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Maintaining Publishing Standards and Global Visibility: Essential Tips for Nigerian Library and Information Professionals

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Abstract

The paper examined the essential requirements for maintaining publishing standards as well as global visibility of research scholars, using Nigerian Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals as a focus. The paper x-rayed the basic concepts of the study, extensively looked into the state of publishing and maintaining global visibility by LIS professionals in Nigeria and proffered the key elements for positively changing the scenario, which among others involve using standard numbers in publishing like International Standard Book Number (ISBN), International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) and Digital Object Identifier (DOI), among others, being mindful of what is published, where it is published and who publishes it. The paper equally stated that scholars should maintain research integrity by ensuring that their publications are clear, honest, accurate, complete, balanced, not misleading, selective or ambiguous in reporting, while journal editors and publishers generally, equally must ensure the integrity of the research literature. Thus, LIS professionals must maximise the benefits of publishing, maintain publishing standards, have quality publications, attract the right audience and ensure the eventual influence of their publishing on global visibility.

Keywords: Global visibility, Publishing standards, Tips, Library and Information Professionals, Nigeria, Maintaining.

Introduction

The issues of maintaining publishing standards and global visibility are inseparable phenomena that have bothered the mind of many professionals. Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals are not left behind in the quest for maintaining publishing standards and global visibility in this digital age and competitive global economy, as these form part of the global best practices. According to Ayoub, Amin, Amin, and Wani (2019), publication by

scholars of any institution on the internet is not only a tool for scholarly communication but also a sure way to reach larger audiences and equally represent the performance and global visibility of the institutions. This global visibility extends to the authors of such scholarly publications. It is worrisome to note that many Nigerian LIS professionals go about publishing without being mindful of who their audience is and how best to reach them in this globalized world. Most of them feel that it is not worth giving their time, while only a few consider it necessary to go by its requirement for their career advancement. Consequently, for LIS professionals to maximise the benefits of publishing, have quality publications, attract the right audience and ensure the eventual influence of their publishing on global visibility, several actions can be taken before and after our papers are published. Though we create good paper content, without an audience, the paper can get lonely by merely residing on the pages of invisible and low impact-factor local journals and heaped on our shelves to accumulate dust. It can equally be published online in any of the predatory journals, which the author may be parading himself to have published in an international journal. Even when the content of our publication is great, it does not find an audience on its own unless the right things are done by the authors and publishers in the areas of marketing, publicity and considering where it is published like high impact factor journal. There is thus a need for a strategy to consider where we publish and to find and attract an audience for our publications, which invariably help the LIS professionals in creating and maintaining global visibility.

Today, it is evident that many research dissemination tools are available to researchers, including research reports, peer-reviewed publications, press releases and policy briefs (World Health Organization (WHO), 2014). Worthy of mentioning is the fact that considering the recent information overload, the scholarly community is also turning its attention to the use of social media and other online platforms for publishing. In recent years academics have shown a growing interest in non-traditional methods of evaluating their scholarly 'impact'. These alternative metrics, known as 'altimetric, allow researchers to gauge the impact and reach of their research on the social web beyond the traditional science citation count and journal impact factors. However, the bottom-line remains maintaining publishing standards, creating global visibility and maintaining this global visibility in publishing for the LIS professionals.

The paper is poised to reveal some approaches and essential tips for maintaining publishing standards, creating and maintaining global visibility of research findings published by the LIS

professionals in Nigeria, which will invariably and hopefully contribute towards changes and development of the profession and the professionals.

Conceptual Clarification

Every profession has its dedicated audience, niche, and journals; therefore, the expectation is that most of the researches carried out in the discipline should be directed at those publishing places and professional audience. Albeit, substantial developments in most disciplines frequently find their journalistic light in uppermost international and interdisciplinary technical journals. Pomponi et al (2020), was of the view that the reason for this could be due to breakthroughs the study epitomises for the profession, or the importance or impact it has on humanity, or its timeliness compared to existing socio-political-economic global movements, or its broader significance in the overall scientific advancement of the society. Since the move in the direction of research-focused higher education institutions the world over, especially in Nigeria, has not been easy, there is great concern about Nigerian LIS professionals' research and publication output. This can be measured in terms of the standard of publications and its global visibility as well as the fact that the research outputs published in local or national and sub-national sources remain very minuscule and poorly cited, when compared to research published in international sources.

The concept of maintaining publishing standards and global visibility, therefore, is underpinned by the framework of this presentation, which addresses three key publication-connected difficulties faced by Nigerian LIS professional. These connected challenges are;

- How do we maintain publishing standards among the LIS professionals in Nigeria?
- How do we improve local access to global research? and,
- How do we improve global access to local research?

It is important to note that the sluggish pace in socio-economic and political development in Africa has been associated with insufficient research to drive knowledge and development (Ezema, 2011). An additional fact is that investment in science-based researches receives very small or no attention. Thus, making the applicability and value of research not respected, which has been the case of Research and Development (R&D) at the tertiary education level in developing nations (Vuong, 2019).

The academic publishing world is principally dominated by scholars with institutional affiliations in the developed world (Hyland, 2016; National Science Board, 2018). This realism continues at the moment even as researchers from such realms as China and India make effort to bridge and narrow the gap. Research outputs (indexed by Scopus) from developed nations in 2016 accounted for 60% of the universal research output, a fall from nearly 80% in 2003 (National Science Board, 2018). The chronic disparities and inequities in the world of scholarly publishing between the developed and developing countries are attributable to several factors, such as the enduring dominance of English language journals over the past decades (Henshall, 2018; Hyland, 2016); difficult access to tertiary-level science and quality research training (Okeke, Babalola, Byarugaba, Djimde, & Osoniyi, 2017); poor collaboration among researchers, policymakers, and industry players (Lavis et al., 2010); and the lack of skilled human resources possibly due to the migration of trained professionals from less-developed to more-developed settings (Cash-Gibson, Rojas-Gualdrón, Pericàs, & Benach, 2018).

According to Kozlova & Antoshkova (2018), standards serve as a tool for refining and evolving various formulae and approaches of library and information sustenance to science, contributing to the enhancement in the organization and management of scientific and information actions. Standards setting are carried out on the troika of international, regional and national. International standards are developed by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) (Matysek, 2015). International Publishers Association (2021) assists in developing international standards for content identification, description, development and the facilitation of e-commerce to promote open, non-proprietary standards that can easily be implemented by large and small publishers around the world.

Not paying attention to or adhering to standards in any human endeavour, including publishing, among other things, leads to the application of unethical methods to reach expected goals. In his work titled **“Add-my-name” as a parody of research collaboration among Nigerian researchers**, Aiyebelehin (2021), decried the practice of researchers engaging in unethical practices by undermining standards in a bid to overcome the publish or perish syndrome (Vuong, 2019) that pervades the academic environment in Nigerian university education sector. This is also noted by few other authors concerning research practices among Nigerian researchers.

Ogunrin, Ogunrin, and Murray (2016) found that “the knowledge and practice of research ethics are insufficient among Nigerian biomedical researchers” while Adeleye, University of Benin Teaching Hospital and Adebamowo (2012) reported that over 22.0% of Nigerian researchers studied, agreed to at least one form of unethical practice oscillating between fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism. Besides, Wager and Kleinert (2011) advised that research scholars should ensure that their publications are clear, honest, accurate, complete, balanced, not misleading, selective or ambiguous in reporting, while the journal editors on their own part have the mandate to ensure the integrity of the research literature, which are set out in guidelines provided for maintaining research integrity.

The State of Publishing and Maintaining Global Visibility by Nigerian Library and Information Professionals

In Nigeria, academic research started even earlier before the country gained political independence from her British colonial masters. This was dictated by the craving of the colonial government to encourage research that would ensure the availability of agricultural raw materials to feed the British industries then, rather than the advancement of research and growth of the country (Ezema, 2011), which has been the driving force for development in other climes (Fatoki and Obiyan, 2005). This accounts for why the initial research institutes, such as National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI) and National Institute for Oil Palm Research (NIFOR) established in 1923 and 1939 respectively in the country were agriculturally based. However, with the founding of university education in the country; starting with the University College, Ibadan in 1948, the central point of research shifted more towards the universities. Subsequently, many other government and private-funded universities have been founded and all engage in the conduct and communication of their research findings. Basically, research is undertaken in many contexts by universities, industries, government agencies and independent scholars because it generates primary outputs (such as data sets, images, video files •.and sound recordings) and secondary outputs (such as books, pre-prints. journal articles, conference papers, theses, technical reports, unpublished papers and web sites), which interpret and summarize the research findings (Cathro 2004).

A survey report carried out on the first-generation universities in Nigeria by Alo cited in Christian (2008) revealed that studies in agriculture were still dominant. While engineering and

medicine followed hierarchically in that order, Nigerian scholars have made noteworthy contributions in the field of applied research (Ezema, 2011). Fatoki and Obiyan (2005) pointed out that two separate events (Johannes Gutenberg's advances in printing technology of the 15th century and the advent of the Internet and the World Wide Web) in the world revolutionised the publishing industry.

Aina (2004), stated that for any profession to grow, research must be regularly conducted as an endeavour to expand the boundaries of knowledge in the discipline hence the reason for research being vital for staff development and enduring progress of Library and Information Science (LIS) as a field of human vocation.

In recent times, studies have shown that research activities have been waning due to obvious reasons ranging from the overall underdevelopment of Africa including Nigeria, which has led to over-reliance on developed nations for all forms of knowledge, extended inattention to education, which results in academics moving away from their principal duty of teaching, research and supervision of students' research work to confronting official neglect and anti-human policies (Olukoju, 2004). Despite the observation that humanities and social science disciplines have made remarkable improvement in research output (Ezema, 2011), this horrible condition has led to the collapse of numerous publishing outfits and the dearth of indigenous publications.

Furthermore, Ezema (2011) while citing Olukoju (2004) regretted that scholarly publications in Nigeria have degenerated since the 1980s and this deterioration is associated with the pattern of information generation and dissemination in the global community, which has brought about the underrepresentation of research output from developing countries. Vuong (2019), believes that the fallout of underrepresentation of research from the developing world is the bias occasioned by the developed world's research agenda and the uneven adoption of new scientific practices in the former (Gwynn, 2019). This situation is notably alarming in the field of Healthcare and Medicine (Alemayehu, Mitchell, & Nikles, 2018; Ali et al., 2017; Cash-Gibson et al., 2018). It is very significant to note that when research output from emerging powers such as Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa – known as the BRICS countries – in recent years, scientific publications from many developing nations remain infinitesimal in comparison. According to the National Science Board (2018), only 10.9% of the Scopus-indexed papers published in 2016 were from authors in non-BRICS developing nations. Since it is assumed that

enhanced access to research can aid a country to achieve its development objectives, there is a need for more engagement in the generation and sharing of knowledge in less-developed countries (Gwynn, 2019).

The distinctiveness and broad-based outlook of Library and Information Science as a field of study and a profession, make it to be without borderline or stratum. This distinguishing factor signifies that the discipline is a multidisciplinary field, which relies heavily on research procedures from other fields. Thus, LIS research is useful to a broad variety of members of the society.

It is however, unbecoming that some LIS professionals, particularly in Nigeria neither adhere to publishing standards in book and journal publications nor consider being globally visible. The standards may involve having the right title with the right length and right message, having the relevant preliminary pages, having quality manuscript, using International Standard Book Number (ISBN) for books, indexing the book, having the book or journal article being peer-reviewed and also ensuring that the journals that papers are sent to have International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) and are of quality (refereed and not predatory). Digital object identifier (DOI) is also used to uniquely identify online journal articles, books, among other electronic publications. The other aspects of maintaining publishing standard rest on who publishes for you? A publisher or a printer?. Some authors do not understand that the printer has a limit to what he does in publishing, while the publisher has a greater role in what the publication becomes. Maintaining publishing standards, invariably determines the quality of publications, what is published and who publishes it. Thus, it is worrisome that most Nigerian LIS professionals are not visible in their publishing activities and therefore require essential tips that will enhance their publishing standards and global visibility.

Essential Tips for Maintaining Publishing Standards and Global Visibility by Nigerian Library and Information Professionals

Maintaining publishing standards and global visibility require certain calculated steps and efforts. Among these calculated steps and efforts, involve coming up with a scholarly article and publishing it in high-impact online scientific journals. As journals are the custodians of scientific and technological endeavour and advancement, publish sound research with enduring conclusions that stand scrutiny and validation, journals, therefore, have an impact on the

educational, scientific and technological lives of the people. According to El-Omar (2014), the key elements of journal publications involve novelty and stimulating further discussion and research. As aspiring authors or authors already in the publishing field with intention of either creating or maintaining global visibility, the aim should be to produce quality scholarly communication. Engaging in high-quality research produces high-quality journal paper, which attracts visibility. As lofty as it may sound, it is not an easy task. This, therefore, requires some essential tips to guide authors and publishers to achieve success. Even the most experienced researchers sometimes overlook these essential requirements and the output often ends up in lower-tier journals with little or no global visibility.

Accordingly, some of the essential tips for solid high-impact publication with anticipated high global visibility as suggested by Alsheikh-Ali, Qureshi, Al-Mallah and Ioannidis (2011), El-Omar (2014), Tripathy, Bhatnagar, Shewade, Kumar, Zachariah and Harries (2017) and Overbaugh (2018) involve the following:

1. Prepare a good research

Preparing good research has some essential requirements. For aspiring young LIS researchers, it is essential to choose a good area of specialization with a good mentor. Thus, mentors are essential in guiding young authors through the maze of scientific research folly, pitfalls, and dead ends. They inspire the authors to find the best within them, remain focused, and achieve success. When setting out to research a particular topic, it is essential to read the literature and master what has already been completed previously as there is no reward in reinventing the wheel. Develop a good background of the study. However, if the research is empirical work, formulate relevant research objectives and questions, which will guide the development of the research instrument(s). Generally, and for LIS researchers and authors specifically, the research questions should stem from a trending and all-encompassing important topic that has a significant burden on society.

2. Give preference to collaboration

Preference should be given to collaboration as working alone is self-defeating and likely produces poor-quality research output not worthy of publishing in highly global visible journals and platforms. Thus, there is a need for researchers or authors to expand their co-authorship base.

In addition to the usual benefit of bringing new expertise and ideas to the paper, co-authoring with a diverse group of colleagues helps to disseminate research findings more widely. This is because most journals and high scholarly communication platforms have great consideration for papers with multiple authors.

3. Select title and keywords wisely

A good title should be concise, convey the main topics of the research, and highlight the importance of the research findings (i.e., keywords). Challenges arise with framing a title that is too long (which could be clumsy, verbose and annoying) or too short (which could lack crucial selling points about the research). The best approach is to write down a few possible titles, think about how they describe the content before selecting the best. Authors and researchers should realize that the title is the first window for readers to look at publications. It is, therefore, imperative to come up with titles that would catch attention, accurately describe the contents of the manuscript, and make people want to read further.

Ebrahim, Salehi and Embi (2013) observed that title and keywords have the potential to significantly impact the chances of getting picked up when searched, read, cited and included in systematic reviews that synthesise evidence on an issue. One needs to understand that in today's world, journals, search engines, and indexing and abstracting services classify papers using keywords. An accurate list of keywords will, therefore, ensure correct indexing and help showcase the research globally. It is advisable to select keywords from an established list of subject headings like the Library of Congress List of Subject Headings (LCLSH) and Sears List of Subject Headings, which are compendia of controlled vocabulary for indexing journal articles and books with a general background. The title should be simple and clear while describing the study appropriately and at the same time avoid abbreviations and jargon.

4. Prepare a suitable manuscript

Good scientific writing demands clarity, brevity, and logic, thus, the secret to the successful writing of research papers is telling a good story. Therefore, it must make sense and should have a beginning, a middle, and an end with a “take-home” message. Other researchers or authors reading the paper need to know what has been done, how and why it was done, what was discovered, and what the discovery means. Each paragraph should stand alone, and still provide

context to what precedes it and what follows it. Use simple language and observe the rules of good grammar, spelling, punctuation, and linguistic style. Research demands many years of hard work, commitment, dedication and numerous experiments, which the readers do not need to know. Include only the work that is relevant to the main topic of the paper and the scientific questions being addressed. Good journals outfits require rigid structure and authors are expected to adhere to certain conventions. Sticking to the instructions judiciously helps to avoid engaging in endless corrections and communications with the journal editorial staff. Thus, it is important to make every effort to produce a near-perfect manuscript the first time around.

Before submitting a manuscript, the author must realize the need to attract the attention of the editor. The opportunity is lost by careless mistakes or omissions. It is always very helpful to ask a non-specialist colleague to review the manuscript and comment on readability, typographical errors, grammar, among others. More importantly, such a colleague would be able to advise on the logicity of the manuscript. A trusted professional colleague with a keen interest in the area of study is equally required to read the manuscript and provide more direction.

5. Make the articles open access by publishing in an open-access journal or by self-archiving in ResearchGate, Academia or other online repositories

Publishing in open access journals makes the papers available to all readers free of charge, thereby creating high global visibility. It is widely believed that open access articles have the advantage of being accessible to all readers free of charge, including policymakers, which increases the chances of being cited by the readers (Lawrence, 2011). Also, self-archiving is the act of the author depositing a free copy of an electronic document online to provide immediate open access to it. The author can equally scan and upload a print copy of his or her publications. This requires digitizing papers by scanning into a pdf file or converting born-digital papers from Microsoft word to pdf format as the case may be and uploading it to Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Academia.edu, and Social Science Research Network (SSRN) as desired for global visibility.

ResearchGate (Berlin, Germany), Academia.edu (San Francisco, CA, USA) and Social Science Research Network (SSRN, Rochester, NY, USA) are free online repositories where published works can be shared for a wider audience for greater visibility of research. LIS professionals can also submit or upload articles in institutional repositories where available.

However, it is important to check on the self-archiving policy of the publisher before submitting or uploading.

6. Effective use of online social media

Many studies have shown that there is a statistically significant correlation between social media mentions such as posts, tweets, blogs and citation counts (Eysenbach, 2011; Thelwall, Haustein, Larivière and Sugimoto, 2013). LIS professionals in Nigeria need to engage with individuals and groups within and beyond academia, including key policy influencers and decision-makers, among others, with shared interests. This could be through Facebook posts (Facebook Inc, San Francisco, CA, USA), Tweets, LinkedIn (LinkedIn Corp, Mountain View, CA, USA), Academia.edu and other social media groups. The LIS professionals desirous of maintaining global visibility in publishing can create an account on Twitter (Twitter Inc, San Francisco, CA, USA) (<https://twitter.com/>) and add a short description of 160 characters or less stating their experience, research interests, organisational affiliation and a link to personal blogs if any. They can engage with other researchers, policymakers and the public by finding users who share common interests and electing to 'follow' them to start receiving their updates.

Nonetheless, every social media platform offers the facility to form thematic groups or clubs. Adding relevant people to a like-minded, subject-related group will create a personalised channel to reach a larger number of target audiences and ensure reception and visibility. Authors can equally share social media coordinates with people who desire to connect with them using other platforms such as MethodSpace (www.methodspace.com) (Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA), OR network (<http://ornetwork.ning.com/>) and the Social Science Research Network (SSRN, Rochester, NY, USA) (<http://ssrn.com/en/>), which are social network services that provide an avenue for social scientists to ask questions on fora, discuss research, connect to other researchers in the field and blog about the latest research.

Apart from FaceBook and Twitter, others are both academic and professional networking sites that help authors and researchers to connect and network with one another, discussing research outputs, experiences, skills and current as well as past positions. Such academic and professional networking sites equally have a strong profile and curriculum vitae feature that showcases achievements, publications and expertise. Furthermore, such metrics as profile views,

document views, document downloads, unique visitors, external links to documents, the geographic distribution of visitors and referrals are used for global visibility evaluation.

7. *Get a unique author identifier ORCID to distinguish yourself and your work from other researchers.*

Using a consistent name throughout a research career facilitates easy retrieval of a researcher's output. Common problems with authors include inconsistency in name formats, legal name changes, similar names or common names, which can make it difficult to associate research output to the correct author. It has been suggested that using an author identification system such as ORCID (Open Researcher and Contributor ID) (ORCID Inc, Bethesda, MD, USA) or ResearcherID (Thomson Reuters Corp, New York, NY, USA) could help aggregate all the authors' contribution to knowledge. ORCID IDs are permanent identifiers for researchers, which protect the unique identity of scholars and help them to keep their publication records updated with very little effort. After creating an ORCID account, an author can link the identification to other networking sites such as Google Scholar (Google Inc, Mountain View, CA, USA), SSRN, Academia.edu, and LinkedIn profiles, personal website and blogs.

8. *Other tools for dissemination*

Authors are encouraged to present their research findings and papers at virtual workshops, conferences, seminars or any virtual academic gatherings especially when requested to do so. It is equally important to include Twitter handle and links to authors' profiles in presentations, an e-mail signature and a business card. Researchers can use their institutional newsletter/bulletin/local newspaper to disseminate study findings.

Furthermore, Wager & Kleinert (2011) in their presentation summarised standards of publishing with the following; the investigation being conveyed must have been conducted legitimately. Scholars must report their findings with clarity, honesty, and devoid of fabrication, falsification or inappropriate data manipulation. Researchers should endeavour to describe their approaches clearly and unequivocally to enable their discoveries to be understood by others. Researchers should strictly adhere to publication requirements of originality and avoid copying others, such that works submitted for publication would not have been published somewhere else. Writers must take shared obligation for submitted and published work. The authorship of research

publications should truthfully reveal parties' contributions to the work and its findings, while sources of financial assistance, as well as germane conflicts of interest, must be disclosed.

Summary and Conclusion

The standard of publishing and global visibility of the Nigerian Library and Information Science professionals over the years have experienced a steady decline instead of growth. Owing to the importance of publishing in the career development of LIS professionals in Nigeria, such a scenario should be vigorously addressed, as LIS scholars all over the World show leadership in publishing as well as observance of ethical values, while at the same time, maintain their global visibility. Furthermore, given the current emphasis on maintaining global visibility in publishing, the LIS professionals in Nigeria could consider drawing up a systematic plan for publishing and research dissemination to ensure that their publications receive a wide audience and are equally cited. The LIS professionals should equally learn the art of publishing in online high-impact factor journals as well as using social media and other online platforms to increase the dissemination of their research findings.

Recommendations

The following have been recommended:

1. The Nigerian LIS professionals should be regularly trained on current and best practices in publishing as this will help them form the right decision in the area of maintaining global visibility in publishing.
2. It is important to come up with a clear policy aimed at protecting and valuing high-impact online resources. Besides, the Nigerian universities and their policymakers who regularly emphasise the presentation of hard copies of publications as a prerequisite for acceptance of publication should desist from that. This is because most of these visible journals do not come with hard copies.
3. Just as it could be seen in some universities, the Nigerian university policymakers should come up with a general policy on compulsory platforms expected of researchers to publish on before attending any height in their career.

4. The Nigerian universities should give more attention to open access institutional repositories and ensure that the institutional repositories are functional for the global visibility of the authors/scholars and the institution.
5. More emphasis should be placed on mentorship and collaboration among LIS professional in Nigeria.
6. The LIS professionals, Associations and groups should be encouraged to support being globally visible by frequently granting awards of recognition to the most visible professionals.

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