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### Relevance of Repositioning Cataloguers for Information Management in an Electronic Era

#### Abstract

*This study which centres on the relevance of repositioning cataloguers for information management in an electronic era is aimed at determining the relevance of repositioning cataloguers; ascertaining ways of repositioning cataloguers and identifying problems associated with repositioning cataloguers for information management in an electronic era. The geographical area covered by this study is the South-East geo-political zone of Nigeria which has five states and fourteen universities both public and private. Research design employed in this study is descriptive survey method. The population of the study is forty-seven (47) consisting of all the cataloguers in the technical section of the University Libraries under study. Questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection using Likert rating scale. Data collected were analyzed using mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) statistics. The result of the analysis reveals that repositioning cataloguers is necessary because it will help them to maintain their pride of place in organization of information resources. It also reveals that cataloguers can be repositioned through many ways, especially by attending conferences/seminars and professional workshops. Moreover the result reveals that resistance to change, inadequate funds and lack of sponsorship of cataloguers to conferences/seminars and workshops are some of the problems hindering repositioning of cataloguers. Therefore, the study recommends, among others, that the library management should see the need to sponsor their staff to conferences/seminars and workshops, as this will help them to acquire more knowledge on ICT applications in library operations.*

**Keyword:** *Cataloguers, Information management, Libraries, Electronic era.*

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#### 1.1 Introduction

Cataloguers have been at the hub of the effort to organize information resources for easy identification, storage, access and use, with the inception of libraries in the ancient times organization of knowledge became expedient ones a large quality of recorded knowledge are made available in the

library. Cataloguing and classification are twin activities adopted in library administration to facilitate the easy access and location of library resources by the users. These two processes are intended to relate and display together the edition, and subject which a library has of a given work, and the works which it has of a given author whereas

cataloguing deals with the physical description of library resources, classification reveals the content or subject analysis of the same resources.

In the process of carrying out their daily activities, Adomi (2012) submitted that, cataloguers diligently search for bibliographic details, index and classify library resources into meaningful accessible forms. Prior to this time cataloguing and classification were done manually which made the work very difficult, boring, repetitive and time consuming. This system of cataloguing and classification according to Zaid (2008) is a painstaking and time consuming exercise. It is possible using this method to have library materials that should be processed fast to spend months in cataloguing section which is why repositioning of cataloguers becomes expedient in this digital age of gamut of information resources.

Repositioning in library and information science is the act of retraining cataloguers/librarians from the traditional method of library services of cataloguing, classification and indexing to modern cataloguing skills for effective information management. Supporting this assertion Ogunrombi (2012) sees repositioning as the act of retraining librarians to get acquainted with the contemporary network technologies. Getting acquainted with the network environment implies taking advantage of network applications and technologies, as they are marked by ease of access, use, effectiveness and efficiency. In the idea of Atinmo (2011) cataloguers must go beyond the ordinary, to acquire new training that should help eradicate digital illiteracy. The essence of this is to ensure that library resources and relevant information from libraries are made available to a global audience.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

At the moment, education and training

of cataloguers has become a serious issue in our profession. Many a time it has been questioned whether library and information science schools today produced graduates who have what it takes to meet up with the needs of employers, users and compete with the rapidly changing circumstance in information management. There reason for this is that there is no programme in our library schools that specializes one as a cataloguer, reference or circulation librarians, cataloguing and classification is one of the core courses studied in library and information science. It is also the brain box of librarianship. This aspects of librarianship needs librarians who are intelligent, skillful, resourceful, dedicated and innovation in the performance of their routine jobs. The constant use of traditional method of cataloguing and classification, and dearth of cataloguers has resulted to the case of backlog titles we see in technical sections of our university libraries. The effect of this backlog, is that, users are denied access to such important books, because they have not been worked on therefore it cannot be easily circulated. It is based on this, scenario that the researcher advocates for the reposition of the cataloguers for information management in this electronic era.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The study has three objectives; which are:

- To determine the relevance of repositioning cataloguers.
- To ascertain ways of repositioning cataloguers for information management in a digital era
- To identify problems associated with repositioning of cataloguers.

### **2.1 Review of Related Literature**

It is generally admitted that our library schools have done a lot to adopt educational programmes or courses to the various

requirements for cataloguers and librarians in general. It is obvious that library schools are trying to adapt their courses to the needs of society but there are still some questionable areas. Firstly, many courses particularly cataloguing is based on two narrow a conception of what a cataloguing or an information professional is or will be, as they stick to a very traditional description of job content. Secondly, the effect of new information technologies on educational programmes of a cataloguer is increasing at an alarming rate, but the library schools are not seriously taking into account the development of these new technologies that is trying to swift the legs of the traditional cataloguers, who were seen as 'lords' in librarianship (Nwalo 2002). The idea of repositioning cataloguers from the traditional method of cataloguing and classification to network and technologies application will automatically boost their productivity and position them better for information management Ogunrombi (2012). The traditional cataloguer is charged with the responsibility of biographic description of books and other publication, assignment of subject headings and classification in order to create a catalogue, while the modern cataloguer is at the same time a subject specialist, who could be relied upon for selection, indexing and abstracting.

The essence of this call for repositioning of cataloguers and librarians in general whose responsibilities includes cataloguing of internet resources for easy access by the users of the local libraries. In agreement to this premise, Lam (2000) has this to say; internet resources have brought great excitement but also grave concerns to the libraries, especially to the cataloguing community. He stresses that, inspite of the various, problematic aspects, prescribed by the internet resources (poorly organized, lack of stability, variable quality etc). Cataloguers have to prove that, they worth cataloguing, in

particular those meeting library selection criteria.

Cataloguers are reported to be increasingly involved in the former domain of system librarians. Internet resources cataloguing are therefore an evolving task for the 21<sup>st</sup> century cataloguers. Therefore, the library catalogue is no longer an inventory list or a finding aid to what library owns, but rather is a portal to everything the library can access. According to Oketunji (2005) the relevance of repositioning cataloguers cannot be underestimated, he said, it is true today that no one society can be isolated from the rest of the world, and that industrial products are often designed in one country, produced in a second and then sold in many others. Information products and services must also more and more he considered internationally or on a worldwide scale.

Cataloguers must be internationally aware, and this is one of the basic requirements for competition. The application of the internet is essentially to fast-track that process and ensures that books and other resources spend the least period of time in the cataloguing section. Cataloguers that have internet access have now recognized the potential of online catalogs for improving subject access many library online catalogs are now accessible for searching class numbers and other cataloguing information. Lon (1997), Zaid (2008) and Omekwu (2009) see the necessity of repositioning cataloguers in this electronic era because of infusion of information and communication technologies in libraries. They are of the view that, the traditional method of cataloguing and classification of information materials involves certain procedures which are long, tortuous and repetitive.

The obvious results are: books spend weeks, months or years gathering dust on the shelves without being processed. The intervention of the internet in this process is

designed to eliminate or reduce the tortuous and repetitive cycle of the service and create platforms for effective retrieval of information resources.

Repositioning of cataloguers for information management is very crucial more especially in this era in which information technologies have become part and parcel of library services cataloguing and classification tasks in librarianship require librarians who are intelligent, skillful, resourceful and innovative to perform the job. Initial education in library schools offers a starting qualification but is no longer enough for the altering demands of professional practice. For them to live up to expectation they need to update their knowledge and skills. McLuhan (2013) posits that in order to prevent 'trying to do today's job with yesterday's tools and concepts', and cope with the changing requirements of their work, it has become imperative for cataloguers to constantly update their knowledge and skills. post-initial professionalization according to Brilijnzeels, Bitter-Rypke-Man and Verjans (2010) involved updating these core skills, and would typically consist of training sessions via (seminars, workshop and conferences) about new cataloguing practice their profession engage in, so as to refresh, update and enhance previously acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes. It comes in different formats ranging from formal to informal, from face to face interactions to the use of electronic technologies. To him, life-long learning promotes the developments of skills, knowledge and competencies that will enable cataloguers to reposition themselves to the challenges of the knowledge based society. Anderson and Frienson (2004; Gaimsterand Gray (2004) believe that continuing education which they see as a life-long learning is also necessary to meet the demands of today's fast-paced, ever-changing workplaces, requiring an increasing amount of knowledge and flexibility from employees. To cope with

these challenges, continuing education offers a good opportunity and Woods (2000) believes that: it is an attempt aimed at remedying the deficiencies of man which are multiplied daily because of advancement in every aspect of human endeavour. Two types of continuing education he observed are:

- i. *Continuing professional education:* Education that takes place once, professional qualification is achieved, with the intent of maintaining competency and learning new skills in one's profession or other related professions; and
- ii. *Continuing personal education:* Education engaged in which is related to personal interests outside the workplace. In his own view, Opara (2014), continuing education is one means by which both the individual and profession as a whole, may be re-energized and motivated to buttress his idea he said as knowledge changes and new tools, technologies and procedures developed, continuing training and retraining becomes a compelling need if the individual and the profession are to remain relevant.

## **2.2 The Importance Attending Conferences and Workshop**

Conferences, seminars and workshops are some of the activities which organizations organize that present opportunities for people to learn and to share ideas by encouraging powerful interactions between participants in a conducive environment. Opportunities provided by the annual seminar/workshop organized by the cataloguing and classification section of the Nigerian library association encourages cataloguers and people of like profession to meet together to reaffirm solidarity. Seminars provide forum where issues are raised and explored, but not necessarily resolved. The gathering requires

the participants to think, to practice the skills of analysis and synthesis, and by so doing, possibly leave with more and better ideas than the ones with which they came. A seminar, according to Egeland (2013), is a lecture or presentation delivered to an audience on a particular topic or set of topics that are educational in nature. It is usually held for groups of 10-100 individuals. Seminars are integral parts of most academic programmes and they are the pistons that drive the intellectual heart of the university. They are not intended as a mechanism for transmitting information. They serve as a means for groups of individuals to obtain a set of common experiences, usually based on paper presentations. Seminars are not a place for the transmission of data. Ideally, they go beyond the sharing of facts and probe the depths of the subject matter at hand.

Furthermore, Marr (2010) describes the seminar process thus: seminars do closely resemble orchestral rehearsals. They are working sessions, full of false starts, much practice, and some extended flights of analysis and synthesis. But the analogy with the orchestra breaks down in one interesting and crucial respect: seminars operate with no equivalent to a musical score. Indeed, it is precisely something like a musical score that gets composed' in the course of the seminars. Within the library and information profession, stakeholders have expressed their concern about keeping members up to date: bringing the gap between researchers and developing competence to cope with the changes which technology has brought into the profession. Workshop on the other hand, is a series of educational and work sessions (Egeland 2013). While Reitz (2006) sees workshop as a meeting of people interested in learning more about a subject or who wish to gain practical experience in the use of a technique, system, or resource, usually for the purpose of training or professional development.

Moreover, a workshop differs from a conference in being task oriented and of shorter duration, and may be open to attendees who do not necessarily share membership in a voluntary organization. Small groups of people and in most cases professionals meet together over a short period of time to concentrate on a defined area of concern. It is generally organized by an institution or association like the cataloguing and classification section of the Nigerian Library Association in order to develop certain literacy skills and competencies for classifying information resources. Workshops can be organized to appraise professionals about new developments in their area of specialization. The close interactions with other delegates from different libraries in Nigeria generate conversation and allow the delegates to actively participate in the sharing of information and knowledge. They create effective learning opportunities for those delegates who learn effectively from direct interactions.

Conference is one of the most important events that professional managers organize to keep the practitioners abreast of events on the job profile. Usually, conferences are filled with various presentations which tend to be short and concise, with time span of about 10 to 30 minutes, which are usually followed, by discussion questions and answers. The difference between a conference and a workshop is the number of attendees involved. Conferences are sometimes called seminars, with a smaller group of delegates, or symposiums or meeting to discuss a particular subject.

The Nigerian library Association Annual Conference is a typical academic conference. One of the objectives of this association is to safeguard and promote the professional interest of librarian. Librarians are seen as specialist in library work. They are professionals responsible for offering services

to library users. It is the dream of every professional body to see her professionals improving in their job in order to achieve self actualization and user satisfaction.

Conference attendance is one of the factors of professional development. According to Vega and Connel (2009), conference attendance is a requirement for the career advancement of many librarians, particularly those who work in colleges or universities. By attending conferences librarians learn to interact with fellow librarians they also learn how to present papers, they network and build, more contacts (Eke 2011). Professionals attend conferences in order to learn new occurrences in the profession and to update their existing knowledge. These benefits are in line with the findings of Adomi, Alapodia and Akporhonor (2006), whose study revealed that most conferees attend the conference in order to keep up-to-date with development in their profession. On the above subject of discussion, Egeland (2013) states as follows: Conferences, Workshops and seminars have a very important place in the workplace, what I have found recently is that there are indeed, some benefits to be found in sucking it up and taking time away from work to attend a professional conference/seminar or a workshop that is applicable to ones area of expertise [p.10].

He stresses his idea by mentioning four value/benefits that come to mind:

- networking with colleagues
- resetting your mindset
- staying current with today's topics just to get away from work and life stresses.

Thus it is not a gainsaying that attendance to conferences/ seminars and workshops impact a great deal on cataloguers/ librarians experiences, as a result it has a very important place in their growth and motivation in the workplace.

### **2.3 Challenges Affecting Repositioning of Cataloguers for Information Management**

This issue of repositioning cataloguers for information management in this electronic era is a crucial matter because of the challenges encountered in the activities. According to Ogbonyomi (2009) and Unegbu (2013) though using different strings of words believed that the problem experience in library is that of change and ideology brought into librarianship as a result of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

Change is a phenomenon that is inevitable for progress. It is not easily accepted in any society because of fear of the unknown. This is one of the reasons why some librarians are afraid of it. They are not sure of what change may bring to their profession. This change also is the cause of the second seemingly problem of ideology. New ideas are always resisted especially by people who have been there for ages. They are afraid of being irrelevant, especially, when the idea is a complete and total deviation from what they know and have been practicing. Eytayo (2007) identified some other factors affecting repositioning of cataloguers for information management as follow. These include:

- i. Time wasting and endless training:* This is due to the fact that many types of software packages are appearing on daily basis and the cataloguers must continue to learn the new devices.
- ii. Insufficient funds:* More funds are needed to keep abreast with the new technologies that may be introduced an effort to update or modernize the profession.
- iii. Loss of data:* This is evident in a situation like in Nigeria where power outage is so frequent and no prior notice is given to power users to safeguard their data in the system.

### 3.1 Research Method

The researcher adopted the Descriptive Survey Method. The geographical area covered by this study is the South East geopolitical Zone of Nigeria, which has five states, namely Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. In this zone there are fourteen (14) universities made of five (5) Federal; five (5) states and four (4) private

universities. The population of this study is 47. There was no need of sampling because the population is small. It consists of all the cataloguers in the technical section of university libraries under study. Rating scale was used for data collection. Data were analyzed using mean statistics.

### 4.1 Data Analysis

Table 1: Relevance of Repositioning Cataloguers

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total Score	Mean Score	Decision
1	It is important because of infusion of ICT into library activities	8 0	8 1	-	-	16 1	3. 4	High
2	Is necessary because of information explosion	6 4	6 3	14	3	14 4	3. 1	High
3	Is relevant because of the threat unprofessional librarians pose on library jobs.	5 2	7 5	18	0	14 5	3. 1	High
4	Help cataloguers to maintain their pride of place in organization of information resources	9 2	7 2	0	0	16 4	3. 5	High
5	Because of the changes in information seeking behavior of the user	4 4	7 8	12	4	13 8	2. 9	High
6	Help cataloguers develop proficiency in bibliographic search and verification	7 6	8 4	0	0	16 0	3. 4	High

Table 1 shows the representation of the mean ratings on the relevance of repositioning cataloguers. The result revealed that, out of a possible mean attainment of 4, helping cataloguers to maintain their pride of place in organization of information resources had a mean score of 3.5, help cataloguers develop proficiency in bibliographic search and verification, also because of infusion ICT into library activities had a mean score of 3.4 respectively. Information explosion and because of threat posed by unprofessional librarians on library activities, had a mean score of 3.1 each while changes in information seeking behavior of the users scored 2.9 from the above result, it can be deduced that there is every need to reposition or retrain cataloguers for information management.

Table 2: Way of Repositioning Cataloguers

S/N	Item	S	A	D	SD	Total Score	Mean Score	Decision
1	Attendance to conference seminars and workshop	7 6	8 4	-	-	16 0	3. 4	High
2	Mentoring	4 4	6 3	2 0	5	13 2	2. 8	High
3	On the job training	7 6	5 1	1 6	3	14 6	3. 1	High
4	Group discussion	4 8	5 7	1 8	7	13 0	2. 8	High
5	Formal education	8 0	8 1	0	0	16 1	3. 4	High

Table 2 represents the mean scores of the ways of repositioning cataloguers in order to meet up with the challenges in information management in this digital era. From the figures in the table, mentoring and group discussion were accepted by the respondents as ways of repositioning cataloguers as their mean score were 2.8 each. On the job training had the mean score of 3.1, while formal education and attendance to conferences/seminars and workshops had the highest mean score of 3.4 respectively showing high acceptance by the respondents.

Table 3 is a representation of the problems that militate against repositioning cataloguers for information management in electronic era. From the analysis of data, lack of sponsorship to conferences/seminars and workshops by the management has the highest mean score of 3.5, next in the order are, inadequate finance to acquire the required tools and poor power supply with mean scores of 3.4 each. Resistance to change has a mean score of 3.2 while poor ICT knowledge has a mean score of 3.1 all these were seen as some of the problems fighting against repositioning by the respondents. These suggest a need to address the problems so as to avoid a backslid on repositioning cataloguer for effective information management in this digital era.

### 5.1 Discussion of Findings

On the relevance of repositioning cataloguers, an effective response scale was designed to ascertain the relevance of repositioning cataloguers for information management in electronic era. Table 1 showed the distribution of six items in a 4-point modified Likert scale. The individual mean score for each of the items indicated that repositioning cataloguers is very important, because it help them to maintain their pride of place in organization of information resources, having the highest mean score of 3.5. This situation supports the ideas of Zaid (2008) and Omekwu (2007), who sees the necessity of repositioning cataloguers in this electronic era because of infusion of information and communication technologies in libraries, which they believe has come to alleviate the tortuous and repetitive method of traditional cataloguing and classification ways of repositioning cataloguers.

### 5.2 Summary of Findings

Summary of data analysis presented in table 2 reveals that cataloguers can be repositioned or retrained through many ways especially by attending conferences/seminars

and workshops and also through formal education. This was indicated from the mean score of the items statement were the mean score for each of them was above 2.5. This conforms to the ideas of Brujinzeels, Bitter-Rijpkema and Verjans (2010), where they said that, for cataloguers to update their core skills there is need for them to involved themselves in some trainings which may be inform of conferences/seminar and workshop attendances or formal education on the problems.

The analysis in table 3 indentifies some hindrances to repositioning as; inadequate tools, Resistance to change, Lack of sponsorship to conferences/seminars and workshop, and poor power supply etc. This is proved as their individual mean scores are high. It is important to note that if action is not taken to avert these problems, the result will be poor information management in this digital era. This conforms to the ideas of Ogbonyomi (2009) and Unegbu's (2013) though using different words posit that, the problem experienced in librarianship is that of change and ideology, brought into library activities as a result of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). They stress that change is a phenomena that is inequitable for progress. It is not easily accepted in any society because of fear of the unknown.

### 5.3 Implication of the study

This study has great implication on the cataloguing, classification and indexing section of Nigerian library Association, it is base on the negligence of this section in designing purposeful mentoring and monitoring programmes to ensure that most issues raised and discussed in our conferences/workshops mostly in ICT application in cataloguing and classification are implemented in our libraries as this has resulted in sticking to the traditional method of cataloguing and classification of

information resources by the cataloguers.

This study has also great implication on the education and training of librarians/cataloguers. The processing of information materials can only be done by professional librarians. The need to organize these information resources for the sake of our users is very imperative. Therefore, it is expedient to advice our library schools to include in their curriculum courses, such as online information retrieval, computer application and introduction to internet and internet search skill. The skills acquired through this training would enable the future librarians/cataloguers to function effectively in this digital era.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The application of information and communication technologies into library operations has not brought the end to our libraries, but rather it has exposed us to new and exciting resources to share with our clientele. The skills we acquire from them as we embrace them will help us to organize these resources for better utilization by our users. Invariably, it is the duty of the cataloguers to place information resources on the shelves of the library there is therefore every need for them to be repositioned or retrained in order to meet up with this obligation.

Based on the findings of the study and their attendant implications, the following recommendations are made.

Libraries should retain their cataloguers (staff) by sponsoring them to conferences/seminars and workshops both locally and internationally in order to acquire more knowledge of the new trends in library operations, because cataloguers of the next generation must be a multi-skilled professional with cutting edge competencies.

Librarians/cataloguers should embrace the changes in library operations as a result of the application of ICT into the system, by continually learning and equipping themselves with technical skills, and technological skills as these knowledge will enable them to play the multiple roles the libraries of the future will demand.

More funds should be provided to the libraries by the parent institutions to enable them acquire the required, information systems and to maintain them.

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