); University of Cape Coast (UCC) University for Development Studies, Tamale (UDS); and the University College of Education, Winneba (UCEW) respectively. The oldest and largest is the University of Ghana which was established in 1948 as the University of the Gold Coast and prepared students for the degrees of the University of London. The University of the Gold Coast became autonomous on October 1, 1961 and was renamed University of Ghana. Currently the University of Ghana has five faculties, four schools and eight institutes.

In 1951 it became obvious that one University College could not cater for the higher education needs of the Gold Coast (now Ghana). Consequently, by a Government Ordinance of October 6, 1951, the Kumasi College of Arts, Science and Technology was established. The College was more or less the type of institution envisaged by the Elliot Commission on Higher Education in West Africa¹. Courses were offered initially in

teacher training and Arts subjects up to the Higher School Certificate Level and in Engineering, Pharmacy and Commercial subjects. As the College expanded, it was made to concentrate only on science and technology. Following the report of the University Commission² which was set up in 1961, the College was upgraded to a fully-fledged University - Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology - by an Act of Parliament on August 22, 1961. The University now has eight faculties and six institutes.

The UCC started as the University College of Cape Coast in 1962, and was placed under the supervision of the University of Ghana. With this arrangement, students of the College were examined in courses approved by the University of Ghana and the degrees, diplomas and certificates were awarded by the latter. The institution was renamed the University College of Science Teachers in 1964. It attained full University status in November 1971 and became known as the University of Cape Coast. The University presently has four faculties, one school and three institutes. The main aim of the University is to produce graduate teachers in Arts and Science subjects for the sec-

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ond cycle institutions in Ghana.

The UDS was established by law on March 2, 1992. It however, admitted its pioneer students in September, 1993. The University, when fully operational, will offer courses in agricultural sciences, medical and health sciences, integrated development studies, social science and environmental and cultural studies. The UCEW took off in November 1992 with the main objective of being 'an additional university for the training of graduate teachers for our senior secondary schools, training colleges, polytechnics and technical institutes to supplement the output of the University of Cape Coast'.³

University libraries are the richest and best organized information centres in Ghana. In all of them, the University Librarian, is accorded the status of a full professor and is a member of the academic board. These libraries are the major sources of information provision for both the staff and students unlike their counterparts from the developed countries who also have access to other well endowed libraries and quality bookshops. The paper will first attempt to review the present state of funding of university libraries in Ghana. The second part will focus on the way out by recommending appropriate parameters for funding the university libraries if they are to contribute to learning, teaching, research and consultancy activities of their parent institutions effectively.

PRESENT STATE OF FUNDING

The five universities in Ghana are all owned by the State. These institutions are almost entirely funded by the State. The economy of Ghana has been in crisis over the past two decades. This has adversely affected vari-

ous sectors of the economy such as education and health.

The university authorities in Ghana have also neglected their libraries. They have under funded their respective university libraries. This lack of commitment to effective library development in the universities in Ghana has been corroborated by the findings of the University Rationalization Committee (URC)⁴. The URC, for example, found out that from 1982 - 1996, the University of Ghana spent a meagre 3.0% of its budget on its library. The URC also found out that KNUST allocated only 1.62% of its resources to the library from 1982 - 1986. During the same period under review, UCC could manage to squeeze a paltry 1.16% of its budget to the library.

The URC, with reference to the subvention formula of funding universities, found out that university libraries, on the average, were allocated just 2.02% of the resources of the universities⁵. The URC then went ahead to recommend a rational allocation of funds to the various units within the university system. The following table gives the URC formula along side the then existing corresponding averages by the universities⁶.

EXPENDITURE AREA	UNIVERSITY AVERAGE %	RECOMMENDED %
Administration (Gen.)	5.56	6.00
Academic	21.70	45.00
Library	2.02	10.00
Academic Staff & Student Facilities & Amenities	12.78	5.00
General Educational Expenses	16.89	15.00
Municipal Services	25.07	15.00
Miscellaneous	15.98	4.00
TOTAL	100.00	100.00

There has been a huge increase in student enrolments into the universities recently. For example, KNUST's yearly admission of fresh students jumped from 881 in 1992/93 to 2,164 in 1994/95⁷ while that of the University of Ghana was 1550 and 3583 fresh students in 1990 and 1994 respectively⁸. The URC report clearly stressed that "to make it possible for our universities to admit more students and to facilitate research in the universities, finances must be spent on their libraries"⁹.

The URC recommended that 10% of all the revenue allocated to the universities should be given to the libraries. It further pointed out that with the proper funding of the university libraries, the latter should be in a position to accommodate at least 30% of the total student population. Regrettably, the funding situation of the university libraries has not improved since the URC report was released. For instance, in 1990 it was reported by Alemna¹⁰ that collection development in university libraries in Ghana was anything but satisfactory. He found out that the collections were outdated and money to procure relevant publications was inadequate. Again, to buttress the low level of financial provision for university libraries, the Balme Library of the University of Ghana was allocated only 2.0% of the university's 1992 recurrent budget as against the prescribed 10%. It was therefore not surprising that this library could purchase just 35 titles of books during the period under review¹¹.

The Library of UDS was started from scratch in May 1993. It was not fortunate to inherit any collection from any Library. Its collection development has, however, been adversely hindered because of inadequate fund-

ing. The Library had by October 1997 accessioned 8198 volumes of books representing an annual growth rate of 1856 volumes. One of the main reasons why the Library has not been able to acquire the much needed books is due to the fact that it has not been able to receive a fair share of the University's budget. For example, in 1996 and 1997 the Library was allocated just 4.45% and 5.22% of the University's recurrent budget respectively even though the official policy, as has already been pointed out, is that it should and ought to have been given 10.0% of the budget.

THE WAY OUT

Charity begins at home. The university administrators should stop paying lip-service to library development in their respective institutions. They should acknowledge that a well developed university library enhances and facilitates academic and research activities of both academics and students. This should then be translated into monetary terms by actually allocating the Government prescribed rate of 10.0% of the budget to the library.

Funds for the universities are channelled to them through the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE). The Council should do more than serve as a clearing house for funds for tertiary institutions in Ghana. It should assert its supervisory role by ensuring that budgets of universities are actually allocated to departments and units based on Government approved formulae.

One major source of funds for university libraries in Ghana is from donations of publications they receive from government and non-governmental organizations, libraries and

individuals. For instance, it has been reported that the collection of the UDS Library has a high proportion of donations to the tune of 57% of the entire collection. It is worth pointing out that Ekoja has also found out that publications received by Nigerian university libraries, when costed in financial terms, make donations the principal source of alternative funding for such libraries. Donations should, however, aim at complementing collection building efforts of libraries. A university library that cannot obtain most of its publications from its regular budget is not likely to develop a balanced collection.

University libraries in Ghana generate extra income from such sources as photocopying, bindery, overdue fines and communication services. The latter cover fax, e-mail and telex. It should be pointed out, however, that income from these is minimal.

The University Teachers Association of Ghana (UTAG) could do more to help university libraries by, for example, putting pressure on the university administration to actually allocate the stipulated 10.0% of the university budget to the library. It appears UTAG is more interested in getting book allowances from the State for its members than ensuring that university libraries are well funded. During the UTAG industrial action of 1995, it succeeded in increasing book allowance from \$100.00 to \$600.00 for its members. Regrettably, it could not ensure that university libraries got increased funds to help upgrade their collections for the benefit of their users.

UTAG has a lot to learn from its counterpart in Nigeria, the Academic Staff Union of Ni-

geria Universities (ASUNU). In 1992, ASUNU signed an agreement with the Federal Government of Nigeria. The section of the agreement that related to the university library stipulated that "budgeting provision for library services be under a special head of its own and that they should account for 10% of the total regular budget"¹².

The National Universities Commission of Nigeria (NUC), unlike its counterpart in Ghana, (NCTE) is committed to university library development. To give backing to the agreement between ASUNU and the Federal Government referred to above, the NUC directed and makes sure that all the universities comply with the following:

1. each year 10% of the total recurrent grant to each university should be fully committed to the operations of the university library;
2. this is to be fully effective from the 1993 allocations;
3. out of this amount, 60% should be committed to the purchase of books and journals while 40% is committed to personnel emolument and purchase of other consumables required in the library;
4. the funds will henceforth be listed separately ... along the same lines as has been the practice for research funds;
5. these library funds should not lapse from one year to the next and the available unused funds should be carried forward to the following year¹³.

The funds made available from direct subvention by the Government to the universities in Ghana have not been adequate over

the years. As a consequence, financial provision for university libraries has lagged behind the recommended norm. The cost of publications and other library materials has, however, been increasing. The university libraries are, therefore, finding it difficult to perform their expected role of supporting the curriculum and extension activities of the universities. The university library must seek other sources of funds to augment the subvention it gets from the Government.

There is an urgent need for university libraries in Ghana to establish public relations departments or library development departments as it pertains in some university libraries in the United States. Such an outfit will be managed by an experienced librarian who will have the basic aim of identifying donors (both internal and external), to the library. Potential donors will have to be identified, targeted and approached to assist the library in a variety of ways such as money, books, equipment and furniture. The public relations departments can succeed if they adopt the relevant marketing strategy. This view is supported by Atlas¹⁴ when he stated that fund raising is closely related to public relations. Kisiedu¹⁵ has also stressed that potential donors want to know about organizations to which they are requested to render assistance. According to her the library should design and issue special brochures which focus on their features and services while highlighting areas that need special assistance to create a balance in service provision. This way the needs of the library can be prioritized to enable donors choose whichever line of item they would like to fund.

The image of librarians and libraries in Ghana is anything but satisfactory. A study by

Antwi¹⁶ in 1990 revealed that university libraries in Ghana lack the required institutional support. This corroborated with an earlier study by Alemna¹⁷ that universities in Ghana are ambivalent in according proper status to their librarians. Efforts should therefore be made to improve the image of libraries and librarianship in Ghana. This is because it has been established by Lippman¹⁸ that the image problem of the library not only affects the financial resources allocated to libraries but also hinders access to locally produced materials, even within the institutions.

University libraries in Ghana should explore the possibility of establishing formal links through the "twinning" arrangements being pursued by some university libraries in the United States and Canada. These links make it possible for university libraries in North America to adopt their counterparts in the developing world. Benefits derived include the provision of books, journals, audio-visual materials and exchange of personnel. It is worth noting that the UDS Library has such links with the Clemson University Library and Louisville Library respectively of the United States. The UDS Library has started benefitting from these links with a donation of books from the Clemson University Library in October, 1996.

"Friends of the Library Club" is one way through which members of the community within and outside can come together to promote the Library. The Club can identify and articulate the needs of the library to the community and then mobilize funds through donations to support the Library.

Consultancy services can also bring extra income to the Library. There are numerous

organizations in the country without libraries. Such organizations have not found it necessary to establish libraries. This is because they are not aware of their importance. The consultancy unit of the library can assist such organizations to set up their libraries for a fee.

University libraries can generate income by organizing short courses for library assistants without any requisite training in library routine. The participants for such courses should be made to pay registration fees. The courses may last for about four weeks. This has successfully been undertaken by the University Library of Abubaka Tafawa Belewa University in Nigeria¹⁹.

The university libraries in Ghana have the richest collection of information sources in the country. These libraries primarily exist to serve their immediate academic users. The services of the university libraries have virtually been restricted to the academic community. The information needs of the wider community have therefore been neglected. Until such time that the wider community gets access to the services of the university libraries, the latter will find it difficult to support the development of these libraries when called upon. The university libraries should begin to market their services to individuals and organizations outside the university community. The services rendered to them should be at a price so they could be sustained.

CONCLUSION

This paper has established that the university libraries in Ghana have been under funded over the years. This has clearly affected the development of these libraries. The univer-

sity libraries are now faced with acute accommodation problems which have been compounded by the exponential growth in student enrolment in recent times. The library collections are limited while some are outdated. The facilities of the libraries can only be upgraded if more funds are made available to them.

Charity begins at home. The various university administrations should give the much needed financial support to their respective libraries. They should stop diverting funds due their libraries and ensure that the prescribed 10.0% of their recurrent budgets actually go to the library.

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