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February 2010

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## **Publication Output of Librarians in Tertiary Institutions: A Case Study of Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria**

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### **Introduction**

The importance of publication in the growth and development of the library profession cannot be overemphasized. It is essential for problem-solving, leading to dynamism in library services as a response to changing times and environment. Stressing the importance of research, Powell, Barker, and Mika (2002) assert its role in problem-solving and decision-making, and making librarians critical consumers of the research literature, allowing them to provide information services to researchers in other fields. Boaduo and Babitseng (2007) note that research has always been the main approach to problem-solving by professions. Aina (2004) observes that while research and publication are needed for expansion the frontiers of librarianship and for finding solutions to problems emanating from its practice, it also benefits librarians.

Montanelli and Stenstrom (1986) say that publication promotes advancement and recognition for librarians, and that librarians who conduct research have a more effective relationship with other faculty. Powell (1997) maintains that research and publication help individuals to think critically and analytically. Buttlar (1991) and Mularski and Bradigan (1991) find that academic librarians publish to meet the promotion and tenure demands of their institution to gain faculty status.

Despite the benefits of publication to librarians, their publication output is low. Onohwakpor and Tiemo (2006) summarize the limitations as ignorance on where to publish and the acceptable journals. Many studies attribute the low publication output of librarians to lack of training, which hinders the acquisition of adequate research and writing skilld and identification of research problems (Powell, et al., 2002, Avemariautulu, 2005).

### **Literature Review**

#### **Publication output of librarians in academic libraries**

The publication requirement for academic librarians varies among different tertiary institutions. Studies have described characteristics of academic librarians and their scholarly publication. In general, such studies look at a large group of publications from librarians who are employed at a wide variety of colleges and universities (Long and McGinniss, 1981). Another useful strategy is a detailed study of the publication of librarians in a single institution. Hart (1999) remarks that, "this narrow focus is particularly appropriate when looking at trends in publication because the type of college or university in which a faculty member works has been shown to be key factor in influencing his or her publication patterns."

This research attempts to further study librarians as authors by focusing on the publication output of the librarians at a single university: Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria. Librarians at that institution are required to publish in order to be successful in their quest for promotion and tenure. These librarians believe that expectations for publication have increased drastically in the past few years. Teaching faculty have also been pressured to increase their production of scholarly books and articles. Studies have analyzed whether academic librarians face a “publish or perish” dilemma. As noted by Alemna (1998) and Aina (2004), librarians must find a solution to the problems emanating from this practice, a solution that also benefits librarians.

### **Publication in core journals and other periodicals**

Garfield (1971), states that:

Bradford's law states that documents on a given field are distributed (scattered) according to a certain mathematical function, so that a growth in papers on a subject requires a growth in the number of journals and information sources. The number of group of journals to produce nearly equal numbers of articles is roughly in proportional to  $1:n:n^2 \dots$ , where  $n$  is called the Bradford multiplier. Bradford 's law is about subjects distributed over a range of sources. On any one subject, a few groups of core journals provide 1/3 of the articles on that subject, a medium number of less core journals will provide another 1/3 of the number peripheral journals will provide the final 1/3 of the articles on that subject. For example, if you did a literature search on the topic of library service to the visually handicapped and you found 300 citations, according to Bradford's law of scattering, you did discover that 100 of these citations came from a core group of 5 journals, another 100 citations came from a group of 25 less core journals, and the final 100 citations came from peripheral journals.

Bradford 's law of scattering is well known to documentalists and librarians, for whom it original exposition demonstrated what must have been intuitively obvious. Bradford in his classic documentation, put it this way: “Articles of interest to a specialist must occur not only in the periodicals specializing in his subject, but also from time to time, in other periodicals, which grow in number as the relation of their fields to that of his subject lessens and the number of articles on his subject in each periodical, diminishes. In other words, no matter what the specialty, a relatively small core journals will amount for as much as 90 percent of the attempt together 100 percent of it will add journals to core at an exponential rate.

Parks and Riggs (1993) found that less than 18 percent of all tertiary institutions require that librarians publish to achieve promotion and tenure.

### **Publication outlets for academic librarians**

Librarians produce different types of publications and products, including newsletters, journals, bulletins, fact sheets, reports, summaries, guides, videorecordings, conference proceedings, books, bibliometric and technical reports, etc. Different types of publications have different purposes and a different audience. Journals can usually be divided into three broad categories: scholarly journals, popular magazines, and trade publications (<http://www.informaworld.com>).

### **Scholarly Journals**

- Authors are recognized in their field
- Authors cite their sources in endnotes, footnotes, or bibliographies.
- Individual issues have little or no advertising.
- Articles must go through peer review or referee process.
- Articles report on scholarly research.

- Illustrations take the form of charts and graphs.
- Articles use jargon of the discipline.

### **Trade Publications**

- Authors are specialists in a certain field or industry.
- Authors often mention sources, but rarely formally cite them in bibliographies.
- Audience includes people in the industry or people seeking employment in the industry.
- There is no peer review process.
- Articles give practical information to people in industry.
- Some illustrations are included, usually charts, graphs, etc.
- Authors use jargon of the industry.

### **Popular Magazines and Newspapers**

- Authors are magazine staff members or freelance writers.
- Authors often mention sources, but rarely formally cite them in bibliographies.
- Individual issues contain advertisements.
- There is no peer review process.
- Articles are meant to inform and entertain.
- Illustrations may be numerous and colourful.
- Language is geared to the general adult audience (no specialized knowledge of jargon needed).

Librarians most often publish in refereed and non-refereed journals in the LIS field. These publications include work done by librarians in the course of carrying out research.

### **Motivating Factors**

Meeting the criteria for tenure and promotion, including the requirement to publish, comes with benefits for librarians and other academics, including: (Ocahi, 1998)

- Study leave with pay.
- Separate academic salary scale (UASS).
- Extended retirement age of 65 years.
- Conference attendance.
- Research grant.
- Sabbatical leave.

These benefits are come with expectations, which constitute the pains of the status. These requirements include:

- Bachelor's degree.
- Research and publication in recognized journals.
- Advanced degree (Masters and Ph.D degrees compulsory).

The publication requirement is an entirely new one for librarians in Nigeria. Previously, librarians has only three requirements for promotion.

- 2-4 years since the last promotion.
- Availability of vacancies.
- Certificatory performance.

The benefits of publication notwithstanding, librarians are motivated to engage in publication for various reasons. Ocahi and Nedosa (1980) assert that publication is motivated by:

- Eagerness or enthusiasm to publish
- Presence of enabling environment
- Self perception of individual librarians with respect to their role

Such self perception, according to Avemariautulu (2005), is a product of education and skills acquired in the early days of professional practice which also determine the ability to produce scholarly papers. One of the motivating factors for scholarly publications by librarians is the availability of other publications which contain the needed language for publication and how to use them. Mabawonku (2005) states that librarians are motivated to publish, especially in overseas journals, to enhance their visibility and satisfy the need of their employers.

### **Factors Militating against Publication**

The literature is replete with the barriers to publication by librarians. Powell (1997) postulates that despite the benefits of publications to librarians, they do not conduct enough research and publication. Among the reasons for low publication output by librarians according to Waldhart (1980), is that, librarians “fail to understand the purpose of publication, its limitation or how it might be effectively used.” Blick (1984), believes that librarians find publication lacking in practical applications or mission orientation. Onohwakpor and Tiemo (2006) summarize the limitation as ignorance about where to publish. White and Monemee (1978) identify lack of interest as a constraint on publication output. Many studies attribute low publication output to poor education, which hinders the acquisition of adequate skills in research, skill, and identification of research problems (Blick, 1984; Aina, 1997; Ocahi and Nedosa, 1998; Powell, et al., 2002; Avemariautulu, 2005.)

Another important factor is time. Swisher (1986) notes that librarians are always engaged more in their daily routine than in publishing. Blick (1984) and Sedikadiwa (2005) include lack of funds a hindrance to publication. Moahi (2007) mentions lack of time and inadequate publications skills as part of the problem.

### **Methodology**

The descriptive survey method was employed for this study. Both academic staff from the department of library and information science and the academic staff from the university library, Abraka made up the population. The population of academic librarians from the library is sixteen, while those from the department is thirteen, for a total population of 29.

A questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A elicited demographic information while section B elicited information on the publication output. The data were analyzed with simple percentages.

### **Findings and Discussions**

#### **Section A: Bio-Data**

**Table I: Educational qualifications**

Educational qualification	Frequency	Percentage
B.Sc.	4	13.8 percent
BLS	8	27.6 percent
PGD	7	24.1 percent
MLS	6	20.7 percent
Ph.D.	4	13.8 percent
Total	29	100 percent

A majority of the respondents are BLS holders.

**Table II: Gender**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	20	69 percent
Female	9	31 percent
Ph.D.	4	13.8 percent
Total	29	100 percent

More than two-thirds of the respondents are male.

**Table III: Distribution of respondents by age**

Age	Frequency	Percentage
30-39 years	16	55.2 percent
40-49 years	8	27.6 percent
50-59 years	4	13.8 percent
Above 60	1	3.4 percent
Total	29	100 percent

A majority of the respondents are between the ages of 30-39 years.

**Table IV: Years of experience**

Years of experience	Frequency	Percentage
1-5 years	6	20.7 percent
6-10 years	8	27.6 percent
11-15 years	9	31 percent
16-20 years	4	13.8 percent
Over 20	2	6.9 percent
Total	29	100 percent

Most respondents have worked between 1-15 years.

**Table V: Academic status/designation**

Academic status	Frequency	Percentage
Graduate assistant	4	13.8 percent
Assistant lecturer/librarian	7	24.1 percent
Librarian I, lecturer I	11	38 percent
Librarian II, lecturer II	4	13.8 percent
Senior librarians/lecturer	3	10.3 percent
Total	29	100 percent

A majority of the respondents are librarian I/lecturer I.

**Section B: analysis of research findings**

**Table VI: Publication in the last two years**

Publications	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	12	41.4 percent
No	17	58.6 percent
Total	29	100 percent

The table indicates that majority of the respondents have not published in the last two years.

**Table VII: Attendance at conferences**

Attendance to conference	Frequency	Percentage
Never attended	10	34.5 percent
2 years ago	4	13.8 percent
3 years ago	5	17.2 percent
5 years ago	4	13.8 percent
Over five years	6	20.7 percent
Total	29	100 percent

A large majority of the respondents do not attend conferences frequently or have never attended.

**Table VIII: Knowledge of journals**

Knowledge of journals	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	5	17.2 percent
No	17	58.6 percent
Undecided	7	24.2 percent
Total	29	100 percent

More than half the respondents report a lack of knowledge of journals

**Table IX: Publications in journals**

Publications in journals	Frequency	Percentage
Emerald	5	17.2 percent
Library Philosophy and Practice	12	41.4 percent
Nigeria Educators	9	31 percent
Not indicated	3	10.4 percent
Total	29	100 percent

About half of respondents have published in *Emerald* or *Nigeria Educators*, while a little over 40 percent have published in *Library Philosophy and Practice*.

**Table X: Motivating factors for publishing**

Motivating factors	Frequency	Percentage
For promotion	15	17.2 percent
Contribute to knowledge	11	41.4 percent
For pleasure	3	31 percent
Total	29	100 percent

Almost all respondents publish in order to be promoted or to contribute to knowledge.

**Table XI: Barriers to publication output**

Barrier	Frequency	Percentage
Weak/poor research orientation	5	17.2 percent
Too much demand by daily work	10	34.5 percent
Lack of academic freedom	4	13.8 percent
Rating of journal titles	7	24.2 percent
Lack of interest	3	10.3 percent
Total	29	100 percent

A majority of the respondents are of the view that too much demand by daily work in the library and department respectively stand as a hindrance to publication output. A majority of respondents have not been promoted for more than ten years. A majority of respondents have also not published in the last two years. Most respondents have not attended conferences and do not have knowledge of journal titles in their profession. Most publications are concentrated in a few journal titles. Librarians are motivated to publish for various reasons, for promotion, to contribute to knowledge, and for pleasure. Regardless of some of the motivating factors, librarians do not generally engage in adequate research and publication. This is acknowledged by Cullen (1998) and Molholt (1998), White and Monemee (1978) who note that lack of interest is an hindrance to librarians publication.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that:



- Research time should be provided for academic librarians to allow adequate time for critical thinking that could encourage research.
- Library and information science professional associations and journal publishing firms should organize workshops and seminars on the ways, how and when for research and publishing towards the growth and development of individuals and the professionL
- Library and information science lecturers should always review their curriculum to accommodate new research skills and methods.

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