
DEVELOPMENT OF A LAW LIBRARY CONSORTIUM IN METRO MANILA***Tadz Majal Ayesha V. Jaafar***MLIS 2012, UP School of Library and Information Studies***Abstract**

This paper proposes a model for a law library consortium in Metro Manila based on the analysis of several factors that could affect its establishment and operations, such as the current status of the participating PGLL member libraries in Metro Manila, the practices and services of these libraries, the resources which are available in each library, and the attitude of the law librarians and the institutions' administrators towards resource sharing.

Introduction

As people try to keep abreast with the continuously changing and evolving information, and keep pace with the incessant technological developments, they employ various techniques to satisfy their information needs. While they make use of these various techniques, they try to look for more efficient and economic ways to obtain what they need in order to keep pace with the continuously rising costs.

As repositories of information, libraries are greatly affected by this technological phenomenon. According to Reinhardt and Boekhorst (2001), the continuously increasing number of publications and other sources of information brought about by advancements in technology has led to greater demands. As a result, some libraries and information centers unnecessarily duplicate the efforts of others to satisfy the demands of their clients.

To address the above-mentioned concerns, libraries now engage in collaborative activities. They ask help from other institutions in order to satisfy the needs of their clients and get the most out of the available resources. These institutions, which share the same goals, can collaborate for the attainment of a particular goal through a consortium, which Neal (1988) defined as “a semi-permanent organization, typically supported largely by financial contributions from its members, that employs a professional staff whose sole responsibility is to encourage and facilitate cooperative activities between and among the members, and between them collectively with others” (p.1). He also mentioned that consortia could be categorized according to the type of members, leadership, goals, size, scope and location.

According to Dunfee (1988), the library consortium might be the earliest form of resource sharing and perhaps the most successful form of institutional cooperation. Consortia, according to Weech (2002), differ from associations in the sense that consortia refer to groups of institutions which are formed for the accomplishment of a particular goal, while associations are formed based on mutual interests. Meanwhile, Young (1983) distinguished consortia from

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library networks in the sense that consortia are groupings of libraries usually for the purpose of resource sharing, and is characterized by formal agreement, while a library network refers to a specialized type of library cooperation for centralized development, cooperative programs and services, which involves the use of equipment such as computers and requires the establishment of a central node.

Institutions in the Philippines also engage in collaborative activities to address the aforementioned problems, and satisfy the needs of their clients. Some of these collaborative activities are done formally. Examples of these are the Mendiola Consortium, Ortigas Center Library Consortium, Inter-Institutional Consortium (IIC) or South Manila Consortium, Intramuros Library Consortium, European Studies Consortium of the Philippines, and the Health Research and Development Information Network (HERDIN).

Like the other institutions, law libraries in the Philippines also collaborate with one another to deal with the demands of the legal profession. Although this cooperation is informal, it has been an effective manner of satisfying the information needs of the clients of many law libraries in Metro Manila, particularly the member institutions of the Philippine Group of Law Librarians (PGLL).

While the informal cooperation among the PGLL member libraries has been effective, formalizing it is still necessary to ensure that all the member libraries benefit from the collaboration. However, a number of factors must be taken into consideration to come up with an effective model of a consortium. Hence, this study sought to find out the following: (1) the information needs of the libraries' clients; (2) the practices of each library in (a) organization of library materials (b) acquisitions (c) user services (d) use of information technology (e) marketing of library services (f) personnel management, and (g) community relations; (3) the collaborative activities that each library engages in; (4) the sources of legal information that each library can share; (5) the services that each library specialize in and can share access with other libraries; (6) the ways in which the law libraries can contribute to the establishment of a law library consortium in terms of (a) management (b) acquisition (c) organization of materials (d) user services, and (e) use of information technology; (7) the attitude of law librarians/library personnel towards resource sharing; and (8) the attitude of the institutions' administrators towards resource sharing. In addition, it proposes a model of a law library consortium that will be most beneficial to all the member libraries.

The Search Techniques and the Participants of the Study

Three sets of questionnaires were used for three groups of respondents. The first set was intended to find out the information needs of the clients. Sixty-two responses from four institutions were obtained for this part. The second set was devised for the librarians to know their practices, available resources and services, the ways in which they can contribute to the establishment of a consortium, their attitude towards resource sharing and their suggested model of the consortium. Twenty-one responses from eight institutions (Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of the Solicitor General (OSG), Supreme Court (SC), Ombudsman, House of Representatives (HREP), UP College of Law, Adamson University, and Fortun, Narvasa and Salazar Law Firm Libraries) were obtained for this part. Meanwhile, ten interview questions

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were asked to eight administrators. All the administrators of the aforementioned institutions participated in the study, except for the Ombudsman, which was replaced by the Administrator of the Court of Appeals Library.

Results of the Study

Information Needs of the Clients

The results showed that although the clients of the different law libraries have different profiles, they look for almost the same type and characteristics of information. Most clients search for laws, decisions, issuances, and news. Many of them prefer detailed and comprehensive information. There is also not much difference between the type and characteristics of information that the clients look for and what their respective institutions require from them.

It was also revealed that most of the clients (4.19%) look for information for personal gain. The others also cited *requirement of the employers, integral part of the job, and personal like* as reasons for seeking information.

The survey results also demonstrated that majority of the clients use their respective institutions' libraries, and that 79.03% of them use textbooks, 69.35% use electronic/online materials, 53.23% use case digests, 50% use dictionaries, 48.38% use periodicals/journals and reviewers, and 19.35% use encyclopedias. It was also found out that most of the clients (85.48%) consult foreign materials, and most of them still prefer to use print materials rather than online resources.

The findings also revealed that while most of the clients who participated in the study are satisfied with their research, still half of them responded that not all the materials that they need are available in their institutions' libraries. Thus, 85.48% of the respondents believe that there is a need for collaboration among the libraries.

The Different Practices of the Law Libraries

To come up with a model for a law library consortium that would be beneficial to all members, the practices of the libraries were also examined. After the survey for the librarians has been conducted, it was found out that majority of those who participated in the survey (6 institutions) use the Library of Congress Classification System in arranging the books. The survey also showed that all these libraries index periodicals, and that most of them use the Library of Congress Subject headings in assigning subjects. It was also revealed that the SC, DOJ and OSG Libraries process library materials manually, using print tools while the Adamson University College of Law Library and the HREP Library catalog and index materials online, using electronic tools. Meanwhile, The Office of the Ombudsman, FNS, and UP College of Law Libraries use both print and online tools in cataloging and indexing materials.

The eight institutions were also found out to acquire library materials using their own budget allotments. They also accept donations from other libraries.

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The practices of the participating libraries in user services demonstrate that collaboration exists among them, and is indeed helpful for their clients. When asked how they respond to their clients' information needs, the librarians stated various ways which includes searching through their own collection, surfing the Internet, and calling other libraries. All the participating libraries were found out to have computer units in their libraries with Internet connection. The HREP, UP College of Law, and Adamson University College of Law libraries have Integrated Library Systems (ILS), while the OSG Library is on the process of developing an in-house system. The libraries also subscribe to online tools for their clients. To maintain the condition of the information technology facilities, the librarians coordinate with their respective Information Technology Divisions. Some of the libraries also hire staff that are knowledgeable in the operations and maintenance of the said facilities.

The results of the study also revealed that the libraries employ different marketing strategies such as advertising and promoting their services and activities. Most of them do this by developing websites that would showcase their activities.

When it comes to personnel management, it was found out that in all the participating libraries, the hiring of the employees remains to be a management prerogative. One of the factors considered in the selection and recruitment of staff, and in the determination of salary is the educational attainment of the applicant. It was noted however, that the salary adjustment in government institutions is based on the Salary Standardization Law.

The results of the study also indicated that most of the libraries participate in activities sponsored by their communities.

Collaborative Activities of the Libraries

The collaborative activities in which the libraries engage are also important aspects which should be considered in establishing a law library consortium. It was found out that 7 out of the 8 participating institutions engage in collaborative activities. All of these seven institutions engage in reciprocal borrowing/collection sharing, six take part in interlibrary loan, and five engage in reference services. The other collaborative activities or services participated in by the libraries are shared cataloging services, union catalog/serials list, and purchasing and negotiation of books and serials. Among the options provided to the respondents, it was found out that sharing of library systems is the only collaborative activity that is not done by any of the libraries. The results also indicated that the FNS Law Library does not engage in collaborative activities.

Library Materials/Sources of Legal Information and Services Available in the Library

The study revealed that the libraries have various collections of textbooks, statutory reports, statutory codes, administrative code, legal dictionaries, administrative register, treatises, case digests, legal encyclopedias, newspapers, case reports, legal periodicals, electronic/online materials, and reviewers. It was noted however that the Supreme Court Library does not have reviewers, since according to their librarians, they don't find it useful for

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their clients.

The study also demonstrated that most of the libraries engage in interlibrary loan, and are good at it.

Ways by which each Library can Contribute to the Establishment of a Law Library Consortium

There are many ways by which each library can contribute to the establishment of the consortium. Four of the participating libraries have staff that are knowledgeable in running a consortium. The librarians are also willing to render services to the consortium on a part time basis, and as part of their job descriptions in their respective institutions. Most of the libraries can also contribute to the establishment of the consortium by taking part in the decision making process, participating in the activities of the consortium, implementing the policies formulated for the consortium, and even securing funding for the consortium. They are also keen to help in acquiring library materials for the consortium. Most of them can help in the selection and evaluation of the materials.

All participating institutions also need an adequate number of staff in-charge of cataloging and indexing library materials who are willing to organize resources for the consortium. However, it was found out that only the UP College of Law and FNS Law Libraries are willing to share their cataloging and indexing tools for the use of the consortium. The others said that they can contribute to the organization of the materials for the consortium by creating a unified catalog and union list for the consortium and adding entries to these tools.

The libraries were also found to have staff designated for user services. However, only six of them are willing to share this to the consortium. The Office of the Ombudsman library is not willing to share this because of lack of manpower, while the Supreme Court is not willing because this remains to be a management prerogative of the court.

The librarians of the eight participating institutions are also affirmative on sharing access to their institutions' information systems.

Attitude of the Librarians/Library Personnel and Administrators towards Resource Sharing

While it was found that 18 out of the 21 librarians from the 8 participating institutions are willing to collaborate with other libraries, there are some apprehensions from the other librarians. One of those who are not willing to collaborate said that collaboration might only worsen the situation. The other reasons cited for their apprehension are uncertainty of management approval and lack of manpower. Despite the hesitations, 19 of the 21 librarians think that a law library consortium is important to satisfy the information needs of their clients. They also said that their administrators frequently visit the library when searching for information, and allow them to purchase the needed library materials. Majority of them also said that they will be allowed to collaborate with other institutions.

Meanwhile, according to the administrators, when they seek for information, they usually go online, since most of the libraries are already subscribed to online databases. But, as what the librarians have earlier mentioned, they still go to the library, especially when what

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they need is available in the library. On the other hand, one administrator added that how they search information depends on the requirements of the service that they provide.

Most of the administrators say that the services of their libraries are adequate, and that they consider the library as an integral part of the institution. They also think that the operational costs of their respective libraries are just right. Only the administrator of the FNS Law Library said that their operational costs are high.

The eight administrators are aware of the concept of resource sharing, and are willing to collaborate with other libraries. However, there are some apprehensions. According to some administrators, they are willing to collaborate provided that the materials to be shared will be limited to library materials, and that there should be equal sharing of responsibilities and resources.

As to the support for the establishment of the consortium, they vouched for support which are intangible in nature.

Most administrators also have the old concept of a consortium that has a central node. Only one of them suggested a model wherein every member will have an important role.

Proposed Model for the Law Library Consortium

Based on the analysis of the data obtained for the study, and of the New England Law Library Consortium (NELLCO) using the components which were enumerated by Wade (1999) in his study, the model created for the consortium will have the following characteristics:

Legal Structure

The consortium will be duly recognized as a legal entity by the concerned government institutions.

Management Structure and Staffing

The consortium will be governed by a board of directors, which shall be elected from the directors/heads of the member institutions. The board's term of office, the members' responsibilities and the activities of the consortium shall be specified in the Memorandum of Agreement. It shall also have a separate staff whose qualifications include a bachelor's or master's degree in library and information science, and knowledge in consortium administration, and whose appointment can be temporary or project-based. The staff shall directly report to the board of directors of the consortium.

Organizational Structure

No central hub shall be formed for the consortium. Instead, all member institutions will be given vital roles, and actively participate in the consortium activities, depicting a web-like structure, in which members are interconnected with each other.

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Funding and Ownership of Assets

The consortium shall have a funding that will be generated from (1) membership fees, (2) service fees, and (3) grants. The funds can be allotted for staff compensation, incorporation, and other activities. The member institutions shall also jointly own the consortium's assets and infrastructure.

Conclusions and Recommendations

After analyzing the data gathered, several conclusions and recommendations were drawn. It was established that the law library is regarded as an essential part of an institution, and that the library clients in the legal field are greatly dependent on law libraries. Thus, it is highly recommended that the librarians should keep abreast of the developments in librarianship and law. It is also recommended that they conduct a timely and objective assessment of their collection and services. They should be knowledgeable of the services that they offer. They should also continuously improve their practices and services. Since the clients continuously search for legal information in various sources which the libraries may not always be able to provide, the librarians must be open to the concept of collaboration, and they must inform their respective institutions' administrators of the advantages and disadvantages of a consortium. Finally, since the administrators of the participant institutions are willing to collaborate with other institutions and give suggestions for its development, it is recommended that the consortium be established as soon as possible, using the proposed model of this study as a guide.

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