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

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Introduction

Information is regarded as a major economic resource, which can be used by individuals, corporations and various levels of 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 (1999.6) brings about problems of location, acquisition, organization and the problems of money easily available to potential user, the right type of information at the right time. The problems are made more frustrating as user themselves find it difficult to locate and make use of the right type of information they consider useful.

The application and use of ICT has resulted in the globalization and knowledge resources. The adoption of ICT to public libraries can no longer be ignored. However, some Libraries in less developed countries whose role involve the location, selection, acquisition, organization and dissemination of information are still using 19th century resources and methods of organization. In the midst of what amounts to a global information revolution, most libraries still use methods, which date back to the time knowledge seemed stable and banned. Information and communication technologies are widely applied in libraries around the world for effective management, but the extent of such application in the South-South Nigeria is still largely unknown.

The geo-political formation of the Nigerian State is represented by North-West, North-East, North-Central, South-South, South-East, and South-West. This research specifically covers the South-South, this region is made up six States namely Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and River States. Information and communication technology (ICT) embrace items of equipment such as computers, scanner, Internet, multimedia, software programmes, networks that allows us to access, retrieve, store, organize, manipulate and present information in electronic means. UNESCO (2000) defines ICT as the scientific, technological and engineering discipline and management techniques used in information handling and processing.

ICT has changed library and information services globally. Digital media

has revolutionised the information source and advances in ICTs have dramatically changed the information provisions. The Internet has provided universal access to information. Technological innovation has changed the rate of conversion of knowledge, information and data into electronic format. Development in the software arena has generated powerful knowledge management software which has transformed the way knowledge is organized stored, accessed and retrieved.

Literature Review

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 as new information and communication products and services as well as increase in the range of possibilities for communicating information. Change is the law of nature. As is very apparent in the present library culture, libraries are not exempted from change. 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, such libraries were able to meet most of their user's requirements with the resources they owned. But today, in an electronic environment, physical location of information is becoming less important as long as the information is accessible. The very concept of ownership has been left behind, as the emphasis is shifting from building strong local collections for long-term materials made available by providers anywhere in the world.

Libraries have entered the electronic era and need to device a global access policy for information. According to Singh (2004:127) the word policy means a set of guidelines designed and developed for a specific purpose. 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 should be informed by the information needs of the user population. Good policy can ensure consistency of approach among staff and serve as a planning tool for managers. It should establish priorities for both policy makers and policy executors.

The world is undergoing a transition from a paper to a digital economy. It is essential for libraries in countries in developing world to take part in this changing scene. In this regards, developing countries, which include Nigeria are being encourage to invest in ICT. Thoine (2003) cited by Ogbomo, 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 durable and sustainable development.

Nwalo (2000:34) asserts that many libraries in the third world including Nigeria are gradually but steadily converting from manual to computerised routines. The benefit of the automated or uses of ICT in a library system are both self evident and overwhelming. He further stressed that ICT will help to improve the library services and help the libraries in reporting all the various operations in the library.

Okolo (2002: 43) opines that in this age of information technology, 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 economic of labour and operating cost. In fact, its application in the activities of the libraries will enhance their information

delivery and the overall performance of the library services.

The accelerated adoption and use of information and communication technology (ICT) has resulted in the globalization of information and knowledge resource. Bibliographic databases, full-text documents, and digital library collections are always available to users (Chisenga, 2004).

Management of collection therefore include selection, acquisition, organization, storage and dissemination of relevant information for users. There has been great diversification in the range of electronic formats available due to the emergence of new technologies. David (1998:18) notes that “the use of electronic service within libraries helps contend with an ever expanding base of knowledge and a steadily eroding base of resources.

Olorunsola (1997) asserts that “the use of information technologies in the provision of information and communication in libraries has had a far–reaching effect on libraries and users of libraries 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 vital attributes for proper research, such skills are particularly critical for university and special libraries that operate 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.

According to Ugbomah (1998), the establishment of a public library is promised on the need to assist people to cater for their information needs which cover a wide area of life education, social, political, economic and cultural. Consequently, Public Libraries hold a wide range of information bearing materials. The library materials are made of books and non-book materials; they deal with various disciplines focus on different geographical areas and preaching different ideologies while some are in different languages. Hawkins (2002) notes that knowledge and information have become the most important currency for productivity, competitiveness, and increased wealth and property. Nations therefore, have placed greater emphasis on developing their human capital. Government around the world are focusing on strategies to increase access to and improve the quality of education/information sources.

Method

The study is descriptive in nature based on ex-post-factor design. The population of this study consists all staff and users of the various public libraries. The researcher found out that it was not possible to collect data from the entire population hence 147 respondents were sampled through simple random technique. The questionnaire which was the instrument used in collecting data from library staff and users. Data collected through the questionnaire were presented in figures and tables and analyzed using statistical percentage.

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

From Table 1, 80 (45.6%) affirmed that their public library are not computerized while 67 (54.4%) agreed. Thus, a larger percentage of the respondents said their public libraries are not 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

Table two, 78 (53.1%) responses indicated that the use of ICT does not improve her library services whereas 69 (46.9%) agreed. From the above data, ICTs are seen as important tools for improving 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

Table 4, reveals that 5 (3.4%) respondents have access to the Fax-machine, 85(57.8%) apply telephone facilities, 12(14.9%) apply Internet, 47(31.9%)apply computer, 5(3.4%) have access to E-mail, 4(2.7%) access E-journal, 6(4.1%) access E-Books, 21(14.1%) access OPAC, while 106(72.1%) access catalogue cards. It is seen in table 3 that most users have no access to ICT facilities in their course of using public libraries in the South South, Nigeria, hence 72.1% still depends on catalogue cards. In corollary, most respondents indicated that ICT have not improved their libraries services. According to Ogbomo and Ogbomo (2008) one of the identified agents through which the world will constantly experience change is technology. In the business of trying to make information available in the right form to the right user both at the personal and organizational levels, and at the right time, the bid to cope with great flood of information has led to the need for a more sophisticated faster and better.

Table 5 – 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

Table 5, reveals responses on the benefit of ICT on collection management in public libraries. 9(6.1%) indicate very high, 31(21.1%) indicate high, 46(31.3%) indicate fairly, 44(29.9%) affirm low while 17(11.6%) indicate no effect.

Table 7 – 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

Table 7, reveals that 27(18.2%) of the respondents indicate seminar/workshop, 44(29.9%) indicate short course, 35(23.8%) indicate on the job training while 64(43.5%) indicate they have not attended any of the above ICT training. From this data, it is seen that most respondents have not attended formal training on ICT in collection management.

Conclusion

This study looked at the use of ICT and collection management in Nigerian public libraries. Obviously, a new technological environment has only engulfed few Public Libraries in the South-South, Nigeria. To this end, most respondents indicated that only few ICT facilities were procured to their public libraries, whereas, most respondents claim that they are not available. Consequently, very few people were exposed to ICT training/workshop while most respondents said they were never given any ICT training.

Adeniran (2000) noted that frequent changes in information technology have not helped matters as some of the equipment and accessories easily become obsolete, this implied that those who are experts in one system of information and communication technologies will need continuous training for them to be relevant in the field or else they will not be useful. It was noted that most Nigerian public libraries still depend on the traditional cards catalogue in this modern era of ICT, to this end, most respondents claimed that ICT benefit is on the low side.

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations were drawn:

1. Effort should be made by government to ensure that all public libraries computerize their library operations and establish Internet connections.

2. Public libraries urgently need adequate funding.

3. Public libraries should encourage their library staff to attend training courses on digital literacy.

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