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Daniel Emojorho

Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria, danielemojorho@yahoo.com

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ICT and Collection Management in Public Libraries: A Survey of South-South Zone of Nigeria

Daniel Emojorho, PhD

Systems/Technical Services Librarian
Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

Introduction

Information is a major economic resource for individuals, corporations, and institutions. Like other major resources, information offers the greatest possibilities to those who know how to use it. The daily growth of information, according to Utor (1999), brings about problems of location, acquisition, organization, and funds. The problems are made more frustrating when users find it difficult to locate and use information they consider useful.

The application of ICT has resulted in the globalization of knowledge resources. Libraries in less developed countries may not have ICT available to them. In the midst of a global information revolution, many libraries still use methods that date back to a much earlier era. The extent of ICT application in South-South Nigeria is still largely unknown.

The geo-political regions of Nigeria are North-West, North-East, North-Central, South-South, South-East, and South-West. This research covers the South-South, a region made up six states: Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and River.

UNESCO (2000) defines ICT as the techniques used in information handling and processing. ICT has changed library and information services globally. Digital media has revolutionised information source and advances in ICT has dramatically changed information provision. The process of collection management has become very challenging and complex. As observed by Friend (2000:55), basic collection management activities include analysis of user needs, inter-and intra-library communication, policy development, budgeting and allocation of resources, contract negotiations, macro-evaluations of collection, micro-evaluation for selection, relegation, preservation or withdrawal of stock, and system evaluation.

According to Singh (2004:127), this set of activities will continue to evolve with new ICT products and services. Gone is the era in which housing a large collection that spans linear miles was a matter of great pride for a library. At that time, libraries were able to meet most user requirements with the resources they owned. Today, physical location is less important as long as the information is accessible.

Libraries need a global access policy for information. According to Singh (2004:127), policy is formulated with an organization's mission statement and strategic plan in mind. Collection management policy should be linked very closely to the general and specific programs of the organization and be informed by the information needs of users.

Developing countries, including Nigeria, are being encouraged to invest in ICT. Thoiune (2003), cited by Ogbomo and Ogbomo (2008), indicates that many initiatives have been taken at the international

level to support Africa 's efforts to develop communication infrastructure, and these efforts are designed to enable African countries to find faster ways to achieve sustainable development.

Nwalo (2000:34) asserts that many libraries in developing countries are gradually converting from manual to computerised routines. The benefits of ICT in a library system are self evident and overwhelming. Okolo (2002: 43) observes that the library needs ICT in order to give efficient services to its users. Not only is the speed of its operation high, the volume of its output is correspondingly large. When ICT is used the library, there is economy of labour and operating cost. The accelerated adoption and use of ICT means that bibliographic databases, full-text documents, and digital library collections are always available to users (Chisenga, 2004).

David (1998:18) notes that, "the use of electronic services ... helps ... with an ever expanding base of knowledge and a steadily eroding base of resources." Olorunsola (1997) asserts that, "the use of information technologies ... has had a far-reaching effect ... [in] ... that provision of information can be made more effective and efficient with the use of electronic information resources." Scott (1995:197) states that knowing how to find information and having good research skills, especially online searching skills, are particularly critical for university and special libraries that cultivate autonomous learners.

Odufuwa (2006:100) asserts that advances in ICT have progressively reduced the cost of managing information. It is enabling individuals and organizations to undertake information related tasks much more efficiently. Such advances have equally introduced innovations in products, processes and organization structures.

Odufuwa (2006:100) observes that advances in ICT have progressively reduced the cost of managing information, making individuals and organizations more efficient. Such advances have also led to innovations. According to Ugboma (1998), public libraries cover a broad area, including education, social, political, economic, and cultural matters. Consequently, public libraries hold books and non-book materials, in various disciplines and various languages. Hawkins (2002) notes that nations have placed greater emphasis on developing human capital. Governments are focusing on strategies to increase access and improve the quality of education and information.

Method

The study is descriptive, based on an ex-post-facto design. The population consists all staff and users of the public libraries. It was not possible to collect data from the entire population; hence, 147 respondents were sampled using simple random sampling. A questionnaire was used to collect data. Data are presented in figures and tables and analyzed using statistical percentages.

Analysis

Table 1: Level of Online Library Services

Are your library services online?	No.	%
Yes	67	54.4
No	80	45.6
Total	147	100

Slightly more than half the libraries are computerized

Table 2: ICT and Improvement of Library Services

Does the use of ICT improve your library	No.	%
Yes	78	53.1
No	69	46.9
Total	147	100

More than half the respondents indicate that the use of ICT does not improve library services.

Table 3: Access to Information in the Public Library

ICT	No.	%
Fax machine	5	3.4
Telephone	85	57.8
Internet	12	14.9
Computer	47	31.9
E-mail	43	3.4
E-Journal	4	2.7
E-Book	6	4.1
OPAC	21	14.3
Catalogue Cards	106	72.1

Most respondents still have a card catalogue, with much smaller numbers have Internet access and electronic resources.

Table 4: Benefit of ICT

To what extent have you benefited from ICT	No.	%
Very high	9	6.1
High	31	23.1
Fairly	46	31.3
Low	44	29.9
No effect	17	11.6
Total	147	100

The benefits of ICT on collection management in public libraries are felt by most respondents to some extent.

Table 5: ICT Training

What type of ICT training have you attended	No.	%
Seminar/workshop	27	18.2
In-service training	44	29.9
Short course	35	23.8
On the job training	64	43.5
None of the above	53	36.1

More than half of respondents have attended training on ICT in collection management.

Conclusion

This study looked at the use of ICT and collection management in Nigerian public libraries. The new technological environment has reached only a few public libraries in the South-South, Nigeria. Most respondents indicated that only a few ICT facilities were available, and a majority indicate that none at all are available. Adeniran (2000) notes that frequent changes in information technology cause equipment and accessories to become obsolete, which implies the need for continuous training.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were presented:

1. The government should ensure that all public libraries computerize their operations and become connected to the Internet.
2. Public libraries should be adequately funded.
3. Public libraries should encourage staff to attend training courses on various aspects of ICT.

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