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The Role of Effective Communication in Enhancement of Library Services: An Overview of Delta State University Library, Abraka

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

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Daniel Emojorho, PhD
Head of Systems and Technical Services Divisions
Delta State University Library, Abraka

Introduction

Communication is the transfer of information from a source to a receiver. It is effective when the sender of information and the recipient have a common comprehension of the message. The importance of communication in the world in which we live today cannot be overstressed. Academic libraries are information centers established in tertiary institutions. Delta State University Library is transmits information needed by staff, students, and researchers in the university community.

Effective communication is central to library services. According to Koontz and O'Donnell (2005) communication is important to all phases of management by every individual within the system and is particularly important in directing and leading any system. This assertion is further explained by McFarland (1994:56) who observes that communication is a central element in all aspects of life.

In libraries worldwide, communication is used to modify behavior and achieve productivity, and meet goals. Communication is the chief means through which an organization or its members influence or react to one another. The success of any library depends not only on having qualified personnel but also on the interaction among them. Lesikar (1999) says that "communication is the ingredient which makes organization possible". To achieve its objectives, libraries must have effective communication systems. Merrihue (1980) defines effectiveness of communication "as any initiated behaviour on the part of the sender which conveys the desired meaning to the receiver and causes desired response behaviour from the receiver". Communication effectiveness in library setting involves two or more people (a sender and receiver). The university librarian communicates, not with him- or herself alone but with the library staff, users, researchers, and the university community.

Feedback is essential for understanding in any communication system. It refers to response from someone who has received a message. Based on the feedback, the communicator can repeat, elaborate, or explain the message. In this regard, Hoy and Miskel (1998) describe two effective communication channels. The two-way communication is a reciprocal process with each participant initiating and receiving message. In this process, each person is a source or receiver with the roles shifting as the message is passed. Unlike one-way communication, information travels in both directions in the channel. The developers call this mutual feedback, which means that each participant initiates messages and each message affects the others.

Hoy and Miskel (1978) identify three criteria of communication effectiveness. The first is the qualities and presentation of message: clarity, timing, consistency, and mutual interest. Second is the achievement of desired results. Third is the time perspective. Thayer (1991) also lists primary functions of administrative communication: informing, instructing or directing, evaluating and influencing. In the university library, the university librarian must take care to identify the audience. The sender must use language that corresponds to the receiver's status.

To achieve effective communication, the communicator must encode the message to fit the relationship between the sender and the receiver and reduce distortion. Anene (2006) asserts that some communicators overlook the volume of the message,which can overwhelm the system. According to Jacques (1987) effective communication requires:

- a known and comprehensive communication structure
- a code governing the relations among people occupying various roles, and
- a relationship among people immediately connected with each other.

In the library organisation, communications occur in a network of human relationships which affect the quality of the communication itself.

Problems

St. John (1970) says that, "No one can manage a modern organization who is not knowledgeable in communication principles and technique in their use". Consequently, this study was aimed at determining the level of communication at Delta State University, Abraka. To ensure effective library services, effective communication becomes vital. To this end, the extent to which the library administration applies its communication tools in coordinating library functions is hereby examined.

Methodology

This study is a survey to investigate the role of effective communication in enhancement of library management and services in Delta State University Library, Abraka. An ex-post-facto descriptive research design was adopted. The population consists of 5,604 registered users and 99 library staff. From the target population, the sample size of 200 was randomly selected. 180 were library users while 20 were library staff. Of these members, 170 library users and 20 members of staff returned completed questionnaires. Simple percentage were used to analyze the data obtained.

Discussion

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents

Subjects	Sample Size	Questionnaire Completed
Library staff	20	20
Library users	180	170
Total	200	190

The survey had a response rate of 95%.

Table 2: Library staff responses on the effects of communication in library services

Effects of Communication in Library Services by Staff University Libraries	S A		A		DA		S D	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Effective communications systems enhanced library services	12	60	7	35	1	5	-	-
Effective communication systems enhanced library services	12	60	7	35	1	5	-	-
The reliance on rumours and grapevines as channels of communication channels enhances library services	5	25	6	30	6	30	5	-
Communication through written channel enhances library services	8	40	11	55	1	5	-	-
The application of ICT in communication enhances library services	2	10	4	20	9	45	5	25

Virtually all respondents agreed or strongly agreed that effective communication systems enhance library services. Respondents were split on the issue of whether rumours and the grapevine are effective channels of communication. Virtually all respondents agreed that written communication enhances library services however, while 70% disagreed or strongly disagreed that application of ICT is boosting their libraries services.

According to Anene (2006) the success of any organization depends not only upon provision of qualified personnel and efficiency of its staff, but also on the interaction between the personnel and clientele. Communication is very significant to the life of any administration because it is a major means through which they give orders, directions, requests, reports and receive rumours and other information.

Table 3: Library users' responses on the effect of communication in library services

Users' Views of the Effects of Communication on Library Services	SA		A		DA		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Effective communication channels boost library services	74	43.5	62	36.5	21	12.4	13	7.6
Oral communication boosts research work using rumours and grapevines	10	5.9	18	4.7	65	38.2	77	51.2
The application of ICT in communication enhances library services	4	2.4	17	10	58	34.1	91	53.5
Up-to-date information is made available in the library	12	7	34	20	69	40.6	55	32.4
Users are satisfied with the library's channels of communication	4	2.4	26	15.3	72	42.3	68	40

Table 3 presents users' responses on effects of communication in library services. Eighty percent strongly agreed or agreed that effective communication channels boost library services. A large majority of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed on the use of oral channels of communication in research work.

It is noteworthy that only 12.4% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the application of ICT in communication enhances library service. With reference to up-to–date information being made available in the library, nearly three-quarter disagreed. More than 80% of respondents were not satisfied with the library's channels of communication.

The use of ICT promotes development and improve services in organization. It is sad to observe that a majority of users indicated that the low level of ICT availability does not enhance library services. Ike (2000) asserts that the slow pace of computer use in Nigerian libraries is traceable to a number of factors, including lack of intellectual curiosity in the libraries and general apathy to innovations in information system services.

Furthermore, a majority of the users pointed out that they are not satisfied with existing channels of communication. Fowowe (1997) observed that the effectiveness of the library as an instrument of education is determined by the success with which it is able to provide the user with the information being sought. This study reveals a low level of ICT facilities in libraries and this inhibits communication effectiveness.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made.

- The communication channels in the library should be improved to boost effective communication between library staff and users.
- Library management should provide a current and adequate collection to enable users obtain up-to-date information.

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- Libraries should place more emphasis on the provision of adequate ICT facilities for effective communication.

Conclusion

The study investigates the role of effective communication in enhancement of library management and services. Library management has yet to fully implement ICT for communication in library services. ICT facilities have not been used effectively to boost communication. Peretomode (1991) says that communication pervades organizations, because most organizational processes require communication to solve problems and accomplish goals.

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