



Managing Academic Library Services in Nigeria in the 21st Century

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Abstract—This paper discussed on the management of library services in the 21st century. Library services like circulation, serial, cataloguing services have all improved with the aid of Information and Communication Technology. Libraries are now introducing social media service to cater for the tech savvy clientele. The paper also focused on the impact of information technology on library routine services like circulation, serial, electronic library, Online Public Access Catalogue and social media services. Furthermore, the paper identified challenges faced with management of Library services in the 21st Century. The study recommended change of LIS curricula to suit the application of ICT in Libraries, need for Librarians to have the requisite ICT skills and improve funding for procurement of ICT infrastructure.

Keywords- library; library service; ICT; 21st century

I. INTRODUCTION

Library and Information Science (LIS) is an old profession and dates back to the period before paper was invented in China. LIS is a profession that deals with the collection, organization, retrieval and use of information resources to clientele. “Librarianship is the discipline and profession that is concerned with helping individuals obtain reliable information to increase their knowledge in all spheres of their lives from the cumulated information store of mankind” [1]. It is a profession that deals mostly with rendering library services to users and the community it serves.

Academic libraries are libraries that are found in higher educational institutions of learning like the Universities, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics. Academic libraries serve to meet the information needs of its clientele and serve as the backbone of its parent institution by providing current information resources. Academic libraries provide information services to students, faculty members and its immediate community with a mission of aiding research, teaching and learning. Academic library services include circulation, serial service, social media service, selective dissemination of information and current awareness services among others.

ICT in libraries is one of the most exciting thing that has happen in the field of science and technology which has brought tremendous changes to Library and Information Technology. Application of ICT to library functions has

changed libraries from store houses for books to an intellectual information centre where computers and telecommunication devices are used to improve routine library operations in order to have access to global information resources.

In Nigeria, before the advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), routine library services were mostly carried out manually. For example, acquisition services involved library staff stamping each book and assigning handwritten accession numbers, which was quite tedious and tasking. Other services like registering new users which are carried out by circulation staff required entry on registration cards to be done either handwritten or by the use of manual typewriter. Same goes for other services in the library like serial services and Selective Dissemination of Information.

II. LIBRARY SERVICES IN THE 21TH CENTURY

Library services in the 21st century are mostly done with the aid of Information and Communication Technology. Information and Communication Technology has impacted and improved all sectors of the economy and the library is not left out of this. The growth of ICT has led to increase demand for information and its changing the way to which information is handled. With ICT in libraries, Librarians are faced with a great task of incorporating ICT to the services they render. ICT has aided a fast delivery of library services as such clientele need not to spend much time within the library before they needs are meet. Furthermore, ICT has revolutionised library services in the 21st

In Nigeria, University of Ibadan was among the first tertiary institution to adopt the use of Information and Communication Technology in 1978 using CD-ROM extensively to produce bibliographic information [2]. Furthermore, over the last decade many libraries have been adopting ICT in its operations and academic libraries are leading the pact in the adoption of these technology. Information and Communication Technology could be referred to as the change agent that has led to significant advancement in library routine activities. With ICT libraries are moving from the centres of printed publication to centres of electronic sources of information where information resources are term as electronic journal, electronic books, electronic magazines among others. Libraries are expected to

provide fast and effective services especially amongst the teeming tech savvy users [3]. Most literature on students' use of electronic resources indicated that there was increased preference for e-resources over print resources because of its several advantages. This is as a result that bulk of the current generation of library users are highly tech-savvy [4]. Consequently, there is the need to provide services that will meet the needs of its users. With the advances in ICT applications in libraries, librarians are looking for new ways to meet the user's new demands and expectations. However, this has encouraged the creation of new and innovative services that would meet up with these technologies and still keep the traditional roles/functions of Libraries.

Application of ICT to library services has brought a lot of changes to library operations there by making access to knowledge more convenient to user. As a result of these, libraries in Nigeria are now spending huge sums of money to invest in infrastructural development of libraries and provision of improved technological services to meet the information needs of its 21st century library clientele in the best global best practices.

These are the following ways library services are offered in the digital age;

A. Circulation Services (Reader Services)

The circulation service is the major service that the library does because this service involves the registration of prospective library users. In the 21st century, this service is now automated. Different libraries are using different Integrated Library Software to automate their circulation functions. With the automated circulation, registration of library users becomes easy, charging and discharging of books are done within some few minutes unlike during the manual process.

Automation of circulation function makes it easier for students to search for the book/materials that are available in the library without them coming into the library. This could be done remotely from any part of the world as long as the lists of materials are present online.

There are different types of Integrated Library Management software. Some are open sources while others are proprietary. Examples of Integrated Library Management software are Millennium and Sierra by Innovative, Koha. In Nigeria the process of automating library is slow due to financial constrain and administrative bottleneck but despite that some Federal Universities in Nigeria have automated their library functions. Universities like University of Ilorin, University of Jos are operating on Koha Integrated Library Management while American University of Nigeria uses Millennium Integrated Library Management software by Innovative.

B. Serial Services

With the advent of ICT, serial publications are now in electronic format term as electronic journal and electronic newspapers. These sources of information are easily accessible from any part of the world. Among all the electronic sources of information, electronic journal are the mostly used sources of information. Due the cost of purchase and subscription, University libraries in Nigeria are coming together under the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Committee of University Librarians to form a consortium to

subscribe to these sources of information at an affordable cost. Furthermore, there are other foundations like Research4life Foundation and The Essential Electronic Agricultural Library (TEEAL) that provides these services at affordable prices especially for developing countries like Nigeria, Zambia, India, Kenya and other developing countries which the foundation covers. With these programmes, electronic journals are now easily accessible and affordable to libraries in order to meet the scholarly needs of students and faculty members.

Librarians are now left with the need to develop digital literacy skills in order to navigate the complexities of locating and searching for the needed information for its clientele and also organise literacy programmes to create awareness to the subscribe electronic journal and also train students and lecturers on how to get their information within the shortest possible time.

C. Electronic Library Services

Electronic library could be referred to as library without walls. Electronic libraries are libraries that use computers and telecommunication devices to provide information resources in digital formats to its patrons. Many academic libraries could be termed as hybrid libraries providing access to electronic resources and services while maintaining and supporting the use of physical collections housed in the library building. With the rapid growth and penetration of internet in the 21st century, students and faculty members now have access to vast amount of information resources online with just a click of the mouse [4].

Electronic library services has led to the provision of Online Reference Services to clientele that are not able to come to the library and this service could be done by sending messages through email to the librarian and wait for his response.

Traditionally, before the digital age, librarian's duty is to select and organise sources of information for easy retrieval and use. But with electronic library services, the librarian directs users on how to get the information he needs in the world of information overload. Despite the benefits attributed to the use of electronic library, print sources of information continue to be available since it's not all the users that have the requisite skills to access networked resources. It therefore becomes necessary for librarians to provide information literacy training to all its users.

D. Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC)

Online Public Access Catalogue has been in existence since the early 1980. Catalogue is an entry that contains the information about a library material. Cataloguing is the process of getting the detailed description of library materials.

Cataloguing is the backbone of Librarianship, as such it leads clientele to the information they require [5]. Before the advent of ICT, only catalogues (book, card or sheaf) were used to get the bibliographic information of library materials, even in the digital age, catalogue cards are still in use in some universities library in Nigeria. Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) is an online information retrieval system which uses Boolean search interface to retrieval records of library information resources.

OPAC is defined as an information retrieval system characterized by short bibliographic records, mainly of books, journals, and audiovisual materials available in a particular library could be accessed remotely or within a local network [6]. Access to the list by library patrons, staff and the public is usually through computer terminals within the library, home, café etcetera through the Internet. OPAC consist of nothing more than a simple index of the bibliographic data cataloged in the system which allows searching the entire catalogue online, conveniently and quickly, using one or more search criteria. Management of OPAC in some libraries has brought improved library services to users.

These OPAC are mostly modules in an Integrated Library Management Software. With OPAC, longer time spent searching through the catalogue cabinets have been eliminated with a click of a mouse. Software like KOHA and MILLENIUM have OPAC modules.

E. Social Media Services

The shift from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 has brought a lot of changes to web technology. At present, we are in the era of Web 3.0 which is referred to as the intelligent web. Though web 3.0 is in its initial stage it has assisted users to access the web through multiple devices like television and mobile phones [7].

Furthermore, Web 3.0 has led to Library 3.0 where libraries are now learning spaces conducive for exchanging ideas, experimentation and solving problems [8]. In the context of this study, web 2.0 applications were discussed not dwelling much into web 3.0. Web 2.0 is a more interactive web interface than the static Web 1.0. Web 2.0 is defined as the emergent generation of web tools and applications [9]. These applications include social networking sites, blogs, Really Simple Syndication (RSS) and podcasts among others. Among these applications, social networking sites are the most widely used.

Social networking sites are web-based services that allow individuals to either construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, or articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, view, and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system [10].

These sites are interactive and it enables individuals to exchange or share information and digital contents like videos, pictures and instant messaging. Libraries in developed countries have incorporated social media into the services they render. With social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp clientele can be informed about new trends and services the library offer through the creation of library Facebook pages and clientele following the library twitter accounts.

In Nigeria, academic libraries have started implementing its usage with no clear cut policy to back its use for library routine services. Research studies in Nigeria have found that social media sites like Facebook, Twitter are used to market library services and for provision Reference Service[11][12].

Furthermore, in a study [13], a respondent stated that “important doesn’t really do it justice. Any library that is not using Web 2.0 technology is not only hurting itself but it is also hurting the future of all libraries”. With these social media platforms librarians can now interact with their

clienteles on a real time basis, so also share and collaborate with other institution to improve service delivery.

III. CHALLENGES FACED BY ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN THE 21TH CENTURY IN NIGERIA

Academic library services in the 21st Century are faced with the following challenges:

- Inadequate power supply is the major problem faced in Nigeria and since these facilities rely on power supply to function these becomes a problem and affects the use of these library services.
- Librarians not having the requisite skills to effectively manage these facilities
- Inadequate funding from the University management to procure the necessary equipment.
- Library School curriculum is outdated and does not reflect the changing environment and does not also include emerging technologies in the field of LIS.
- Attitudinal problem of librarians not willingly to embrace change and still prefer the traditional way of rendering services.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are proffered;

- Provision of alternative power supply that will complement the general power in order for equipment and facilities to be functional always.
- Librarians should acquire the relevant skills to in order to provide better services to its clientele through training and attending workshops and conferences.
- The Library and Information Science curricula should be reviewed in order to meet international standards. The curricula should be more practical oriented rather than been theoretical. The universities should work together with the Nigerian University Commission (NUC), Library Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) and the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) to come up with a minimum standard required for each Library school in the country.
- Funds should be readily available to procure the needs infrastructure and for training of librarians in fields that will meet the yearnings of librarians in the 21st century.
- Librarians are expected to embrace the change and join in developing new policies and trends in the profession. Also for them to know that technology is not here to displace them rather it’s here to make library routine services better and efficient.

V. CONCLUSION

Academic libraries are the backbone of the university as such Librarians need to recognize the changes that have taken place over time. Many library functions have been migrating to an information technology driven environment. Information Technology has led to improved library services in the 21st Century. Academic libraries are gradually

integrating ICT to improve their operation due increase in budgetary allocation.

To satisfy the information needs of their clientele in an information driven world, there is need for Librarians to acquire the relevant skills in information technology to overcome the challenges that could probably suffice in this age.

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