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## **Information Repackaging and Library Services: A Challenge to Information Professionals in Nigeria**

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### **Introduction**

Library services, including the packaging and repackaging of information, have been provided in Nigeria for many decades. Technological advancement has posed challenges which call for changes in library services. Information is a driving force in contemporary society. Libraries exist to serve as many people as possible, disseminating information, preserving culture, and contributing to intellectual and social life.

Library services tend to focus on means rather than ends (Buckland, 1992). This may cause confusion and reduce satisfaction for users. With several alternative sources of information, many library users have turned their backs on the library. For information professionals, the focus must shift from the information provider to the information consumer (clientele). Consumers' needs must guide organizational strategy (Kunneke, 2001). Libraries in higher education in Nigeria must complete migration from traditional library services to electronic formats and remote access. Electronic library materials differ significantly from traditional media. In particular, unlike paper and microform, it is possible to make electronic media available so that they

- Can be used from a distance,
- Can be used by more than one person at a time, and
- Can be used in more different ways.

Repackaging is not a new idea, but changes in information technology have enhanced the process, creating the potential for better serve.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Stilwell et al. (2001) note that the meaning of repackaging information or information repackaging (IR) is unclear. Saracevic and Woods (1981) and Bunch (1984) were the first to use the term in their publications in describing how an information service selects appropriate materials, reprocessing and packaging the information, and arranging materials in a way that is appropriate to the user. These studies focused on scientific and technical information and on community information. Those two types of information and the communities that use them are still the basis for information repackaging today, which is part of both rural development and highly industrialized settings.

Packaging is the bundling of products and services to address specific needs. It can be done by:

- Reformatting and synthesizing raw information;

- Combining expertise or consulting on a subject with access to relevant information sources;
- Providing training or assistance to a user in accessing an information product.

Quantum Dialog (2004) note that to add value to a product, the information provider must understand the types of information access problems most frequently encountered. Based on this knowledge, packaging can add value or services that are not readily available elsewhere. Person-to-person communication is one important form of repackaging. Sturges and Neill (1998) argue that people prefer personal contact as means of acquiring practical information.

In the information age, information overload can occur. Information repackaging can save time, labour, and costs to the user. It is a systematic process of adding value to information services (Greer, Agada and Grover, 1994). This is in line with the shift from documents to their contents and from collections to their users.

Repackaging can take many forms. Popular theatre is one familiar form that is connected with popular culture and indigenous knowledge systems. Drama, storytelling, and the use of songs are examples suggested by Rosenberg (1987). The present technology of integrated text, graphics, and media facilitates this kind of repackaging. Rosenberg discusses this kind of repackaging in providing information to illiterate or semi-literate people in the southern Sudan. She states that librarians have long been involved in repackaging information for their clients and that the measurement of a library's effectiveness is the extent to which its collection has been put to use. Boadi (1987) notes abstracting and indexing, SDI, translation services, bibliographies, special bulletins, and other current awareness services, are all attempts to provide information in a usable format.

Aboyade (1984) advocates oral transfer of information supported by a variety of media. Namponya (1986) and Aina (1991) suggest that illiteracy hampers the delivery of information to farmers, and so information providers should be willing to interpret, repackage, and apply information to the user's situation and help communities act on the information they have received. This means that library service could effectively shift from the exploitation of print towards the repackaging of information for transmission in oral and other forms. Information technology aids this process. Monageng (1987) notes that information must be interpreted and converted into a form that the user can understand and assimilate. A number of information repackaging efforts have focused on rural development. Otsyina and Rosenberg (1997) emphasize the role played by the traditions, values, and aspirations of rural people.

The process of repackaging depends on the availability of materials, from research institutes, government sources, online services and networks, and indigenous knowledge. Gray literature is important in repackaging, although it may be unattractive and hard to access (Sturges and Chimsen, 1996). Information repackaging can also be seen as part of a process of information consolidation. The process begins with the selection of information and the evaluation of content. Restructuring (condensation, rewriting, etc.) repackaging can follow. Information consolidation is part of library marketing, in identifying user needs and identifying and closing gaps.

Sturges and Chimsen, (1996) list three requirements for repackaging information:

- The materials should be collected and organized efficiently
- There should be the capacity to analyze their content and create new information packages from them.
- The new products should be disseminated freely.

The writers call for the identification of good models for repackaging, which requires critical thinking for combining information from different sources, considering the accuracy, completeness, and consistency of the information. Packages must have a clear presentation, and have been tested by a range of users. Newton, et al. (1998), consider the presentation of information particularly important.

## Conceptual Framework

The library is a service organization and a service-marketing model is appropriate. Irons (1996) describes a service-marketing triangle that represents the marketing of services.

In the service-marketing triangle, the staff and the organization are represented on the left axis and the market and organization on the right, while the traditional mix of product, price, and promotion only operates on the right axis between the organization and the market. The between the staff and customers results in a market mix. The triangle is about choosing customers and creating products, according to the customer's needs at affordable prices. It is also about the interaction that takes place when they are brought together. The product designed to specific user's needs, will attract them, particularly if it is affordable, thereby leading to customers' satisfaction. Adopting this model for the library, the left side of the triangle is represented by the library, the right by users. The interaction between library and library user leads to satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The information professional needs to harness this interaction for better product packaging and services delivery.

## Objectives of the Study

This study examines repackaging of information in libraries. The study will acquaint information professionals with the need to be dynamic and explore new ways of providing service.

## The Problem

The government funds tertiary institution's libraries in Nigeria, while research institute libraries are funded by their parent organization. Libraries have to justify their existence and make a case for why their functions should not be outsourced. This has led to budget cuts, which have effect on services to users of the library. Worse still, libraries are made to recover some or all of their costs, and administrators pay little or no attention to the library. The growth of free library services reveals that users place relatively low value on the receipt of information in Nigeria, hence users resist any fee or charge placed on library and information services. Most librarians are not equipped to provide the full range of information repackaging services. Considering the nonchalant attitude that users exhibit towards the library and alternative information sources that are available, how can libraries survive? Can strategies be developed that use modern information technology?

## Methodology

The ancient city of Ibadan is the focus of this study. It is a city with numerous academic institution and research institutes, but predominantly made up of government establishments and civil servants. Its quiet, homely, and agricultural terrain attracts many to the city, particularly for studies and research. There are four research institutes and one university and polytechnic each. These are:

- University of Ibadan , Ibadan [Kenneth Dike Library (KDL)]
- Ibadan Polytechnic, Ibadan (Poly Library)
- Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria (CRIN)
- International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA)
- Nigerian Institute for Social and Economic Research (NISER)
- Moore Plantation

Using the survey research design and questionnaire as the major instrument for data collection, the two academic libraries and three research institutes were selected for the study. Moore Plantation was left out of the study since CRIN and IITA are agricultural institutions and could represent that sector adequately. The study is limited to Ibadan, Oyo state, with focus on the professional librarians in the institutions, of whom there are forty. Twenty questionnaires were received from KDL, seven from Poly

library, three from CRIN, four from NISER, and six from IITA. The sample constitutes all professional staff in the libraries under study. Data collected were analyzed using frequency distribution.

## Results and Discussion of Findings

The respondents are 28 males and 12 females with BLS/B. Sc. in Library and Information Science and MLS degrees. This qualifies them to be professional librarians in Nigeria. All staff in IITA, NISER and CRIN said that they have policies that reflect library services, and while 11 (55%) of KDL staff claim to have such policies, 9 (45%) are not sure of their availability. The written policies are the basis of determining which services the libraries provide.

**Table 1: Availability of Library Policy**

| Policy   | KDL       | IITA Library | NISER Library | Poly Library | CRIN Library | Percentage |
|----------|-----------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|------------|
| Yes      | 11 (55%)  | 6 (100%)     | 4 (100%)      | 5 (71.4%)    | 3 (100%)     | 29 (72.5%) |
| No       | -         | -            | -             | 2 (28.6%)    | -            | 2 (5%)     |
| Not Sure | 9 (45%)   | -            | -             | -            | -            | 9 (22.5%)  |
| Total    | 20 (100%) | 6 (100%)     | 4 (100%)      | 7 (100%)     | 3 (100%)     | 40 (100%)  |

The services provided by these libraries include: lending, reference, literature search, selective dissemination of information, referral, document delivery, current awareness, training, information outreach, photocopying, bibliographic, retrospective computer search, information repackaging, inter-library loan, abstracting & indexing, book binding, etc. Even with that lengthy list, library users still complain of poor service, particularly at the KDL with 14 (70%), Poly library with 5 (71.4%), NISER with 2 (50%), IITA with 2 (33.33%), and CRIN with (33.33%) complaints. Except at CRIN and Poly library, the libraries provide online services.

The libraries surveyed repackage information in the following ways: translation, literacy, scientific/technical information, economic information, selective dissemination of information, etc. The organizations where foreign nationals come in to use the materials most frequently have the most extensive translation services.

**Table 2: Repackaging Services Rendered**

| Services                         | KDL      | IITA       | NISER    | Poly       | CRIN       | Percent   |
|----------------------------------|----------|------------|----------|------------|------------|-----------|
| Literacy                         | 8 (40%)  | 3 (50%)    | 2 (50%)  | 4 (57.14%) | 1 (33.33%) | 18 (45%)  |
| Translation                      | 4 (20%)  | 4 (66.67%) | 1 (25%)  | -          | -          | 9 (22.5%) |
| Scientific/technical information | 5 (25%)  | 1 (16.67%) | 4 (100%) | 3 (43%)    | 1 (25%)    | 14 (35%)  |
| SDI Services                     | 13 (65%) | 6 (100%)   | 4 (100%) | 7 (100%)   | 2 (50%)    | 32 (80%)  |

SDI is the major service engaged in by the libraries (32, 89%), with literary service (18, 45%) following, and scientific/technical information service at 14 (35%). Repackaged information gives an avenue for feedback to determine users' satisfaction. Respondents believed that users will return to the library to use the available products and services.

**Table 3: Needs Met by Repackaging**

| Needs                            | KDL      | IITA     | NISER    | Poly      | CRIN      | Percent    |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Academic/Research                | 12 (60%) | 6 (100%) | 4 (100%) | 7 (100%)  | 2 (50%)   | 31 (77.5%) |
| Agricultural Information         | 4 (29%)  | 6 (100%) | 2 (50%)  | 2 (28.6%) | 4 (100%)  | 18 (45%)   |
| Scientific/Technical Information | 5 (25%)  | 6 (100%) | 3 (75%)  | 5 (71.4%) | 3 (75%)   | 22 (55%)   |
| Rural/Literacy Information       | 3 (15%)  | 6 (100%) | 2 (50%)  | 4 (57.1%) | 1 (12.5%) | 16 (40%)   |
| Organizational Information       | 5 (25%)  | 6 (100%) | 4 (100%) | 4 (57.1%) | -         | 19 (47.5%) |
| Economic Information             | 5 (25%)  | 6 (100%) | 4 (100%) | 4 (57.1%) | -         | 19 (47.5%) |
| Social Information               | 5 (25%)  | 6 (100%) | 4 (100%) | 6 (85.7%) | -         | 21 (52.5%) |

The above table shows that academic/research information needs (31, 77.5%) are predominant. This may be because students, lecturers, and other researchers use the libraries most often. While the IITA library meets all the above needs, other libraries met far fewer. Their services are tailored to the category of users, with KDL and Poly library meeting students and lecturers' needs, IITA and CRIN library mainly meeting agricultural information needs, and NISER meeting social and economic information needs. The professional staff has the professional qualifications and the subject knowledge to repackage information. Some respondents consider repackaging a new development that should be encouraged to enhance research.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

Information repackaging is a way of improving library services, particularly in this era of electronic information. Librarians must give critical thought to this phenomenon with the intent of implementing it in routine library services to users. The effort is considerable, but the long-term benefits outweigh the disadvantage of not providing it.

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