

THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIST

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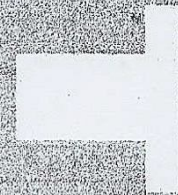
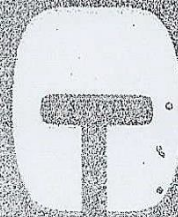
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OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

The Information Technologist: An International Journal of Information Communication Technology (ICT) is a referred Journal by Nigerians and foreign renowned Scholars who have distinguished themselves in the field of Information Communication Technology (ICT)

Essentially the journal concerns itself with the pervasive impact and the changes in the basic character of library and information operations and services occasioned by the use of technology.

The journal deals mainly with the publication of the results of empirical research in the field of Library, Information Science, Communication and Information Technology as they affect Developing Countries. The journal is also devoted to articles of high quality on the theoretical aspects of its area of concern. Book reviews, letters to the editor, news items and other brief communications are also welcome.

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The Information Technologist: An International Journal of Information Communication Technology (ICT) is published twice a year (June and December) by the Association of Information Professionals of Nigeria.

EDITORIAL

This is the fifth issue of our journal, *The Information Technologists: An International Journal of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)*. On behalf of the editorial board members, I heartily congratulate our contributors and assure them that the sustainability and timely publication of our journal is guaranteed.

Once again it is our intention to ensure that the peer review procedures are greatly accelerated. This is to make it possible for manuscript to be disposed off within a time frame of not more than one month. The editorial board is fully equipped with material and human resources, and we are persuaded by the fact that when a journal comes out regularly, its sustenance is guaranteed. This invariably gives confidence to the subscribers and contributors to continue to associate with the journal.

In this issue of **THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIST**, articles on a variety of topics on Librarianship and Information Communication Technology (ICT) are presented.

Our lead article by Dr. E. Camble and Michael Alfred Obaje focused on the Use of CD-ROM Databases by Staff and Students in the University of Jos Library.

Dr. (Mrs.) Rosemar, Agbonlahor and Oluwatoyin N. Oyekan, in their article, assessed the State of Preparedness of Students at different stages of the ICAN qualifying examination in major tuition centre in Ibadan, Nigeria using ICT in professional practice.

The article by Dr. (Mrs.) Margaret Uyoyou Ugboma and Nelson Edewor focused on the Use of E-mail in providing Library and Information Services in Higher Institution Libraries in Delta State, Nigeria.

Dr. Michael Wole Olatokun and Monsurat Funmilola Folaranmi article investigated the Adoption and Use of ICT in Private and Public Secondary Schools in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Fidelis O. Chete, Oruoghor Ovuakpor and Frances C. Chete in their article investigated the Use of the Internet among Students of the

Faculty of Physical and Life Sciences,
University of Benin, Benin City.

The article by Oseghale Osagie examined the Perception and Use of ICT resources in Kenneth Dike Library by Postgraduate Students of the University of Ibadan.

Godwin B. Afebende and Denis Ayana did a Survey of the Use of Electronic Resources (ERS) in Libraries. Specifically, their article focused on Students in two selected academic libraries in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Josiah I. Adeyomoye and Pauline Adeniran in their article, evaluated the Use of the Internet Facilities as an Information Source both for teaching and learning in the University.

Dr. Chizoba Nwora "Zee" Madueke in his article synthesized different theories on the Social, Cultural and Economic Impact of Globalizing Information Technology in developing countries from the African Perspective.

The Article by E. J. Garba and J. A. Garba examined the Challenges facing ICT-Driven distance Education and Proffered Solutions on how to curb these challenges to ensure effective and sustainable ICT-driven distance education in Nigeria.

Michael Alfred Obaje, Augustine Sani and Victoria Lawal in their article investigated Internet Access and Usage of the main Library by Staff and Students of the University of Jos.

From the Editor's Column, is a work which examined the radical redefinition of the nature and operation of the information profession accessioned by the advances made in Information Technology.

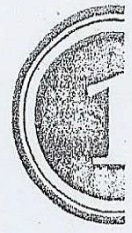
Finally, we sincerely congratulate our contributors once more and wish our numerous readers well.

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TECHNOLOGY SKILLS FOR INFORMATION HANDLING: NEW IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LIBRARY PROFESSION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the radical redefinition of the nature and operation of the information profession occasioned by the advances made in information technology. The paper demonstrates the extent the emergency of new information communication Technology (ICT) has revolutionised the basic character of the Library operations and services.

It outlines the various components of information technology and discusses the emergency of such variables as World-Wide Web (WWW), virtual library, electronic resources like databases as a big challenge for the information professional.

The paper also describes the implication of all these new technologies as they affect librarian/user relationship in the area of:

- a. who are the library users now,*
- b. who are the librarians now*
- c. the role of librarians in the face of rapidly emerging new technology*
- d. the new role of management for new information technology.*

Suggestions are made on how information professionals will overcome the enormous challenges brought about by the new trends in information technology.

The paper concludes by advising librarians and information handlers to embrace the new information technology if they must remain relevant in the scheme of things in this "new" globalizing World.

Keywords: Technology Skills, Information Handling, Library Profession, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Today's librarian and information handler who must provide information services to his clientele in this "globalised world" powered by the advances made in information technology, faces a challenging task. He must of necessity anticipate the needs of the new information community, so that the users will benefit maximally from the impact information technology has had on information use, by providing efficient and effective service.

A major goal of the librarian or information scientist, then, is to determine those new trends that are destined to become an integral part, if not the very foundation, of the information structure of the present century.

The use of computers and telecommunication in information handling has no doubt revolutionised the operations in modern libraries and information centers. It has today become a driving force for change. Librarian at all levels have recognizing this obvious

fact and making conscious efforts to be part of this "new globalizing world" driven majorly by the rapid advance in computer technology and the convergence of the information and communication technologies.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND LIBRARY ENVIRONMENT CLARIFICATION OF TERM:

An explanation is required here for the use of the word LIBRARIAN. Basically it is any one working in the area of information collection and dissemination. In this paper, no distinction is made between information scientist, documentalists, informaticists or librarian. The word Librarian will be used to encompass all working in these areas of information.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND LIBRARY ENVIRONMENT

Information technology manifests itself in library and information services by the accessibility it provides using on-line, to databanks and on-line

bibliographical databases. This is made possible by the merger of computers and telecommunications. Information technology also manifests itself, in term of service provision by the immediate access it ultimately permits user to large usually remote collection of data (Bowden 1984).

The latest in this technological drive for the provision of library services to users is the introduction of virtual library. This is basically library without walls. It could also be called digital or electronic library. Essentially it relies on virtual reality technology for the creation of highly realistic simulation and surrogations in which the user can become totally immersed, Omekwu (2002). Virtual library makes use of highly sophisticated computer and telecommunication equipment. A user can enter a virtual library, browse around it, open the pages of the book he needs. This is however done in the computer.

Apart from the reality of virtual library, other feature of the library of the present century include:

- (i) Reliance of computer and telecommunication for resource acquisition, organization and disseminations.

- (ii) Wide spread use of electronic systems for information storage and retrieval.
- (iii) The use of the internet and other electronic systems and on-line access for library co-operation

The various advances in computer hardware and software have led to the discovery of many ways of disseminating information in the world, thus making available more and more information to the ordinary as well as sophisticated users. The consequence of all these has been the advent of the so-called information super highway. This again has been made possible by computer networking, which has in a few years changed the manner in which people in various societies have access to information resources (Kiven and Shafact (2002). The situation enables the librarian to search and locate materials electronically, order online, organize electronically and disseminate electronically.

The information superhighway exemplified by the internet and more so by the world wide web (www) has made it possible for an individual anywhere in the world with a simple personal computer with enough memory and storage, and a functional telephone line to have access to millions of pages of information through various uniform

resources locator (URL) or web sites which are interlinked by search engines that move from one website to another looking for the appropriate information required (Kiven and Shafack 2002). The situation enables the librarian to search and locate materials electronically, order on-lines, organize electronically and disseminate electronically.

In view of the above therefore, the questions that arise are: who are the library users now? Who are the librarians now? What is the role of the librarian in the face of rapidly emerging new technology and finally what is the new role of library management for new information technology.

The above is the focus of this paper which addresses a case study of the library profession.

WHO ARE LIBRARY USERS NOW?

The developments in information technology as described above illicit questions such as who are the library users now. According to Saule (1991), the nature of the library user is transforming from an in-house user, looking for answers in printed sources to a remote information user looking for answers in a variety of computerized sources offered directly to him/her by a wide range of information providers, including libraries. Here the idea of

virtual library quickly comes to mind. Here again the library user does not necessarily have to come to the library as an in-house user. Using highly sophisticated computer and telecommunication equipment, it is possible to enter a virtual library, browse around its rooms and shelves, use an index or catalogue, select a book (by providing to it and touching it) open it and then read it. Of course the only place where the book exists is the computer and within the mind of the user (Omekwu, 2002).

However, some of the users still come to the library, in person, to find a variety of computerized sources. In order to provide services for both remote and in-house library users it is necessarily for the librarians to define for themselves who their users are and what the characteristics and needs of the users might be.

THE IMPLICATION FOR LIBRARIANS:-

With their drive for more user control of systems design and applications, librarians must also develop a clear sense of themselves, who we are. Can we still fit the traditional model of a librarian facilitating patron use of library collections? If our role has changed or expanded, what direction should librarianship take in view of

changing information media and technologies? What is our role in information or computer literacy? What exactly, are service obligations and mandates in the information age? This situation leads us to the next question.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF LIBRARIANS IN THE FACE OF RAPIDLY EMERGING NEW TECHNOLOGY

Today when we examine exactly how a library user, or a remote information user, might need to use information technology to find answers, our role with the information seeker becomes more like a consultant to a client than a librarian to a patron. The information seeker needs guidance, he/she needs help formulating his/her question and search strategy and to a lesser extent she needs help with individual systems protocols. The librarian is called upon in an extended advisory role to help analyse the information need, find the best source to fill the need, and give the basic support in the librarian-client interaction which is the whole information-seeking process rather than the simple question its answer.

Another model for the new role of the librarian is that of an information agent. According to Marr and Williams (1997), the word agency may suffice to describe the future role of librarians and

libraries. The librarian will have to become an agent who helps increasingly sophisticated knowledge worker accomplish more complex tasks. In other words, the librarian will carry information from the information provider or database vendor to the user, explaining to the user how the information is constructed and how it could be used.

Another important function that the libraries can play in the face of rapidly emerging new technologies is as an advocate for users' need to database vendor and software designers. Because of our training and experience in information management and retrieval, libraries are poised to be instrumental in the development of new information and instructional technology. We can assess our users need and advocate for them in market place. We can also work with database producers and vendors to create better prudent, products that address users needs as well as fill a market niche.

Finally, it is important to remember that, while information technology may demand new service approaches, and a re-examination of our service goals, we are still concerned with providing services to people on how to find answers to questions.

THE NEW ROLE FOR MANAGEMENT

Providing services in the library is part of the larger complex of library departments and functions. As information technologies develop and services approach for these technologies changes, the management structure of the library or library system will need to adapt accordingly. As users gain access to more local and remote library collection, and as users come to expect fast and direct information retrieval, library organizational structures need to respond to these expectations quickly and directly. According to Lipow (1989), the organization and management of collection development, interlibrary loan, circulation, reference, and systems functions will need to respond to the needs created by the expansion of the online catalog and other information retrieval systems.

The role of strategic and long-range planning is especially important as the roles of libraries and librarians are being re-defined. The library service mission must be viewed as essential to the survival of the library and its supporting functions, especially in terms of planning for new technologies that will be used in and out of the library itself.

CHALLENGES FOR THE NEW LIBRARIAN

In view of the rapid advances in information technology, a lot of challenges face the modern librarian who must not ignore the use of computer and telecommunication information handling. This is if they must remain relevant in the scheme of things in this "new" globalizing world.

Omekwu (2002) has outlined "a nine-point agenda for library and information professionals who will set the pace in the knowledge age" p109.

These includes:

- a. Skill, this is the need for the acquisition of computer and internet literacy in addition to profession qualification in library and information works. To function efficiently in today information environment, computer literacy is sine-quantum.
- b. Source, today, knowledge is recorded in many physical formats. These include the print sources and the electronic sources. A good knowledge of the electronic source will enable today's librarian to acquire materials from both local and remote sources.
- c. The librarian should concern himself with approaches that optional retrieval

result in less time; provide access to knowledge institution and networked resources and services”.

- d. Service – a modern librarian should be ready to provide services that will ensure, better access to information, possibilities for co-operation, resource sharing, improved productivity, up-to-date information service, efficient and affective delivery of service etc. these are the functions of the new information technology.
- e. Systems use – Today’s librarian must be up-to-date. He/she must of necessity be familiar and competent in the use of computer and internet based technologies in the provision of information. In some cases a user may need assistance especially in the use of some of these technologies to search for information. The librarian of the 21st century should be able to provide a leeway.

The above five challenges if properly addressed by today’s librarians will no doubt reposition them to face the changing task of their profession propelled by the new information technology.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, it is necessary to once more look at the central focus of this paper. As stated in the introduction, there is the need to see how the radical redefinition of the nature and operations of the introduction technology, affect the major stakeholders. It is the contention of this paper that information professionals must of necessity be information literates. According to Armstrong (2005) quoting CILIP, information literacy implies “knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner”.

The above qualities are expected of today’s librarians if they must remain relevant.

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