The Role of ICT in the Professional Development of Academic Librarians in Nigeria: A Review of Related Literature

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Abstract
The paper examined the role of ICT in the training of professional librarians for better library services which include the provision of computers, internet services and databases for effective and efficient library services. The review of literature discovered that many academic libraries are lacking the necessary ICT facilities for the training of staff and the provision of better library services. Moreover, there are inadequate finances for the training of staff and the deployment of proper and adequate ICT in academic libraries. This has made libraries not to be providing the needed services that are required by users. The paper therefore recommends that parent organizations and the government should provide enough finances for the training of staff and purchase of relevant ICT facilities. In addition, librarians should regard training in ICT as a necessity that must be embrace for the good of library system.

Keywords: ICT, Professional development, Academic librarians, Skills, Tools

1.1 Introduction

Librarianship has undergone many changes over the years. A few decades ago, librarians in Nigeria and indeed many parts of the developing world were mainly conducting their work and providing services in the traditional way. Routine library services such as circulation, reference, cataloguing, serials control and other services were completely done manually. With the introduction of Information Communication Technology (ICT), libraries and librarians have shifted from their passive method of providing services to a proactive way of reaching out to users through the use of ICT. The need for librarians over the years to develop themselves so as to meet up with the challenges of the information age cannot be over emphasize. Library professionals therefore require continuous updating of their skills and knowledge for effective performance through the use of ICT which has revolutionized academic libraries in information provision. This rapid technological change has greatly affected the way librarians handle their responsibilities. Susan, Baby & Sreerekha, (2011) noted that continuous education is necessary for library professionals. This involve motivation for librarians to keep abreast of the new knowledge and technology, as well as an interest in supplementing professional training which can be done through maintaining professional competence in the use of information and communication technologies.

2.1 Review of Related Literature

2.2 Information Communication Technology (ICT) in academic libraries

ICT refers to technologies that provide access to information using telecommunications which focuses primarily in the use of internet, wireless networks, cell phones and other communication mediums. ICT provide the society with a vast array of new communication capabilities. For example people communicate in real time with others in different countries using technologies such as instant messaging, video conferencing, and social networking website like facebook, Twitter, SMS, Instagram, etc. which allow users from all over the world to remain in contact and communicate on a regular basis. Islam and Islam (2006) state that library services now largely depends on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) through the use of computers and other technologies. This has brought about not only remarkable changes in their daily operations and services but also identified a new and active role for librarians. Automation or computerization is another important role of the application of ICT in libraries. It facilitates speedy library operations, services, and access to information delivery. Gokhe (n.d) states that ICT are essential components that are used in academic libraries because it has been able to turn the world into a global village. The use of ICT has brought many changes to the library environment. Islam & Islam (2013) further outlines the benefits of the uses of ICT in library based system to include:

- Improving the efficiency of internal operations
- Improving access to local library resources
- Providing access to resources outside the library
- Interoperability of information systems

These ICT facilities are used in the house keeping operations of libraries. They help not only in improving access to library collections but also with the aid of internet and networking, provide information at the door step of readers. Lawal-Solarin (2018) noted that the facilities that are required to provide effective library services through the use of ICT are:

- Internet services that linked users with information across the globe.
- Subscription to databases that provides scholarly and general information that ordinarily would have been out of reach of readers in the traditional library set up.
- Online public access catalogue (OPAC) that is available in the internet for use by readers in the campus and beyond. OPAC also provide the opportunity for readers to have access to the collections of big libraries all over the world.
- Other services provided by libraries that are related to ICT are photocopying services, bindery services, lamination services, video and audio services.

The above enhances the credibility of a library in the eyes of the public, particularly to the active and potential users of the library. Quadri (2012) further reiterated that the use of ICT in libraries has shifted the focus of libraries from the traditional oriented services to providing digital services through the use of computers, networks and internet services. This has greatly modernised libraries and information centres which has enhanced resource development, resource sharing and information utilization at all levels and it has greatly enhanced quick and easy access to information through the services provided by information professionals.

2.3 Professional development of librarians through the use ICT

Who are librarians? According to ACRL (1998) librarians are professionals whose role are teaching, scholarship and service to the institution and profession. Academic librarians are a people focussed role. They manage library resources as they have readers in their minds. They work in universities, research institutes and other institutions of higher education (Academic librarian: Job description, n.d.). Because of the nature of the job of academic librarians they need to be versatile in all fields of learning so as to meet the needs of their readers. This then makes it very necessary for librarians to be updating their knowledge through continuing education which is an essential ingredient of professional development for all employers and employees. The library profession is not an exception. Librarians are expected to keep abreast with the current trends in their area of specialization. This can only be possible with the aid of ICT that enables library professionals to know the new happenings that are coming out on a regular basis which enhances library operations and services and then apply it to the local environment.

Susan, Baby & Sreerekha (2011) noted that continuing education for librarians is necessary due to the technological development that plays a role of mediation between the vast network of resources and users. This takes the form of attendance in Continuing Education Programmes (CEP) like conferences, workshops and seminars which often becomes a forum for helping individuals update their knowledge and skills with the current happenings in the field of library and information science. They further stated that apart from CEP, librarians also undergo training through the formal level of training in library schools and other similar computer training programmes. This provides an intensive training that prepares trainees for the task of providing good services to readers. It is for this reason that library schools have changed their nomenclature from Library Science to Library and Information Science.

This is as a result of the incorporation of ICTs into the curriculum of library schools to change the content of their curriculum to reflect the changes that are ICT based according to international practice in librarianship. Many librarians therefore strive to update their knowledge through on the job training or going for formal training to obtain additional knowledge to makes them relevant in the new information age. The reason for the changes is for librarians to be proactive and adapt to the information changing behaviour of users whom among many of them no longer patronage the traditional information resources such as paper based materials like books, journals and reference materials for their readings and research but rather rely more on eBooks and journals for their studies. If librarians remain dormant, the right information will not be provided to readers but they will get the junk of information that are there in the internet which are not reliable. With the knowledge in librarianship and ICT, librarians become better informed to acquire, organise and disseminate the right kind of information to clientele in a faster and efficient way.

2.4 Problems confronting librarians in their professional development through the use of ICT

Despite efforts made by librarians to develop themselves professionally and improve library services through the use of ICT, there are still many challenges that are yet to be overcome and some of these problems are:-

Cost of hard and software – Krubu & Asawaru (2011) noted that the high cost of hardware and software is the reason why many libraries are still struggling with the issue of acquiring computers in libraries.

Inadequate training of library staff – In their separate studies Lawal-Solarin (n.d.) & Omosor (2014) noted that inadequate training results to poor performance of librarians and eventually causes work stress among professional librarians. This is due to the fact that many librarians are not ICT friendly, particularly in the use of computers and the internet. This then becomes a problem in organising and disseminating information to the user community. Quadri (2012) also collaborated the above fact that there is lack of ICT knowledge and skilled manpower in academic libraries. On the other hand he noted that many skilled staffs that have been trained abroad on the use of ICT and librarianship often leaves the services of their employers upon returning for greener pastures, hence causing brain drain.

Funding of E-libraries – Some of the challenges facing the training of professional staff according to Ezeani (2009) are the fact that many academic libraries lack the funds to send their staff for training in and outside Nigeria. Susan, Baby & Sreerekha (2011) further indicated that financial constraints as a result of many organizations not sponsoring librarians is a key factor that is a hindrance to the reasons why many librarians do not attend continuing education programmes and eventually this does not help in updating their knowledge that would have translated into effective and efficient services. When staffs are not motivated through staff development, they will not be properly trained and motivated to give their best concerning service delivery to users. Furthermore, he noted that librarians needs the support of technical staff like networking engineers and systems analyst who are often difficult to come by because libraries cannot afford to pay for their services.

Lack of innovation and creativity by head of libraries – Haider (2004) also noted that many head of libraries are not innovative, creative, imaginative and visionary in thinking and planning on how to carry out ICT programmes in their libraries for their staff. This according to him is buttressed by the fact that Nigerian academic staff including librarians cannot compete globally because they have limited knowledge on computer skills and therefore cannot use technical computer programmes to complement their work because they are not formally trained on the use of ICT. This is as a result of the fact that many head of librarians are not versatile in the use of ICT.

Conclusion
This paper highlights the evolution of library services from the time when libraries and librarians were providing traditional library services. With the advent of ICT there was a paradigm shift to adapt to the new technologies in order to serve readers better. This has now made library professionals to shift their focus to using computers, internet and databases to provide functional, efficient and faster services to the user community. However, these have come with challenges to librarians such as the training of librarians not only in the use of ICT but also obtaining the right kind of training in library modules through the use of new technologies. Also, many organisations are finding it difficult to send their librarians for training in the use of new technologies through workshops, conferences and formal training in higher qualifications due to lack of finances. Moreover, the computers and equipment needed for training of librarians are inadequate in many libraries. Equally, some of the libraries schools that have the mandate of training staff do not have adequate ICT facilities. Some heads of libraries also do not

motivate their staff through encouragement or otherwise in the use of ICT in libraries.

Recommendations

Having examined the state of training of library professionals in the use of ICT in academic libraries Nigeria, the following recommendations are made on how to improve the training of librarians so that good and better services will be provided in libraries.

- Head of libraries should develop interest in the use of ICT and library based information technologies. They should also as a matter of importance developed interest and encourage their staff to attend trainings through conferences, workshop, seminars and formal training in educational institutions so as to acquire ICT skills that will be useful in providing library services and also be adequately trained to compete with their colleagues globally.

- Academic institutions and head of libraries should provide enough finances for the training of library staff and the acquisition of relevant ICT facilities in libraries to provide effective and efficient library services.

- Institutions should train their library staff to become experts in the use of ICT in all areas of library operations. Where such is not possible, libraries should employ relevant ICT experts that will manage the hard and software of their libraries. These categories of staff should work together with librarians in other to achieve library goals and objectives. They should be paid well so they do not leave the library to other greener pastures.

- Frequent changes in ICT modules have

become cumbersome to many libraries to keep pace with the changes in the modern technologies. However, libraries should choose packages that do not require frequent changes/updating and are easy to use and maintain.

- Library schools should give proper training that will help library professionals in their work through laying more emphasis on the practical use of ICT in libraries.

- There should be a benchmark policy on the provision and utilization of ICTs in libraries. This will subsequently define the categories of staff and the requisite ICT qualification that will work in academic libraries.

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