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Awareness of Library 2.0 and Participating in the Global Discussion among Librarians in Southwest Nigeria Universities

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Introduction

Libraries use a variety of tools and techniques to and devise services to support the requirements of their users. Computer-based linking of sources and users has become more pronounced. The accessibility of electronic resources tempts users to satisfy their information needs beyond the four walls of the library. As the Internet has become an integral part of everyday life, librarians, like any other professional group, must attempt to make sense of these changes within their domain of expertise and engage with the opportunities and challenges raised.

The library has not escaped considerable discussion about the potential change afforded by ICT, particularly “Web 2.0” and social media. It is hard to sell this concept in most developing countries, since half the libraries are unequipped or and many librarians have not been trained to make these changes. Libraries of developing countries differ greatly. Some who are trying to implement innovations find it hard because only a small percentage of the population uses the Internet or computers regularly. Most users are not familiar with how modern libraries operate.

Library 2.0

“Library 2.0” is a term believed to have been coined by Michael Casey (Miller, 2006b). With Library 2.0 there is focus on going beyond the library building to offer ways of bringing together data held in individual libraries to use the transformational power of yjr Web (Miller, 2006a). Library 2.0 is associated with technologies such as blogs, wikis, podcasts, RSS feeds, etc., which facilitate a socially-connected Web.

Maness (2006), defines “Library 2.0” as “the application of interactive, collaborative, and multi-media web-based technologies to web-based library services and collections.” Limiting the definition to web-based services avoids confusion and makes the term more useful in professional discourse. Maness further states that a theory for Library 2.0 can be understood to have four essential elements:

- User-centered.
- Provides a multi-media experience.
- Socially rich.
- Communally innovative.

The State of ICT in Nigerian University Libraries

Because of harsh economic conditions and government apathy, the content and quality of services of most Nigerian university libraries have deteriorated. Ajakaye (2004) decries the cumbersome, time-wasting, and rigid policies and practices of traditional libraries and librarians:

In the libraries, a patron undergoes a rigorous training on the cataloguing system, meets most times in the Nigerian libraries, rather disinterested-looking officials, spends more than half hour looking for the only book available, gets to know later that it had been borrowed, or even gets the book only to discover that some very relevant portions have been made away with. In the Internet, the same material is available to several different users at the same minute, same second, same hour worldwide. The truth, which cannot be disproved, is that with the Internet, a lot more fresh ideas are available to the students or the researcher than any library could handle.

With the installation of the ICT in the library, most of the antisocial attitudes and malpractices from library staff and students, like delinquency and mutilation of pages of books and journals, respectively, will be abolished. Any university library without a functional ICT connectivity will eventually become extinct. This is why Ajayi (2003) says that:

Any industry that sidelines ICT has simply signed a “death warrant” on its continued relevance. The library represents one area that has experienced this revolution. The fact that we live in knowledge based society with the need for universal access has made it necessary for the library to redefine its role and mode of service delivery. The traditional “brick and mortar” libraries need to give way to libraries that are not limited by geography. It is essential for libraries to reinvent themselves if they hope to develop and facilitate access to information in this digital age.

A survey of information science in Nigeria reveals a catalogue of problems and gaps. These include a towering infrastructural inadequacy, seemingly insurmountable problems of human and financial resources, lack of access to necessary information and resources for learning, and poor communication among key players in the library schools. The most acute problem arises from an erratic power supply. Personal computer users are the greatest sufferers as very often they cannot justify spending large sums of money (sometimes more than the cost of the computers themselves) on stabilizers and an uninterruptible power supply. The depth of frustration when the power supply fails three or four times within a two-hour session or remains down for an hour, or for a whole day, has to be experienced to be appreciated.

According to Njoku (2008), the challenges facing the information profession in Nigeria and Africa as a whole are linked to the following:

- Energy crisis – frequent power interruptions restrict all computer-related activities
- Poor communications infrastructure
- Poor funding – information and communication technology (ICT) are available only to a few privileged workplaces in private sector organizations, universities, research institutes and a few government establishments
- Lack of recognition of the profession – until recently, the profession was seen as reserved for people with little or no ambition and for those who were not intelligent enough to gain admission to another course of study
- Poor standardization of the practice of the profession – no accreditation, no best practices
- Lack of credentialing in the profession – anyone can be employed to do the work of a librarian and there is no set standard as to what competencies are necessary to be a qualified information scientist/librarian
- Many library schools teach a traditional library curriculum. and information science and technology are still at the budding stage

- Non-acceptance of librarians by some other information professionals
- Ill-equipped workplace – compensation, physical environment, and available resources are poor

This paper presents the report of a pilot study seeking to find out the level of knowledge regarding Library 2.0, attitudinal disposition towards and perceived support of librarians towards library 2.0 innovations, and extent of participation of these professionals in the ongoing global discussion. The outcome of the study will inform advocacy for policy formulation and implementation to strengthen professional practice.

Methodology

This study was a cross-sectional survey which employed a structured questionnaire to collect information from respondents selected from universities within Southwest Nigeria. At the time of this research, 33 universities had received Federal Government charter to operate within the geopolitical zone. These comprise federal, state, and private institutions. This region is predominantly populated by Yoruba-speaking Nigerians, although most metropolitan cities where a majority of the universities are sited have multi-ethnic expression accommodating people who are there as a result of the work they do directly or indirectly with the universities. The Southwest territory is noted for agricultural, commercial, and industrial enterprises, which are linked with university activities. The universities are an important asset for growth, since raw materials from the communities are converted to products for community development through research, policy formulation, and implementation.

Population of Interest

The target population as stated in the title is librarians in Southwest Nigerian universities. This pilot study was restricted to three universities, but there are considerations that will allow cautious generalization to others in the region. The 33 universities can be categorized into first, second, third, and possibly fourth generation; into federal and state; and by location in terms of cosmopolitan, urban, and semi-urban setting. Universities in the same category have similar characteristics, especially in terms of size of faculty, infrastructure, funding, proximity to Internet Service Providers, and so forth. It may be assumed that a similar study in any of the other universities will yield results that are not remarkably different.

Results and Discussion

The study enrolled 31 participants in a pilot study among academic librarians in 3 universities located in the SW region of Nigeria. The majority (80.6 percent) of the surveyed participants hold a master's degree in librarianship and 48.4 percent of them have at least 10 years of working experience in the library. There were 17 (54.8 percent) males and 14 (45.2 percent) females.

Table 1. Frequency distribution of demographic characteristics of respondents in this study

Demographic Variables	Respondent in this study N=31	
	Frequency (N)	Percent
Institutions		
University of Ibadan	15	48.4
Babcock university	5	16.1
Olabisi Onabanjo University	11	35.5
Gender		
Male	17	54.8
Females	14	45.2
Age		
30 -34	3	9.7
35 – 39	12	38.7
40 – 44	8	25.8
45 – 49	6	19.4
50 and above	2	6.5
Educational Attainment		
Bachelors degree	6	19.4
Masters degree	25	80.6
Doctorate	-	-
Working experience (Years)		
<2	4	13
2 – 5	7	22.6
6 – 9	5	16.1
10 and above	15	48.4

Only 9 (29 percent) of the surveyed respondents in the study had knowledge of library 2.0 prior to this study and 67.7 percent were hearing of it for the first time during the survey. On a 12-point scale, participants scored a mean of 3.9 with a standard deviation of 1.94. Seven respondents were able to identify RSS feeds and podcast while 8 (25.8 percent) could accurately identify open access.

Table 2. Frequency distribution showing respondents with good understanding of Library 2.0 concepts and components.

Variables	Respondent in this study N=31	
	Frequency (N)	Percent
Knowledge		
General awareness of Library 2.0	9	29
Respondents just hearing in this study.	21	67.7
RSS feeds and podcast connected to Library 2.0	7	22.6
Open access a free subscription	8	25.8
Blogs and Facebook for information dissemination.	9	29

Nearly 80 percent indicated their willingness to participate in Library 2.0. The overall attitudinal disposition toward Library 2.0, measured on an 18-point scale, had a mean of 10.39 (SD=4.26).

Table 3. Frequency distribution showing respondents with positive attitudinal disposition towards Library 2.0

Attitudinal Variables	Respondent in this study N=31	
	Frequency (N)	Percent
Not apprehensive about changes in information world.	19	61.3
Traditional structure should remain	10	32.3
Willing to participate in Library 2.0	24	77.4
Will resist any innovation to change traditional library	5	16.2

Perceived support for Library 2.0 innovations was expressed by all respondents in the study, who reported that they will educate themselves regarding the new information culture. Perceived support measured on an 18-point scale showed a mean of 14.23 (SD=2.86) even though some (19.4 percent) viewed it as a departure from the traditional role of the library.

Table 4. Frequency distribution of respondents with perceived support for Library 2.0

Perceived Support Variables	Respondent in this study N=31	
	Frequency (N)	Percent
Recognition of global information change and need for libraries to respond positively.	31	100.0
See this change as shifting away from traditional role of the library.	6	19.4
Will Educate self regarding the new information culture connected to Library 2.0	31	100.0

Table 5. Frequency distribution showing participation in the ongoing Library 2.0 Agenda

Participation Variables	Respondents (N=31)	
	Frequency (N)	Percent
Infrastructure for information resource processing in place compatible with Library 2.0	24	77.4
Respondents using computers at work.	29	93.5
Have setup Blog	1	3.2
Have had training or workshop experience on Library 2.0.	0	0.0

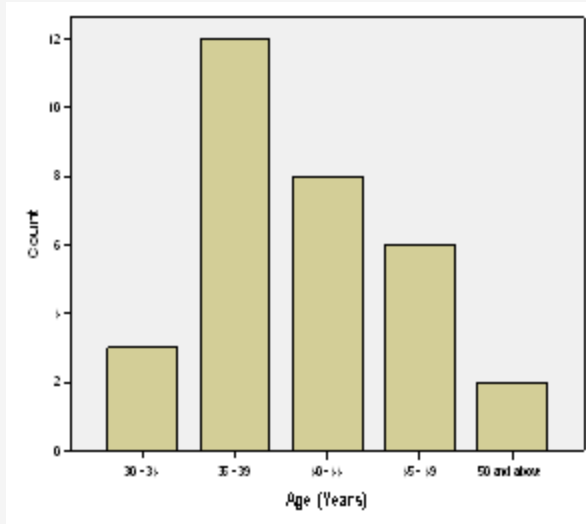


Table 6. Summaries of descriptive statistics for major variables in this study.

Variables	N	Maximum Point scale	Mean	Standard Error of Mean (SEM)	Standard Deviation	Variance
Knowledge and awareness about Library 2.0	31	12	3.9	0.34	1.94	3.757
Attitudinal disposition towards Library 2.0	31	18	10.39	0.76	4.256	18.112
Perceived support for Library 2.0	31	18	14.23	0.51	2.86	8.180
Participation in Library 2.0	31	6	3.68	0.16	0.87	0.760

A summary of descriptive statistics suggests insufficient awareness and understanding of what constitutes Library 2.0, since on a 12- point scale, the respondents scored a mean of 3.9 (SD 1.94). When participants were compared on the basis of institutions, analysis of variance for knowledge ($F=0.257$; $P=0.775$), attitudinal disposition towards library 2.0 ($F=0.936$; $P=0.404$), Perceived support for library 2.0 ($F=1.77$; $P=0.188$), there were no significant variations between institution. However, when analysis of variance was considered for levels of participation between the institutions there was observed a significant variation ($F=12.33$; $P<0.0001$), with Babcock University showing more tendency of participating although the institution level of participation was not satisfactory (Mean = 3.68; SD 0.87). Most important is the observed lack of formal workshops in this region to acquaint librarians with the emerging concept of Library 2.0.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is clear that all surveyed participants recognized this innovation in information evolution as a global trend that requires a local responsiveness that would align local players quickly enough to keep them relevant. The use of Web 2.0 technologies will constitute a meaningful and substantive change in the history of libraries. Developing countries need to capture this vision and participate in order to remain relevant.

The researcher makes the following recommendation with particular reference to Nigeria.

- The Nigerian Library Association (NLA) should continue in its effort to place the association in the global limelight. Cooperative efforts with the US Department of State are a welcome development. The NLA president was nominated for the International Visitors Leadership Programme (IVLP) to tour libraries in the US as well as attend the ALA annual conference. The IVLP was a four week programme, with 21 people from different countries visiting five states in the US. This helped the association build new partnerships.
- Senior Librarians should endeavour to develop a mentoring circle and expose young librarians to the world of opportunities in digital terrain. For instance two Nigerians, won the ALA/Ingenta Research Award. All newcomers to the profession should be encouraged to apply for this and other kind of programs in support of career development in LIS.
- Librarians should not wait for the government or employers to train them in ICT. They should be self-reliant by paying for their basic training in ICT, at least on part-time basis. This initiative is being taken by very few library professionals in the country.
- Government should exempt ICT equipment from customs and excise tax so that the prices of such equipment will be drastically reduced and become affordable.
- The government should set up powerful V-SATs and pay for adequate bandwidth in all federal and state tertiary institutions, and encourage private institutions to do likewise.
- Tech- savvy staff are needed, who will be willing to adapt to change and new skills to be able to succeed in the Web world.
- The National University Commission (NUC) should implement, as soon as possible, its proposal to sponsor university librarians to tour university libraries in the US and UK. This will enable the librarians to be exposed to the ways in which ICT is used in offering modern library services.
- The government should increase funding to Nigerian Universities, in order to implement the National ICT Policy.
- Solution to the energy crisis in the country should be a priority to the government, so as to give room to ICT infrastructure development.
- And finally, there should be a set standard on what competencies are necessary to be a qualified librarian. To this end, the NLA should intensify efforts in getting its members registered by the *Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria*.

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