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Abstract

Purpose: This paper examined the challenges to transforming library and information services (LIS) for effective service delivery in three academic libraries in Imo state. **Design/Methodology/Approach:** The survey method was adopted for this study with questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The target population comprises of library and information science professionals in three academic libraries in Imo State Nigeria. Availability and purposive sampling techniques was used to select the participant. The generated data were analysed using descriptive statistics, frequency counts and percentage was well illustrated. **Findings:** The findings revealed the challenges to effective transformation of academic libraries in the 21st century to include: poor funding, indifferent attitudes of library managers, absence of well-defined and uniform library policies and non-compliance with the demands of ICT. Transformation of library and information centres is all about improving product and services offered in Nigerian libraries to meet the needs and demands of knowledge society. Among other benefits, it enhances the capability of libraries to contribute positively to the reality of knowledge society in contemporary Nigerian society. **Practical Implication**: retraining of LIS practitioners; provision of adequate funding; provision of relevant and functional ICT facilities relevant to the Nigerian libraries and formulation of viable library policies are practical steps that can be taken to transform Nigerian Libraries by relevant bodies such as Librarians' Registration Council (LRCN), Nigerian Library Association (NLA) and National Association of Library and Information Science Educationist (NALISE). **Originality/Value:** transforming academic libraries enhances the capability of libraries to contribute positively to the reality of knowledge society in contemporary Nigerian society. The paper has empirically established that there are a lot of challenges to transformation of library service for effective service delivery in the 21st century.

Keywords: Library Services (LS), Information Services (IS), Service Delivery, Academic Libraries, Imo State

Introduction

The library and information service arena no doubt has been undergoing series of transformational process as a result of the integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to library service. The conservative approaches to librarianship have been demystified. A more proactive and pragmatic approach to librarianship has taken the centre stage of information services. Libraries of all types are on the move to catch up with the trends of producing ICT related information services. In an effort to move along this trend, libraries are faced with different challenges and these challenges must be addressed accordingly if librarians want to remain relevant in the delivery of library and information service in the 21st century. Rapid advances in information technologies as pointed out by Ukpanah (2012) have revolutionized the role of libraries. In line with this, libraries are faced with new challenges computers demand and expect. Omekwu and Echezona (2008) argued that librarians and information professionals of the future must be equipped with a wide range of personal and transferable skills in order to manage the changing environment in which he or she works. The contention is that information professionals need to be ready to move with the challenge of digital technology, globalised information access, networked resources, a changing economy, new learning and research system and the demands of user communities for information that adds values to their works.

Libraries are not immune to the societal forces re-shaping other institutions brought about by technology and economics. Social institutions today look vastly different than they did twenty years ago (Fagbola, Uzoigwe and Ajegbomogun, 2011). Today, the contemporary practices in

academic library services in the 21st century is being propelled with an information explosion, and the inclusion of ICT in all aspects of library services (Abubakar, 2011). As the traditional custodian of information, librarians in the 21st century need to be aware of these significant changes and as such employ their technological knowhow and intellectual prowess in order to retain the leading role of the academic libraries in supporting teaching, learning and research. This means that the 21st century librarian will have to be armed with competent skills that will enhance the provision of effective library services to meet client's changing information needs (Emezie and Nwaohiri, 2013).

There is a clear dimensional shift from traditional ways of providing library and information services to a digital dimension that is being engineered by information and communication technologies. The emergence of new demands surrounding information and its delivery and deliberation naturally dictates the need for libraries to meet these emerging user interests and desires, and to create a newer, more participatory type of user interaction (Kowalsky, 2013). The scope of library and information services is changing significantly and is moving parallel with technological developments and substantial changes are taking place in library and information centres as well as products and services offered therein. These changes however are being engineered by the waves of ICT with the potential of placing higher demands on library and information science professionals (Anyanwu, Uche and Ossai-Onah, 2014). To them there is need for re-designing and transforming library and information centres and its services to meet the demands of contemporary societies. As it is now, we cannot afford to use the same old methods and strategies of offering services to library clientele and expect them to be effective. Transforming library and information centres is a necessity if library and information

professionals must remain relevant and retain their place as information providers in the information conscious society.

Fagbola, Uzoigwe and Ajegbomogun (2011) citing Salami (2007) buttressed that:

> *''the 21st century has witnessed a great increase in information management and transmission. The new information age has brought about improved knowledge delivery, processing of information, precision, good time management and improved network system. Furthermore, information is also called data and databases are created and made accessible online via the Internet and other machine readable formats. Search engines are made accessible to the public. In view of this, conventional libraries seem to be giving way to hybrid and virtual libraries. (otherwise called libraries without walls or paperless libraries) accessing or developing digital collections alongside print-based collections''*.p.5

Onuoha, Anyanwu, Ossai-Onah, & Amaechi (2015) argued that if we must innovate and create avenues for successful change that will culminate in efficient library service delivery, we must embrace information and communications technology. The era of confining ourselves to ancient forms of librarianship are gone, if there must be a shift in services offered, there must first be a shift in our professional mind-set. Library and information professionals must be ready for change. Demands for change are both external and internal and as we have seen, outside factors include legislation, technology, socio-economic forces, the political agenda, etc., while those from inside include re-orientation, the new function of libraries, leaders and reorganization (Tam and

Robertson, 2002). They further buttressed that however, change does not happen by itself; people make it happen. To be successful, change has to incorporate the mission, goals and objectives of the organisation. Simultaneous changes in structures, systems and people will lead to a change in the culture of the organisation.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To determine the areas of library and information services that requires transformation in the 21st century

2. To establish why these areas of library and information services should be transformed

3. To identify the challenges to sustainable transformation of library and information services in the 21st century

4. To identify strategies that will enhance feasible transformation of library and information services in the 21st century

Literature Review

Rabiu (2012) stressed that in the recent times, the library and information profession has faced serious transformation particularly with the proliferation of ICT which has transformed the way and manners of business transactions, education, learning, use of the library and its numerous functions, including that of sharing information, and general social interaction. According to Ezeani, Eke and Ugwu (2012), the 21st century has brought a lot of dynamism within the library and information science profession and this to them has come as a result of the sophisticated

nature of the present day library user. Shehu and Amako (2013) points out that the 21st century librarian is an embodiment of a digital information professional and a knowledge worker who can add value and make libraries truly useful and user friendly.

Michalak (2012) points out that transforming an institution with a long tradition is difficult because many features of the academic library have tremendous power to resist change such as volumes print collections, ageing and inflexible buildings, state and private institutional governance structures that include outdated personnel and financial regulations etc. According to Ellis, Rosenblum, Stratton, Armes-Stratton (2014), in recognition of the trends and challenges occurring within higher education and academic libraries, libraries Organisational Review Team (ORT) sought to redefine professional roles and functions to strategically position the libraries for the future. Emezie and Nwaohiri (2013) in their paper highlight the challenges to effective information services delivery in the 21st century and these to them include: lack of competency, lack of technology literacy, poor internet connectivity, inadequate power supply and poor funding.

Characteristically, a transformed library to Michalak (2012) is where staff members actively manage their work and take intelligent risks, if only to step forward with suggestions for improvement. Fagbola, Uzoigwe and Ajegbomogun (2011) argues that despite the tremendous development associated with the birth of ICT, there exist basic challenges that tend to hinder the provision of access to knowledge by libraries especially in developing countries like Nigeria and these include: poor/unreliable public power supply, inadequate operational human resources, apathy on the part of staff, lack of maintenance and poor funding.

Okore and Ekere (2008) aptly pointed out that the development of ICT threw up some

opportunities and posed some challenges to information professionals and the challenges posed includes: increase in the number of published materials and to cope with these developments, there is need for information professionals to develop specialized skills and competences to enable them manage knowledge effectively in this electronic age. According to Abubakar, (2011) the present-day academic library services in the 21st century is focusing more on the area of digital, virtual or libraries without borders all of which have transformed academic libraries and led to transition and transformation in the academic library environment. The transition and the transformation are accompanied with sophistication in the changing pattern in the information needs of users which is growing rapidly.

Okiy, (2005) in Eze and Uzoigwe, (2013) observed that university libraries are now expected to provide to users a range of ICT and e-resources necessary for retrieving information quickly from both local and remote databases, as well as creating a need for library cooperation and consortium initiatives. Abubakar, (2011) observed that digital revolution has dramatically changed the face of libraries in the 21st century. This posed a challenge to academic libraries to digitize their services and resources through appropriate ICT application in order to remain relevant. However, academic libraries in Nigeria are faced with enormous problems, notably the lack of proper funding. Despite that, they must against all odds try to measure up with their contemporaries elsewhere. Similarly, Eze and Uzoigwe, (2013) findings revealed that certain factors pose problems to these academic libraries, such factor as poor funding of the libraries and others which have a bearing on it – poor infrastructure (especially electronic facilities) and high cost of maintaining the facilities.

Research Methodology

The methodology adopted for this study was survey research with a well structured questionnaire designed in line with the objectives of the study as the instrument used in collecting data. The population of this study comprises of the library and information science professionals selected from three university libraries in Imo State, Nigeria. The availability and purposive sampling techniques were used to select the participants from the sampled institutions. The data generated were analysed using frequency counts and percentage. A total of ninety (90) questionnaires were distributed to the library and information practitioners in the three selected university libraries in Imo state, Nigeria which included: Alvan Ikoku University of Education Library (AIUE), Imo State University Library (IMSU) and Federal University of Technology Library (FUTO), all in Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. 79 copies of the instrument were duly completed and retrieved out of the ninety questionnaires representing 87.8%.

Results and Findings

Research Question 1: Which of these areas of library and information services requires transformation?

Table 1: Areas of Library and Information Services that requires transformation

Areas of library services	Frequency	Percentage
Reference services	63	79.7
Serials services management	61	77.2
Bibliographic services	60	75.9
Circulation Services	60	75.9
Technical Services	60	75.9
Acquisition Services	57	72.2
Marketing of Library Services	56	70.8

Bindery/Maintenance Services	54	68.4
ICT Related services	52	65.8
Inter-Library Loan Services	50	63.3
Reprographic services	49	62
Management of Thesis / Dissertation	46	58.2
Provision of special collection services	44	55.7
Current Awareness Services (CAS)	43	54.4
Institutional Repositories Services	43	54.4
Research and Training Services	43	54.4
Embedded Library Services	42	53.2
Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI	36	45.6

From Table 1, the statistics from the table shows that the participants affirmed that virtually all the areas of library and information services in the institutions studied has felt need for transformation except in the area of selective dissemination of information services (45.6%). This finding was not surprising considering that SDI is more or less a personalized service that is peculiar to a special library whereas the libraries studied are all academic libraries.

Research Question 2: Why do you think these areas of library and information services should be transformed?

Table 2: Reasons for Transforming Library and Information Services

Reasons for Transformation	Frequency	%
To promote efficient service delivery	73	92.4
To promote the image of libraries/library professionals	70	88.6
To attract and retain the library users	68	86.1
To enhance effective use of available information resources	66	83.5
To ensure user's satisfaction	66	83.5
Boost people's confidence in librarianship	64	81
To reduce level of theft and mutilation	62	78.5
To familiarize users with library services	61	77.2
Facilitate proper organization of information resources	59	74.7

From Table 2, it is obvious that promoting efficient service delivery (92.4%) has the highest frequency, this being closely followed by promoting the image of libraries/library professionals (88.6%) with attracting and retaining the library users having 68 response indicating (86.1%). From the table it was evident that all the reasons scored above 70%.

3: What are the challenges to sustainable transformation of library and information services?

Table 3: Challenges to sustainable transformation of library and information services **(N= 79)**

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
Inadequate funding of libraries	68	86.1
Non-compliance with the demands of ICT	64	81
Indifferent attitudes of library managers	61	77.2
Lack of ICT policies	61	77.2

Poor working conditions	61	77.2
Lack of ICT facilities	61	77.2
Lack of passion for the profession	61	77.2
Lack of motivation	60	75.9
Non attendance to workshops / seminars	58	73.4
Institutional policies not in favour of librarianship	54	68.4
Absence of well defined and uniform library policies	51	64.6
Librarians phobia for emerging technologies	48	60.8

From Table 3, Inadequate funding of libraries has the highest score of 68 response (86.1%). This was followed by non-compliance with the demands of ICT with response score of 64 (81%) , indifferent attitudes of library manager, lack of ICT policies, poor working conditions, lack of ICT facilities and lack of passion for the profession all had the response of 61 (77.2%), followed by lack of motivation (75.9%) and non attendance to workshops / seminars (73.4%). Institutional policies not in favour of librarianship, absence of well defined and uniform library policies as well as librarians phobia for emerging technologies all had response rate below (70%)

Research Question 4: What are the strategies for feasible transformation of library and information services?

Table 4: Strategies for feasible Transformation of Library and Information Services

Strategies for Transformation	Frequency	Percentage
Provision of adequate funding	72	91.1
Provision of relevant and functional ICT facilities	67	84.8
Attendance to conferences relevant to the profession	64	81
Formulation of viable library policies	61	77.2

Mentoring / coaching of younger librarians by their seniors	61	77.2
Passionate approach to library services	61	77.2
Formulation of viable ICT policies	60	75.9
Retraining of Library and Information Practitioners	58	73.4
Introduction of Training the Trainer programmes	56	70.8

Table 4 shows that all the articulated strategies has a response rate of 70% and above with provision of adequate funding scoring highest (91.1%), followed by provision of relevant and functional ICT facilities (84.8%) and attendance to conferences relevant to the profession (81%).

Conclusion

This paper examined the challenges of transforming library and information services (LIS) for effective service delivery in three academic libraries in Imo state, Nigeria. Transformation of library and information centres is all about improving product and services offered in Nigerian libraries to meet the needs and demands of the knowledge society. Among other benefits, it enhances the capability of libraries to contribute positively to the reality of knowledge society in contemporary Nigerian society. However, it is obvious from the result of this study that there are a lot of challenges to transformation of library service for effective service delivery in the 21st century.

Recommendation

The following recommendations were made in line with the finding of the study: retraining of LIS practitioners; provision of adequate funding; provision of relevant and functional ICT facilities relevant to the Nigerian libraries and formulation of viable library policies that can

transform Nigerian Libraries by relevant bodies such as Librarians' Registration Council (LRCN), Nigerian Library Association (NLA) and National Association of Library and Information Science Educationist (NALISE).

i) *Training and Re-Training of Library and Information Science Professionals:* in order to effectively transform library and information services, there is need for training and re-training of library and information science practitioners so as to equip them with necessary ICT skills/competencies required for them to be able to render effective service. The library staff should be sent to conferences, seminars and workshops that are library science oriented. Efforts should be made to ensure that librarians that are ICT compliant have access to instituional sponsorship especially when the institution ultimately will benefit from the development.

ii). *Provision of adequate funding:* funds no doubt is the bed rock for success of any organization. In view of this, adequate fund should be provided to the effectively carry out the transformation processes. Finance is required to procure ICT facilities, hire the right staff, train and re-train the staff and implement other staff development programmes. To ensure that this is achieved, there should be orientation amongst library and information science practitioners on strong lobbying and advocacy strategies as a way of attracting fund.

iii). *Provision of relevant and functional ICT facilities:-* relevant and functional ICT facilities should be provided for university libraries to facilitate the change process. Being in the digital age, however, it will require the availability of the right ICT facilities for the library to render effective library services expected of the 21st century librarians. The right software should be made available in Nigerian university libraries.

iv.). ***Formulation of viable library policies***: librarians have come a long way as a profession and in order to facilitates a smooth transformation process, there is need for various bodies like Librarians' Registration Council (LRCN), Nigerian Library Association (NLA) and National Association of Library and Information Science Educationist (NALISE) to come up with a framework upon which professional practices should be based. For, instance in Nigerian university, in principle, 10% of the subvention received from the institution should be allocated to the library but it is not so in practice. The various bodies should come with strong policies that will guard against unethical practice.

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