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Involvement of Library personnel in the Application of Information and Communication Technologies in Academic Libraries in Bayelsa and Delta States

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Abstract

This research was carried out to survey the involvement of library personnel in the application of information and communication technologies in academic libraries in Bayelsa and Delta States. The descriptive survey design was the research method adopted for the study where 198 questionnaires were retrieved and used for analysis. It was found out from the study library personnel in academic libraries in Bayelsa and Delta States were not highly involved in ICT application process. It is recommended that library personnel in academic libraries in Bayelsa and Delta States be carried along and be involved in the ICT application and implementation process so that such project can be successful.

Key words: ICT planning and implementation, involvement of library personnel

Introduction

As society becomes more complex and dependent on technology, the need for a proactive approach to an organization's communication and dissemination of information through the application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) is inevitable. Akanni (2008) posits that the direct consequences of globalization and the Information Age which the global community finds itself calls for review and redirection of library services to meet client needs. In this regard, Nigerian libraries like their counterparts overseas are faced with the challenges of

globalization posed by revolutionary changes brought about by information and communication technologies.

Librarianship under the influence of information and communication technologies has witnessed transformation and improved professional practices; as library services now cut across geographical boundaries. Hence, Atkinson (1991), states that the emergence and development of the virtual library system in the 21st Century is redefining and extending the traditional definition of library; rendering those definitions with respect to a particular 'locality', or 'particular institution' or 'geographical region' outdated. Hence, Nigerian libraries must therefore, overcome the prevailing perspective of locality as libraries play key roles in providing the right information in the context of the global village (Akanni, 2008). However, library services could be hindered by lack of information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure thereby frustrating the effort of providing the right information to the right audience at the right time and with ease.

As such, libraries today are shifting from the traditional custodial role of information resources to the provider of service-oriented digital information resources (Williams & Channaveeraiah, 2008). Library personnel are the major stakeholders in the application of information and communication technologies in libraries geared towards providing better services in libraries. Bikha (n.d) reiterated that making successful changes in libraries as a result of ICTs intervention (i.e. ICT project or programme) should not be regarded as a straight forward undertaking. Library personnel should be involved in application of ICTs at the different levels within the academic library. Outside members from other departments and sections of the universities (i.e the stakeholders) should also be involved. Library personnels' work patterns might change; their roles, responsibilities and working relations altered, all for the sake of improving the functioning and operations of the library (Bikha, n.d).

Literature Review

Introduction of information and communication technology in libraries is not only about new processes, technology and tools; it is also about the involvement of relevant stakeholders in the management and delivery of library services including the application of ICTs in the management of libraries (Lwoga, 2011). This implies that application of ICTs in academic libraries should be done with the involvement of users for it to be effectively used and sustained.

Bikha (n.d) states that for ICT project to be successful, it needs the full support and commitment of all stakeholders. To achieve this, the library and its 'eco-system' i.e. the combination of academic faculties, departments, research units, external institutes, need to institute a process of applying information technologies. How this happens in practice may vary by university. In any case it appropriate that an ICT application body or platform be established within the library system to be in charge of the ICT application processes that can also proactively engage with all relevant stakeholders (Grimes, Zing & Hanley, 1999). As such one may suggest that an ICT application committee be established in academic libraries which work hand in hand with representative of the University ICT Committee, the Vice Chancellor, Heads of Faculties, who work towards applying shared ICT vision and strategy, serving as the foundation for ICT programmes and projects.

The persons involved in the ICT application in libraries are also referred to as stakeholders. According to Aina (2004), stakeholders are those people who have a particular interest in the outcome of a system and they should be involved. Stakeholders include internal stakeholders whose members are representing different sections of the library like the head of serials, circulation, acquisition, technical, reference, etc. External stakeholders are individual who represent parent organization/institution, like the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic (DVC) and users as part of the stakeholders can help to make sure that the application of information technologies will reflect an improvement on the library services. The reason for involving

stakeholders is to assist the University Librarian in ensuring a favourable outcome and also to ensure support and funding for the library ICT application plan (Aina, 2004). The stakeholders committee will consist of about 8 to 12 people who meet regularly during the ICT application process (Grimes, Zing & Hanley, 1999).

Muirhead (1993) reported the results of a survey funded by the British Library, Research and Development Department, of Systems Librarian posts in UK libraries. The survey revealed that for a considerable majority, there has been a widening of their role. A majority said they were involved in IT application additional to managing their library housekeeping system. Standard office automation, CD-ROM, PC-based applications, and network management were among the most frequently mentioned areas. Since librarians are stakeholders in the library, their input, insight and suggestion need to be sought for during ICT application in libraries.

Before the ICT application plan is implemented, it should be clearly communicated to the entire user community. Peterson (1989), notes that an ICT application plan should be fully discussed and publicized before it is implemented. It is an opportunity to share the library's vision with the library community. According to Grimes, Zingg and Hanley (1999), stakeholders should work in an environment that encourages participatory and strategic governance, funding and a culture of trust including communication, and widespread agreement with the principle that teaching and learning processes must drive technology application in the library. They stated further that at the California Polytechnic, this kind of environment has been evolving as role clarity, mutually developed requirements, and increasingly explicit shared processes for governance and discourse, have been refined. They opined that this balance is best described through the relationship developed between the Chief Academic Liaison (CAL), the Chief Information Officer (CIO), and Chief Academic Officer (CAO) and the library.

Rice (n.d) asserted that librarians are stakeholders whose function and activities may be impacted by the ICT application in the library. Librarians therefore are people who have information, experience, or insight that will be helpful in applying the information and communication technology and have a vested interest in the ICT project. Rice (n.d), therefore, listed areas librarians could be involved in ICT application in the library to include:

- i. Design Team Members (DTM): DTM are charged with the responsibility of executing the ICT work and would provide a critical perspective by engaging them throughout the ICT application process in the library. Their time commitment is the largest. Incentives might make it more accessible for all to participate. They are the key decision makers on what will go in the ICT application drafts and plan. Design teams are often groups of 5-10 people, representing different stakeholder groups.
- ii. Provide Input: These are stakeholders that would not be as involved as a design team member, but could have critical insight to be incorporated into the ICT development process. Input might be gathered from groups of people such as library staff through existing meetings (e.g. community partner forums, faculty curriculum committees, staff meetings, student organization meetings).
- iii. Provide Feedback: these are stakeholders that read drafts of the full ICT development in the library or portions of it, and provide feedback.
- iv. Approve the Plan: these are stakeholders that need to formally approve the ICT development programme as their support is critical.

During application of information technologies in libraries, librarians are involved in series of action directed towards the result. Librarians should be involved in playing the roles of planning, time management, costing, training, written agreement and evaluation. Aibieyi (2009) wrote that planning begins with recognizing an opportunity to exploit or a problem to deal with, establishing goals or objectives as the end result of exploiting the opportunity or solving the

problem and forecast to obtain relevant information which librarians should initiate. This implies that ICT application in libraries should be planned and implemented. Some planning premise should be established which are agreed upon and used by librarians. Ivwighrehweta and Onoriode (2011) and Schwalbe (2006) writes that librarians as stakeholders should be involved in all the roles in the information and communication technology application process which involves project planning, policy formulation, attending meetings, execution processes, monitoring, controlling and project closing processes which include formalizing acceptance, archiving files, closing out contracts, documenting lesson learnt, etc. This is important for proper application of ICT to academic library services.

Table 1 Involvement of Library personnel in the Application of ICTs in Academic Libraries of Bayelsa and Delta States

I am involved in the application of ICT in the library by	Agree	Disagree	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Being part of the Information and communication technology planning process	0 (0%)	198 (100%)	1.0	±1.0
Policy design for integration of ICT	0 (0%)	198 (100%)	1.0	±1.0
Attending ICT development meetings	20 (10.1)	178(90.9%)	1.1	±0.9
Providing insight to development of ICT programmes	18 (9.1%)	180(90.9%)	1.1	±0.9
Being a member of ICT development committee	22(11.1%)	176(88.9%)	1.1	±0.9
Receiving training for ICT development and its application in the library	0 (0%)	198 (100%)	1.0	±1.0
Being part of the Information and communication technology implementation processes	0 (0%)	198 (100%)	1.0	±1.0
Formalizing Agreement / acceptance for ICT application	0 (0%)	198 (100%)	1.0	±1.0
Closing out contracts for ICT application	16 (8.1%)	182(91.9%)	1.1	±0.9
Project conceptualization or initiation	18 (9.1%)	180(90.9%)	1.1	±0.9
Taking part in the ICT implementation processes	28(14.1%)	170(85.9%)	1.1	±0.9
Taking part in monitoring of the ICT	32(16.2%)	166(83.8%)	1.2	±0.8

application project				
Data input and file archiving	31(15.7%)	167(84.3%)	1.2	±0.8
Documenting lessons learnt in ICT application process	0 (0%)	198 (100%)	1.0	±1.0
Managing time for ICT application project	0 (0%)	198 (100%)	1.0	±1.0
Weighted Mean			1.1	±0.9

From Table 1 majority of librarians in academic libraries in Bayelsa and Delta States were not involved in ICT planning process, policy design for integration of ICT, received training for ICT development and application and taking part in ICT implementation process as revealed by 198 (100%) respondents with $M = 1.0$ and $SD = 1.0$ respectively. The weighted mean (M) = 1.1 and Standard Deviation (SD) = ± 0.9 showed that librarians are not fully involved in the application of ICTs in academic libraries in Bayelsa and Delta states.

The finding in table 1 is that majority of librarians in academic libraries in Bayelsa Delta states were not fully involved in ICT planning process, policy design for integration of ICT, received training for IT development and application and taking part in ICT implementation process in the libraries. This finding is in contrast with that of Muirhead (1993) who reported that for considerable majority of librarians, there has been a widening of their role and were involve in ICT application in addition to managing their library housekeeping functions. What this implies is that librarians in academic libraries in Bayelsa and Delta states are not fully involved in the application of ICT in their libraries which can lead to breakdown and failure of ICT projects, since they are going to be the people to use and manage them.

Conclusion

It is however concluded that majority of librarians in academic libraries in Bayelsa and Delta States were not involved in ICT planning process including policy design for integration of ICT and taking part in ICT implementation process.

Recommendation

It is recommended that majority of librarians in academic libraries in Bayelsa and Delta States be carried along by involving them in the ICT planning process including policy design for integration of ICT and taking part in ICT implementation process. This will bring sense of belonging and librarians as stakeholders can contribute to the overall success or failure of the ICT implementation process.

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