



**PROCEEDINGS OF THE 62ND NIGERIAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE
ON PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVENESS THROUGH
INNOVATIVE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICE
DELIVERY IN NIGERIA, PORT HARCOURT 7TH-12TH JULY, 2024.**

Garden City 2024





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PREFACE

The need for Libraries to Promote Diversity and Inclusiveness in an ever-changing world has now become inevitable as more and more hate, crimes, ethnic violence and religious intolerance are being reported. Libraries, therefore, must strive to offer new innovative library services and offer diverse collections of resources that represent variety of cultural experiences across marginalized communities. Also, libraries must commit to providing a conducive and welcoming learning spaces for all categories of diverse user groups, including the people living with disabilities. Diversity and inclusion have always been essential in the library and information science profession. Libraries are uniquely equipped to lead the campaign in celebrating diversity among their varied user groups and ensure inclusivity. In line with the above, the Nigerian Library Association held her 62nd National Conference at Port Harcourt, Rivers State from 7th to 12th July, 2024 with the Theme “*Promoting Diversity and Inclusiveness through Innovative Library and Information Service Delivery in Nigeria*”. It is a theme that is considered very apt in the face of rising cases of gender violence, multidimensional poverty, communal conflicts and religious intolerance across communities in Nigeria.

The conference tagged “**Garden City 2024**”, attracted 120 papers on the various sub-themes of the conference theme. Each submission was reviewed by selected experts/professionals in the relevant areas of Librarianship and Information Science. After each paper was subjected to scrutiny by the reviewers, 80 papers were selected and presented at the Conference. The selected papers were assembled in this book of proceedings. The papers in this book provide detailed overview and discussions of the key concepts and issues underlying the imperativeness of libraries of different types to take a center stage in addressing diversity and inclusiveness across communities in Nigeria.

To this end, this Book will provide thoughtful insights on the impact between collaboration, digital libraries, public libraries, academic libraries, knowledge Organizations, Social Media platforms, advocacy, digital device, digital literacy and so on and their implications to promoting diversity and inclusiveness in Nigeria. We specially thank the participants of the 62nd NLA National Conference 2024, for their unalloyed cooperation, support and contributions over the years. It is our expectation that you find this book of proceedings interesting, educative and stimulating.

Dr. Lawal Umar

Vice President & Chairman, National Organizing Committee

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ACADEMIC LIBRARIES' CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PROMOTION OF DIGITAL INCLUSION IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA.

By

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to examine the academic libraries contribution to the promotion of digital inclusion in Rivers State. The study adopted a survey design. The study was guided by three objectives and research questions. The population of the study consists of 62 librarians across 4 academic institutions in Rivers State (Rivers State University Library, Donald Ekong Library of University of Port Harcourt, Dame Goodluck Jonathan Automated Library of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Library and Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic Library). The study used the complete census sampling technique. A questionnaire was used for the generation of primary data from respondents. Mean was used to answer the research questions. The findings amongst others revealed that academic libraries foster digital inclusion by promoting digital literacy programmes that enhance users access to technology and foster access to digital content and resources, thus promoting digital inclusion. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations were made that the Government and other stakeholders should ensure that libraries are adequately funded to enable them to integrate more digital literacy programmes to help cushion the effect of the digital divide. Again, Librarians should ensure that digital content and resources available in the library are regularly updated to cater for users who may not have access to other sources of digital content among others.

Keywords: Academic Libraries, Digital Divide, Digital Inclusion and Rivers State.

Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has formed a new era of connectivity and convenience, connecting the world as a global village and fostering collaboration among members of the society. Digital technology has been of great benefits and has become an important aspect of our daily lives. In recent years, these technologies have been applied across various sectors, ranging from education, healthcare, employment, communication and so on. However, some controversies of the digital divide have become a pressing issue. This may be attributed to the fact that a good segment of the population or masses are not tech-savvy, lack access to these resources and are unaware of the developmental strides available through the use of technology. Extant literature reveals that access to these technologies is seemingly limited to the elite group, creating a divide among the social groups of the society. Access to digital resources is gained for free access. This is where libraries and other information centres come in (Every Library, 2023).

Libraries can bridge the digital divide by providing access to technology and its resources to all members of the society regardless of their social standing. However, the final NTIA (2000), report during the Clinton/Gore administration entitled "Falling through the Net: Toward Digital Inclusion." explained that rather than the continued focus on the gaps in technology and access between the haves and the have-nots, the concept of digital inclusion should be embraced. Digital inclusion changed the focus of the study to a socio-political approach, emphasizing the foreseeable role of digital technology as a means to engage members of the society.

Digital inclusion encompasses approaches to narrowing the digital divide and increasing digital literacy. A recent study identified the underlying components necessary for digital inclusion as adequate funding for technology, sufficient physical and technological infrastructure to support the technology, adequate bandwidth, and sufficient training in using the technology (Becker, Benner & Sattler, 2010). Libraries play the role of fostering digital inclusion through the following ways: provision of access to technology, delivery of electronic resources and educational opportunities via library tours, user education, reference services, orientation programs, etc.

Libraries have long been recognized as essential community hubs, providing access to information, education, and cultural enrichment to all. Solomon and Nyemezu (2023), opine that they are information resource centres that fosters innovation amongst various members of the society. Therefore, the roles of the library have been expanded to address the challenges of the digital age, which has positioned them as hubs for digital inclusion initiatives. By exploring the diverse ways in which libraries contribute to digital inclusion, and examining the programs, services, and partnerships that enable them to serve as catalysts for bridging the digital divide, various can adopt such strategies and measures to promote digital inclusion.

The Concept of Digital Inclusion

The term digital inclusion has been defined by various social groups, the general theme of these definitions is surrounded by the position that all members of the society are carried along in the smart societies. According to Nguyen (2022), digital inclusion is a form of social inclusion in the digital age that broadly refers to the concept of ensuring all individuals and communities in the society have equal opportunities and abilities to access and effectively utilized digital technologies. The concept of digital inclusion is centred around equitable and equal access to technology and its resources by all members of the society, regardless of social standing.

According to the South Australian Council of Social Science (2021), digital inclusion encompasses use the of digital technologies to access education, employment, training, commerce and government services to enhance the quality of life. They are targeted towards the access and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) like the internet and its infrastructure, hardware, software and digital literacy training by all, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, mobility, physical and cognitive abilities, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. (Interactive Design Foundation, 2020). Over time, programmes and services targeted towards bridging the digital divide have been developed to help enhance the quality of living. Libraries like other social organizations have developed strategies, programmes and services that foster digital inclusion. This can be referred to library digital inclusion initiative.

The Library's Digital Inclusion Initiative

Libraries are social organizations that serve as knowledge hubs, and educational and recreational centres, that provide an array of resources and services for members of their host community. Solomon, Ahiauzu and Nyemez (2024), opine that a library provides physical (hard copies) or digital access (soft copies) materials and maybe a physical location, virtual space, or both, designed for efficiency and user satisfaction. It is a collection of materials, books or media that are accessible for use and not just for display purposes. Similarly, the Online Dictionary of Library and Information Science (ODLIS) define a library as a collection or group of collections of books and/or other print or non-print materials organized and maintained for use (reading, consultation, study, research, etc). They acquire both print (hardcopy) and digital (softcopy) materials to meet the needs of the different categories of users. This means that the library resources are not limited to print materials, but rather encompass digital resources and as such library's digital inclusion initiative should be integrated into the library's services.

Library digital inclusion initiative refers to all the programs or services of the library tailored towards bridging the digital divide, fostering and promoting inclusiveness in the provision of library services to its patrons. These programs carried out by the library are aimed at ensuring that its users have in-depth knowledge of the digital technologies available, their importance and how they can be used effectively to ensure that these technologies introduced into the library are effectively utilized. They include the totality of programs, initiatives, or services offered by libraries to guarantee that all community members have access to and are able to use digital resources and technologies are referred to as library digital inclusion initiatives. They include but not limited to:

Access to Technology

Libraries serve as critical access points to technology for individuals who may not have personal devices or reliable internet connections at home especially low-income households or earners and those residing in rural areas. Libraries, public libraries in particular, offer free or low-cost access to computers, Wi-Fi or wireless internet access, and other digital tools and technologies. This access is especially vital for students needing to complete homework assignments, job seekers applying for positions online, and individuals seeking to access government services or health information. The Library gives people the means to use their technologies to the fullest, be it for school, personal research, social activities, etc. The library's free access to digital tools and internet connectivity is a lifesaver to those who can't afford it and urgently need it and the library contributes greatly to closing the digital divide.

Libraries can provide access to assistive technologies that support digital accessibility for users with disabilities, such as screen readers or text-to-speech software (Inamdar, 2021).

Digital Literacy Programs

Libraries have developed comprehensive digital literacy programs to support the digital inclusion initiative. These programs are aimed at educating library patrons on how to effectively and seamlessly utilize digital resources for problem-solving. The library achieves this by organizing workshops, training sessions, conferences and more on topics such as coding, online privacy, and digital security to equip patrons with the skills needed to thrive in the digital environment. Individuals from remote environments where access to digital technology was limited and digital skills, internet use and safety skills were not taught, have the privilege of gaining such knowledge through the help of the library.

Librarians play key roles in promoting digital literacy. They provide one-on-one assistance to users who need help with technology, provide answers to users require on how a particular technology functions and it's uses, and they can also design and deliver training programs that meet the specific needs of their users.

Libraries can promote digital literacy in diverse communities by offering resources and training in multiple languages and addressing cultural considerations related to technology use. (Inamdar, 2021). They can partner with other organizations to promote digital literacy. For instance, they can collaborate with non-governmental organizations, corporate bodies and government bodies to provide training and access to technology to users.

Community Outreach and Engagement

Academic Libraries are embedded within the academy community, making them uniquely positioned to engage with diverse populations. They can conduct outreach and engagement programmes targeted towards improving digital literacy in the environment. This outreach enables libraries to gather useful data from its patrons and prospective patrons, the data will then be analyzed and evaluated. By understanding the specific needs and challenges of their users, the digital inclusion initiatives programmes of the library can be restructured to accommodate all members within the academic environment.

Digital Content and Resources

In addition to providing access to physical technology, libraries offer a wealth of digital content and online resources such as e-books, audio-books, digital magazines, e-journals, online public access catalogues and streaming services. These resources and services are made available to patrons irrespective of their social standing, expanding access to educational and entertainment materials (Inamdar, 2021). Academic libraries also curate digital collections and provide advice on how to access and utilize them, offering users access to broader information on many topics. This potentially increases their knowledge and understanding of any given subject, thanks to the digital content, resources, skills, and technology made available by the library.

Academic libraries are key players in the fight against the digital divide in current technology-based society. They are the link through which members of the academic community are empowered, and equipped to utilize and enjoy the benefits of digital technologies. Academic libraries provide free consultation services to their users; access to all available resources and ensure that users are enlightened. Thus, bridging the gap of the digital divide in the academic community.

Statement of the problem

Technology has significantly transformed various aspects of human endeavour; several institutions have leveraged its potential to attain new heights. The availability of digital resources and content, is a product of advancement in technology. This has in turn reduced workload and created new opportunities for novel discoveries. However, amidst the benefits attached to the use of technology, there have been concerns digital divide. The world is evolving as technology has been integrated into all spheres of life.

Sadly, most individuals still lag, without access to technology or its resources. In a bid to bridge the digital divide, several organizations including NGOs and government bodies have developed strategies to cushion the effect of this divide. The library has a significant role to play, as they are at the centre of information service delivery. A study by Ademodi and Adepoju (2009), reveals that most library users lack digital literacy skills making them vulnerable to this divide. Preliminary observations by the researchers also show that academic libraries are the heart-beat of their parent body, thus positioning them as agents of digital inclusion. It is on this premise that the study seeks to examine academic libraries contribution to the promotion of digital inclusion in Rivers State.

Purpose of Study

This study is directed to examine academic libraries contribution to the promotion of digital inclusion in Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine the role of academic libraries in fostering digital literacy in Rivers State.
2. investigate the role of academic libraries in fostering access to digital content and resources in Rivers State.
3. identify the constraints of promoting digital inclusion initiatives by academic libraries in Rivers State.

Research Questions

1. What is the role of academic libraries in fostering digital literacy in Rivers State?
2. What is the role of academic libraries in fostering access to digital content and resources in Rivers State?
3. What are the constraints of promoting digital inclusion initiatives by academic libraries in Rivers State?

Methodology

This study adopted the use of a descriptive survey design, to access. This study is directed to examine academic libraries contribution to the promotion of digital inclusion in Rivers State. According to Amadi

(2020), descriptive survey design involves the study of a group of people considered to be a representative of the group. This design was adopted as it provides in-depth insight into the variables of the study. The study respondents used for this survey were limited to 4 academic institutions within Port Harcourt Metropolis in Rivers State. The population of this study is 62. It consists of 62 librarians across 4 academic institutions in Rivers State (Rivers State University Library, Donald Ekong Library of University of Port Harcourt, Dame Goodluck Jonathan Automated Library of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Library and Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic Library). The census sampling technique was adopted as the instrument for data collection and was distributed to the entire population of the study which is 68. A questionnaire instrument was used for the generation of the primary data. Mean was used to answer the research questions. The expected mean criterion for each item is 2.50, all items below the expected mean criterion were disagreed.

RESULTS

Research Question 1

What is the role of academic libraries in fostering digital literacy in Rivers State?

Table 1

Role of academic libraries in fostering digital literacy in Rivers State

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	X	Decision
1	They offer instructions and training programmes that promote information literacy skills among members of the academic community.	33	24	5	0	3.45	Agreed
2	They collaborate with other campus departments and organizations to integrate digital literacy into the academic curriculum.	24	29	5	4	3.17	Agreed
3	They provide support for digital scholarship initiatives, providing resources for users from low-income backgrounds.	31	15	11	5	3.16	Agreed
4	They offer assistive technologies and accessibility services to ensure users with disabilities have equal access to digital resources.	29	24	4	5	3.24	Agreed
5	They continuously evaluate digital literacy programmes and services to assess their feedback and make improvements to better meet the evolving needs of the academic community.	31	15	11	5	3.16	Agreed
Grand Mean						3.23	

Table 1 shows the mean of librarians on the role of academic libraries in fostering digital literacy in Rivers State. Based on the decision rule and expected mean criterion score of 2.50 (which is the standard mean criteria for items of same likert scale), the results indicate that all items on the table were accepted with a grand mean of 3.23.

Research Question 2

What is the role of academic libraries in fostering access to digital content and resources in Rivers State?

Table 2

Role of academic libraries in fostering access to digital content and resources in Rivers State

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	X	Decision
1	They ensure access to a wide range of digital content resources.	24	37	1	0	3.37	Agreed
2	They ensure equitable access to digital resources for all users without any form of bias.	41	21	0	0	3.66	Agreed
3	They maintain the technological infrastructure necessary to support access to digital content.	7	9	18	28	1.91	Disagreed
4	They provide assistance patrons in accessing and using digital resources.	41	21	0	0	3.66	Agreed

5	They support open access initiatives by promoting the dissemination of scholarly content freely to users thus, contributing to digital inclusion.	24	37	1	0	3.37	Agreed
	Grand Mean					3.19	

Table 3 shows the mean of librarians on constraints on promoting digital inclusion initiatives by academic libraries in Rivers State. Based on the decision rule and expected mean criterion score of 2.50, the results indicate that all items on the table were accepted with a grand mean of 3.38.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 1 reveals the roles of academic libraries in fostering digital literacy in Rivers State. The findings of this study reveal that academic libraries foster digital inclusion by promoting digital literacy programmes that enhance users access to technology. The findings of this study align with the findings of Eleto, Nyemezuru and Solomon (2023), which opines that library digital literacy programmes facilitates student's ability to utilize digital resources.

Table 2 reveals that academic libraries foster access to digital content and resources, thus promoting digital inclusion. This corroborates the findings of Immander (2021), who opines that academic libraries bridge the digital divide by providing free access to digital content to all categories of users.

Table 3 shows the reveals the constraints on promoting digital inclusion initiative by academic libraries in Rivers State. Findings of the study identifies limited funding, copyright and licensing restrictions limit the sharing of resources by academic libraries, difficulty in keeping pace with rapidly evolving technology and software etc as the constraints on promoting digital inclusion by academic libraries in Rivers State. The findings of this study aligns with findings of Immander (2021), who opines that issues of finance pose a threat to significantly closing the digital divide.

Conclusion

Academic libraries play vital role in bridging the digital divide. They provide access to resources to all users regardless of their social status. Academic libraries serve as a link between users from low-income backgrounds to digital content. Findings of this study indicate they promote digital literacy, provide access to digital resources and content, whilst serving as instructors to users. This positions academic libraries as agents of digital inclusion.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Government and other stakeholders should ensure that libraries are adequately funded to enable them integrate more digital literacy programmes to help cushion the effect of digital divide.
2. Librarians should ensure that digital content and resources available in the library are regularly updated to cater for users who may not have access to other sources of digital content.
3. Government can set-up a committee to carry out surveys to identify challenges encountered by libraries in the fight against the digital divide and policies that will tackle such issues.

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ACCOMPLISHING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION THROUGH LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper explored the diversity and inclusion initiatives in library and information services and their contributions to the management of Nigeria's diversity issues. How to ensure peaceful co-existence among Nigeria's conglomeration of people has been a concern to all the governments of Nigeria. Libraries have positive effects on this peaceful co-existence by offering diverse services that showcase or encourage every cultural heritage, through the provision of; diverse library collections of different authors, diverse digital services, and information services to the disabled or physically challenged people in the communities amongst others. The paper also highlights some impediments to these services as insufficient funding, unskilled staff, and a host of others. The paper proffered some recommendations for the challenges identified; the government should increase the library's budget allocation, training of the staff and others.

Keywords: Diversity, Inclusion, Library, Information, Services, Nigeria.

Introduction

Diversity is the presence of differences within a given setting. it could be in the workplace, school communities, and other social places. This can mean differences in race, ethnicity, age, gender, identity, sexual orientation, age, and socioeconomic class. It can also be referred to as differences in physical ability, veteran status, and whether or not you have children. Heinz, (2024). Diversity is beneficial because it facilitates a greater ability to understand and provide service to diverse communities of patrons. Diversity and inclusion are interconnected concepts that refer to the variety of unique individuals that make up a group of people and the environment that allows them to work together as equally valued contributors. Workplaces that prioritise diversity and inclusion efforts have been statistically proven to be safer, happier and a more productive work environment. “Diversity” can also be defined as the sum of the ways that people are both alike and different. When we recognise, value, and embrace diversity, we are recognising, valuing, and embracing the uniqueness of each individual. (American Library Association Council [ALA],2019).

Similarly, the Association of Library and Information Science Education's Diversity Taskforce characterised diversity as “the representation of a wide variety of backgrounds (including racial, cultural, linguistic, gender, religious, international, socio-economic, sexual orientation, differently-abled, age among others) that people possess and is often used to address quantitative requirements/agendas/ goals” (Association of Library and Information Science Education [ALISE], 2013). ALISE (2013) also brought into the conversation the notion of inclusion “what happens to people once they are in an organisation, institution or social context.” Complementing diversity, and inclusion constituted full representation, participation, and empowerment; it also implied combating all types of discrimination (ALISE, 2013). Like ALISE, ALA (2016) through its Task Force on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion characterised inclusion as constituting “an environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully; are valued for their distinctive skills, experiences, and perspectives; have equal access to resources and opportunities; and can contribute fully to the organisation's success”. Additionally, the ALA Task Force posited that some groups had been systemically disadvantaged in accessing both education and employment. These groups therefore remained organisationally and institutionally underrepresented or marginalised. Given this legacy, a commitment to equity ensured fair policies, practices, processes, and outcomes.

“Inclusion” means an environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully; valued for their distinctive skills, experiences, and perspectives; have equal access to resources and opportunities; and can contribute fully to the organisation's success. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are

often grouped together because they are interconnected and it is only in combination that their true impact emerges. McKinsey and Company (2022). As used in the library and information sciences context, diversity is defined as “inclusiveness with regard to differences in age, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, and ethnic, racial, or cultural background within a given population (Larsen, 2017).

Libraries are organised information resources managed for easy accessibility and utilisation by information users. Libraries are different in size and resources according to the type of people they serve. School libraries are found in primary and secondary schools, and academic libraries are established in tertiary institutions like universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education. Public libraries are the libraries that are situated within a community to meet the information needs of such communities both old and young. While special libraries are found in private establishments. According to Ntui and Edam – Agbor (2015) a library is an organised collection of information resources made available to a defined community for reading, reference or borrowing. It is organised to provide physical or digital access to information resources such as books, periodicals, newspapers, manuscripts, films, maps, prints, documents, microform, CDs, cassettes, videotapes, DVDs, e-books, audiobooks, and other formats. Libraries differ in size from a few shelves of books to several million items. It may be a physical building or virtual or both for use and maintained by a public body, an institution, a corporation, or a private individual. Libraries today serve as dynamic community hubs. Where every information service is geared towards the needs of the host community either in academic libraries, school libraries for primary and secondary schools, public libraries meet the needs of both adults and children of various ages and challenged people in the community.

Nigeria is a country that is made up of different people, states, tribes, ethnic groups, different cultures. To ensure that every tribe and every ethnic group is represented and no discrimination of any kind, the federal government instituted a policy called 'Federal Character' to ensure the even distribution of all the available resources in Nigeria. For example, public education admission is done by quota system, 30% of less educationally disadvantaged people must be admitted. (Adeleye, Atewologu and Matanmi, 2014). Diversity is beneficial not only because it facilitates a greater ability to understand and provide service to diverse communities of patrons, but because organisations that embrace diversity are ultimately more successful. Libraries aim to ensure the full representation of all of Nigeria's diverse populations in the provision of information resources and services that would meet their heterogeneous information needs. According to ALA, (2023), libraries are ideal places to celebrate the diversity of a community or a nation. Inclusion sometimes means being able to rally around something that makes the library community special. Each community has unique qualities that deserve celebrating; these qualities become opportunities to inspire everyone in the community. The future for the libraries is where they develop and sustain a culture that welcomes and includes everyone, and a Library in which all feel they belong, and all see the need to pursue and create knowledge. It is against this backdrop therefore, this paper examines the management of Nigeria's diversity and inclusion issues, the effects of libraries' services diversity and inclusion initiatives in the management of Nigeria's diversity, challenges encountered by the libraries in managing Nigeria's diversity and inclusion. It also proffers some solutions and recommendations to the challenges identified.

Management of Nigeria's Diversity and Inclusion Issues

Managing Nigeria's diversity has been the focus of every succeeding government so that there can be peaceful co-existence among the various ethnic groups. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with a population of about 230,842,743 (2023 est.) (CIA World Factbook, 2024). It is a federation of 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Abuja, broadly grouped into six geopolitical zones (north-west, north-central, north-east, south-west, south-east, and south-south) and two regions (the north and the south). The political system is fashioned after that of the United States of America (USA), with a federal government at the centre and 36 federating states. There is also separation of powers between the executive (the Presidency) and the legislature (the Senate and the House of Representatives). Adeleye, Atewologu and Matanmi (2014). The diverse population of Nigeria is so complex that it has many different tribes, ethnicities, cultures, ages, and genders with these complexities, it is difficult to ensure a satisfactory inclusion of all. Onyejeli, (2010) reported that Nigeria provides an interesting context in which to explore the concepts of equality and workplace diversity, with its unusually high levels of diversity across ethnic/cultural, racial, religious, linguistic, age and socio-economic dimensions. Nigeria's people belong to 250–400 different ethno-linguistic groups, with three major ethnic groups. Nigerians belong to several different religions as well, with Islam and Christianity accounting for approximately 50 and 40 percent of the population respectively. Islam is dominant in the northern region while Christianity is the major religion in the south; indigenous African religions are also commonly practiced around the country. In terms of age, 40.69 percent of the total population is in the 0–14 years bracket, 55.95 percent in the 15–64 range, and 3.6 percent are aged 65 and over. (CIA World Factbook, 2024).

As a multicultural country, Nigeria is overwhelmed by various issues that threaten its survival and its ongoing existence as a country. Even after decades of nationhood, diversity in language, tribe, religion, ethnicity and other social differences seems to have become a complicated problem for Nigeria. This has resulted in underdevelopment despite the country's enormous natural resources. Adeleye, Atewologun and Matanmi (2014) noted that the uneven socio-economic development poses an 'existential threat' to the

somewhat divided country, and has brought to the fore the issue of managing diversity. At the national level, the slogan 'unity in diversity' has been popularised by successive governments for several decades in their quest to emphasised that diversity is positive for Nigeria and that there is an urgent need to foster inclusion in society and organisations. 'The Federal Character principle' was constituted to ensure the even distribution of the nation's resources and prohibits discrimination on the grounds of community, ethnicity, place of origin, gender, religion, or political opinion.

Since the civil war of the late 1960s, several attempts have been made to promote the spirit of 'unity in diversity', culminating in the establishment of the 'Federal Character Principle'. The principle was embodied in the 1979 constitution and was inscribed into the 1999 constitution which prescribed that a Federal Character Commission (FCC) be established to monitor and enforce compliance with the principle (Overseas Development Institute, 2006, p. 3 in Adeleye, Atewologu and Matanmi (2014). The composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the Federal Character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or any of its agencies.

Eniekebi, (2021) asserted that as the nation seeks ways out of the predicament, many alternatives have been offered. Bello (2012) claims that the appropriate use of the 'Federal Character Principle' will guarantee that the various ethnic groups at the core of authority are represented fairly and equitably, giving each group a feeling of belonging and potentially qua disputes. Falade and Falade (2013), suggest transforming attitudes through social mobilization and adopting and imbibing key principles of unity and trust to achieve national integration. Sifawa and Kurah (2016), believe that education is a true instrument for fostering unity and peaceful coexistence in the nation, particularly the inclusion of history in the curricula at all stages of schooling. The Federal Character Principle was extended to public education (secondary, tertiary, and higher educational institutions established by the federal government) to address the educational inequalities among the states and regions. In most institutions, at least 30 percent of admissions are based on quotas, with candidates from states recognised as 'educationally disadvantaged' having considerably lower entrance scores or 'cut-off marks. Each state is assigned cut-off marks based on the percentile distribution scores of its indigenes in the nationwide entrance examinations.

Nigeria exhibits unusually high levels of diversity, as indicated in the global diversity survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), USA, and the Economist Intelligence Unit (SHRM, 2009). People with disability or physically challenged people are parts of Nigeria's citizens and they should be given equal treatment like every other Nigerians. According to Lang and Upah, (2008), an estimated 19 million people are living with disabilities in Nigeria, and they are one of the poorest and most socially excluded groups in the country. In the last six years or so, a right-based agenda has started emerging as several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international developmental agencies collaborated with the major disabled people's organizations – the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAWPD) and the Association for Comprehensive Empowerment of Nigerians with Disabilities (ASCEND) – to advocate for equal treatment of people living with disabilities. (Adeleye, Atewologun and Matanmi 2014).

Managing Nigeria's diversity is a crucial issue that must be put into consideration by any organisation in Nigeria to ensure that no one is marginalised based on, origin, gender, ethnicity, age, religion, physically challenged, and sociolinguistics to maintain her peaceful co-existence.

Library and Information Services Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives in the Management of Nigeria's Diversity

Libraries diversity initiatives support the Nigeria's diversity through the provision of information services for all without background, ages, gender, origin, ethnic and language discrimination. Library and information services are key players in providing unhindered access to essential resources for economic and cultural growth of an individual and a nation. In doing so, they contribute effectively to the development and maintenance of intellectual freedom, safeguarding democratic values and universal civil rights. They encourage social inclusion, by striving to serve all those in their user communities regardless of age, gender, economic or employment status, literacy or technical skills, cultural or ethnic origin, Agboke, (2019).

ALA council core value, (2024) agrees that free access provides opportunities for everyone in the community to obtain library resources and services with minimal disruption. Library workers create systems that ensure members of their community can freely access the information they need for learning, growth, and empowerment regardless of technology, format, or delivery methods. Libraries are organised information resources managed for easy accessibility and utilisation of information users. Libraries are different in size and resources according to the type of people they serve. School libraries are found in primary and secondary schools, and academic libraries are established in tertiary institutions like Universities, Polytechnics, and Colleges of Education, Public libraries are the libraries that are situated within a community to meet the information needs of such communities both old and young. While special libraries are found in private establishments. The International Federation of Library Association's IFLA/UNESCO Multicultural Library Manifesto recognizes that cultural and linguistic diversity is the

common heritage of mankind and should be cherished and preserved for the benefit of all. Therefore, libraries of all types should reflect, support and promote cultural and linguistic diversity at the international, national, and local levels, and thus work for cross-cultural dialogue and active citizenship.” (<http://www.ifla.org/node/8976>). Libraries ensure that people of different origin, social backgrounds, gender, ethnic groups are brought together by rendering information services that unify them.

In order to attain diversity and inclusivity in our communities, the following are the diverse services initiatives rendered by the libraries in support of Nigeria's unity in diversity:

1. ***Provision of Diverse Culturally Resources Initiatives:*** Nigeria is rich in cultures. Libraries store some of these rich cultural heritage resources for information, recreational and educational purposes. Libraries know the importance of representing their collections' in rich diversity of cultures, ethnicities, and perspectives. This involves actively seeking out materials authored by individuals from various cultural backgrounds and communities. By offering books, articles, films, and other resources that reflect diverse experiences. This includes acquiring materials in various languages, offering programming and events that celebrate different cultures and religions, and providing access to resources that support the spiritual and cultural needs of library users. By promoting cultural and religious pluralism, libraries help to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of different cultures and religions. Libraries also allows students to explore different cultures, traditions, and worldviews. Moreover, exposure to culturally diverse materials fosters empathy, understanding, and appreciation for the Nigeria's cultural diversity this create unity in diversity of culture.
2. ***Provision of Diverse Library Collections and Provision of an Environment that is free of Bias and Discriminations Initiatives :*** Libraries provides diverse collections of information resources to ensure equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status. Diverse library collections are collections that provide good representation of the topics, perspectives, authors, characters, and narratives associated with underrepresented or marginalised groups. The focus on adequacy of representation is really more about equity than diversity, and the literature of library and information science does not always distinguish among the three components of DEI – diversity, equity, and inclusion (Lawrence, 2020, 2021). Diverse library collections are important because, they can facilitate the kind of discussion and understanding that informs and promotes social inclusion. Libraries go beyond traditional print materials to offer a variety of formats, including audiobooks, e-books, digital databases, and multimedia resources. For instance, audiobooks cater for auditory learners, while digital resources provide flexibility and convenience for those who prefer accessing information online. Moreover, libraries ensure that materials are available in alternative formats such as large print, Braille, and translated languages to accommodate individuals with visual or linguistic impairments. This commitment to diverse formats ensures that all citizens can engage with information effectively, regardless of their learning preferences or abilities. When a library's collections reflect the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of its patrons, it can make those patrons feel seen, valued, and represented. This can lead to a more positive and inclusive experience for patrons who may have previously felt marginalised or underrepresented. In addition to representation and equity, libraries also actively work towards creating an inclusive environment where all individuals feel welcome and respected. This means actively promoting an environment that is free from discrimination and bias, as well as providing training and education for staff on how to interact with and serve diverse populations. Collections diversity will mean little to patrons who are members of minority groups who do not feel welcome in that space. (Hepler and Horalek, 2023).
3. ***Provision of Diverse Digital Services Initiatives:*** Libraries make provision of diverse digital resources and services available to Nigerians in this era where digital literacy is increasingly essential. Libraries provides free access to computer and internet services to ensure equitable access to technology and by providing free access to computers and internet services, libraries bridge the digital divide, particularly for individuals who may not have access to such resources at home due to financial constraints. This promotes the unity of Nigerian citizens. Public access computers in libraries allows users to conduct research, access online educational materials, complete assignments, and communicate with peers and instructors. Moreover, libraries often provide essential software programs and applications on these computers, enhancing students' ability to engage with information and develop essential digital skills. By offering public access to computers, libraries promote digital inclusion and provide equal opportunities for learning and academic success to all community members. (Ashikuzzaman, 2024). National Digital Inclusion Alliance in Frank, et al., (2021) posited that digital services inclusion encompasses the activities required to ensure the access and use of ICTs by all and sundry (individuals and communities). It is targeted towards the attainment of digital equality, which is the state where everyone has access and possesses the capacity to fully utilise Information and Communication Technologies. (ICTs) for socioeconomic gains. The goal of digital inclusion is to ensure that no one is left out in the access and use of ICTs.

4. **Provision of Services to the physically Challenged People or Disability Initiatives:** Libraries in Nigeria empower users with disabilities to overcome barriers and participate fully in academic activities by providing assistive technologies, libraries recognise the importance of technology in facilitating access to individuals with disabilities. To this end, they invest in assistive technologies such as screen readers, text-to-speech software, and magnification tools. These tools enable library users with visual impairments to access and navigate information independently. For example, screen readers convert text into speech, allowing visually impaired individuals to listen to the content of a webpage or document. Similarly, text-to-speech software reads aloud text-based materials, while magnification tools enlarge text and images for individuals with low vision. The provision of these service has contributed to the literacy, enlightenment of physically impaired citizens and making them useful to themselves and the society also, discouraged social discrimination of the physically challenged citizens.
5. **Provision of Diverse Library Outreach Programs Initiatives:** Libraries extend their services beyond their physical walls through proactive outreach programs targeting underserved communities. By forging partnerships with schools, community centers, and other organisations, libraries ensure that all individuals can access information resources and support services regardless of their socio-economic status or geographic location. Libraries provides services to the grassroots through outreach programs which include bookmobile services, where libraries directly bring books and educational materials to communities lacking traditional library facilities. Additionally, libraries may collaborate with local schools to provide [orientation](#) sessions or literacy programs for students and educators. By engaging with underserved communities and addressing their unique needs, libraries play a vital role in promoting equity and inclusion, ensuring that everyone can benefit from the wealth of knowledge and resources available through the library. According to Eniekebi, (2021) other services offered by Nigerian' libraries to support the unity in diversity include organising programmes in recognition of various national and international remarkable events such as World Literacy Day, World Book Day, World Poetry Day, National Democracy Day, Nigerian Independency Day etc. These programmes in one way or the other inculcate the spirit of unity in the minds of children at young stage.

Challenges Encountered by Libraries in the Provision of Diverse Services in Nigeria

1. **Inadequate Funding:** One of the major problems facing Libraries in Nigeria is poor funding. The budget allotted for Libraries; be it academic, school and public are considerably low to acquire the needed resource of the libraries. Inadequate funding is a big barrier for Librarians and information Professionals in Nigeria, when it comes to Library and information services. Nigerian Libraries are suffering from a severe financial crisis as a result of dwindling funding and competition from other information service providers.
2. **Untrained Library Staff and Unskilled Library Users:** Some library staff are not ICT compliant. They do not have skills in managing the electronic resources and are not willing to adapt to what is trending in the field of Librarianship. Even some of the library users are not digital literate.
3. **Inadequate Power Supply:** Nigeria libraries are faced with epileptic power supply and most electronic facilities rely on power supply to function. This becomes a problem and affects the use of these libraries.
4. **Poor Internet connectivity/ High Cost of Data Subscribing:** Poor internet connectivity and high cost of subscribing to data are impediments to libraries services in Nigeria. In most of the local communities in Nigeria, service providers' network is very poor and most libraries cannot afford the annual data subscriptions. This has prevented adequate utilisation of digital facilities in the libraries.
5. **Poor Infrastructure:** Poor infrastructure has been a challenge to libraries in Nigeria. Most of the public library building facilities in local communities are old and dilapidated.

Conclusion

Libraries diversity initiatives and inclusion recognise the uniqueness of people's race, gender, ethnics, social economic background and cultures. Libraries provides diverse services to support Nigeria's unity in diversity and this paper enumerates diverse services provided by the libraries to support Nigeria's diversity and inclusion, challenges encountered and recommendations to enhanced adequate provision of these services. With the provision of the enlisted services Nigeria's unity in diversity as well as inclusion will be more strengthened thereby combating discrimination and marginalisations.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations proffered to enhance the development of libraries in Nigeria for unity in diversity.

1. Government should increase Libraries financial allocations to ensure effective running of the libraries in Nigeria.
2. Libraries should organise various workshops and ICT training for their staff where they would be trained and re-trained.
3. Library users must have affordable access to the Internet in order to eliminate the digital divide. Governments must support universal access to ICT infrastructures, develop digital literacy and skills, and increase the relevance and understanding of the advantages of using the internet.
4. Library Management should make proper arrangement to provide complementary public power supply. Solar power technology can be explored as an alternative.
5. Government should make provision for new libraries buildings to replace the old building facilities and they should be equipped with the new and trending technological facilities.

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ADDRESSING DIGITAL DIVIDE THROUGH POSSESSION OF DIGITAL LITERACY SKILLS: THE LIBRARIANS' PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The digital divide, characterized by disparities in access to and use of technology, presents a significant challenge in all facets of human endeavours. Except it is addressed, technology acceptance, especially, in developing and under-developed nations will remain a mirage. In the light of this assertion, the study was conceived. It employed the descriptive survey design with a population of 112 librarians drawn from 11 academic libraries in Taraba State. The study utilized a structured questionnaire to gather data on digital literacy possessed, areas of application, and its perceived effect on adaptation to the digital age. 112 copies of the questionnaire were distributed but 109 returned. Data analysis was carried out using descriptive statistics of mean scores and standard deviation. The findings revealed a low possession of few digital literacy skills by the librarians, such as the ability to use the Internet in search of information, and to communicate, the ability to conduct website evaluation, and use Boolean logic, among others. It also reported the application of their digital skills in delivering certain services, such as digital reference services, information scouting, and offering Internet services, among others. The study further revealed the perceived effects of the digital literacy skills of librarians on their adaptation to the digital age. This includes enabling them to effectively deliver digital reference services, and conduct information scouting services, among other things. To this end, the study concludes that possession of digital literacy skills remains a vital ingredient in solving the problem of the digital divide, especially concerning librarians in academic libraries in Taraba State. Based on this, the study recommended the need for library administrators to provide support/incentives that will encourage the acquisition of digital literacy skills by librarians. In doing so, the librarians will appreciate the need to acquire such skills, among other things.

Keywords: Digital divide, Digital literacy skills, Technology, Librarians, ICT

Introduction

Digital divide, a phenomenon that has gained ground since the mid-1990s has remained an issue of major concern. This is because as the day goes by, more sophisticated information technologies keep emerging thereby leaving some people behind. According to Afzal et al (2023), the digital divide is seen as the gap separating those who have access to new forms of information technology from those who do not. To these authors, the concept of the digital divide remains an important public policy debate that encompasses social, economic, and political issues. Further clarifying the digital divide, Norris (2001) and the OECD (2001) noted that the concept can exist within and between countries. This is present in three (3) levels. First is the digital divide between countries, which is called the global divide, and has become strikingly evident in the chasm between developed and developing countries. The second is social divide, which is the gap in access to and use of ICTs between different sections of a nation's society, and the last is the democratic divide, which refers to the difference between those who do and do not use ICTs to engage in their public life. In a bid to overcome the adverse effect of the digital divide, there is a need to create a society in which all citizens can reach and share information. This will be done not only through the enactment of policies but also through the acquisition of skills that enable the individual to function in the digital age.

However, the acquired skills or tactics to effectively function in the digital age are termed digital literacy. Digital literacy is further defined as the ability to understand and use information in multiple formats (Chan et al., 2017). This literacy encompasses critical thinking skills, information, and communication technology skills in the areas of having the ability to read and interpret the meaning of a digital text, symbols, and graphs. Okeji et. al. (2020) further opined that digital literacy could be regarded as an umbrella framework of skills, knowledge, and ethics. Speaking further, Fakunle et al. (2022) described a digitally literate person as someone with the ability to identify, access, manage, integrate, evaluate, analyse, and synthesize digital resources. According to the authors, digital literacy can be conceived on three levels.

These levels include digital competence, digital usage, and digital transformation. Consequently, this literacy promotes the ability to read, write, view, listen, compose, and communicate information and changes from time to time. Emiri (2015) holds that digital literacy encompasses photo-visual literacy (the ability to read and deduce information from visuals), reproduction literacy (the ability to use digital technology to create a new piece of work or combine existing pieces of work to make it your own), branching literacy (ability to successfully navigate in the non-linear medium of digital space), information literacy (ability to search, locate, assess and critically evaluate information found on the web), and socio-emotional literacy (the social and emotional aspects of being present online, whether it may be through socializing, and collaborating, or simply consuming content).

Nonetheless, Allen (2016) submitted that the issue of developing technology, digital divide, and massifier structures necessitate digital literacy. Therefore, acquiring digital literacy skills is a necessity. To this end, the capability and skills of academic librarians to use technology to create, navigate, disseminate, evaluate, and store information is described as digital literacy. Digital literacy has to do with skills, knowledge, and behaviours that involve effective and efficient use of digital devices like smartphones, tablets, iPhones, laptops, iPads, and desktop PCs for purposes of collaboration, communication, expression, advocacy, and even decision-making. This has become a highly sought-after skill for information managers such as academic librarians. This led to the assessment of the digital literacy skills of 21st-century librarians in private university libraries in Anambra State by Okeji, et. al. (2020) where it was reported that the librarians possess these skills from self-sponsorship. On the challenges facing the acquisition of digital literacy and its application in service delivery, the study of Okeji et. al. (2020) reported power failure and poor Internet. In light of the above, the authors recommended that academic librarians should endeavour to acquire all the digital literacy skills required for perfect service delivery, among other things.

Not minding the series of efforts put in place, the digital divide is still largely felt, especially in developing and under-developed nations owing to factors such as low income, lower-quality and/or high-priced connections, low level of education, lack of digital literacy, limited access to quality ICT content, the cost and affordability of ICT and lack of knowledge and understanding of the technology in many developing countries. Additionally, Singh (2007) asserted that infrastructural barriers, literacy skills barriers, economic barriers, and content barriers are part of the factors responsible for the problems of the digital divide in developing countries. To this end, Ukpebor and Emojorho (2012) averred that the inequitable access to the internet in continents like Africa is attributable to the state of ICT infrastructure and lack of adequate investment in the society that supports the new technology. This is largely attributed to the absence of required skills that can enable one to navigate through the digital age. To this end, the study seeks to examine the possession of digital literacy skills as a means of addressing the academic librarians' digital divide.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to examine the possession of digital literacy skills by librarians in academic libraries in Taraba State as a way of addressing the digital divide. Specifically, the study investigated the following;

1. *digital literacy skills possessed by librarians in academic libraries in Taraba State;*
2. *areas in which librarians in academic libraries in Taraba State apply their digital literacy skills;*
and
3. *perceived effects of digital literacy skills possessed by the librarians in academic libraries in Taraba State on their adaptation to the digital age.*

Literature Review

Understanding digital literacy skills and their application to address the digital divide has remained the bone of contention. In the submissions of Sharma (2017) and Mavridi (2020), competencies associated with digital literacy skills are of significant value to individuals involved in several activities such as research, project-based learning, blended learning, e-learning, and service delivery. These competencies according to Kukulska et al. (2015) manifest in such a way that they enable the individual to participate effectively in online communities, create and share content online, respect ownership and avoid plagiarism, evaluate the credibility of online content, manage digital distractions when doing homework, and deal with potentially inappropriate conduct or contact e.g., cyberbullying. Additionally, Mavridi (2020) noted that due to the recent occurrence seeing to the fact that digital technologies have become increasingly pervasive in the way people live, learn, and communicate, adding to the force enabling people to access

unprecedented amounts of information and connectivity, knowledge of such technologies becomes imperative.

Nonetheless, Motteram (2013) noted that despite the digital divisions that still exist, digital technologies are increasingly becoming “a core part” of the digital age. Because of this power, however, uneven access to technology can amplify existing social, cultural, and economic inequalities, creating the so-called 'digital divide'. Be it as it may, Mavridi (2020) reported that because using the internet can have an overwhelmingly positive impact on people's lives, the digital divide can be problematic for those on the less-served side of it. This is further corroborated by UNICEF (2017) in its assertion that “to be unconnected in a digital world is to be deprived of new opportunities to learn, communicate and develop skills for the twenty-first-century workplace” (p. 43). Hence, the call for an avenue to close such gap brought about by digital division. The Economist Intelligence Unit (2019) observed that progress in access, affordability, and quality of coverage has helped to considerably narrow this gap although, quite unsurprisingly, low-income nations are still falling behind. The statistics contained in UNICEF (2017) revealed that around 30% of young people globally do not use the internet and almost “9 out of 10 of them live in Africa, Asia or the Pacific”. Mavridi (2020) noted that as efforts to close these access disparities are well underway, a new digital divide comes into play. This divide does not merely separate the connected from the unconnected but goes deeper to reflect new social inequalities that emerge. To this end, forcing a new approach to the matter. This approach on the side of librarians is what Fakunle et al. (2022) suggested as digital literacy

According to Emiri (2015), librarians need much more in this digital age to embrace digital literacy skills in their work than ever before. The author further submits that digital literacy will go a long way in helping these librarians develop skills that can add to their economic status and improve their overall job performance and standard of living. Such skills can also help them to progress in their jobs and their careers. Chukwueke and Idris (2023) observed that with these skills, librarians, especially academic librarians will be more equipped for resource sharing, website development and maintenance, social networking, surfing the net, instant messaging, blogging, and a host of other digital-oriented activities. Trying to examine the state of the librarians towards meeting this high demand of the digital age, Anyaoku, et. al. (2015a) investigated information literacy skills and perceptions of librarians in colleges of education in Nigeria and found that respondents rated their skills lowest on the ability to carry out a search using Boolean operators and the ability to use appropriate presentation software to present information. The majority of the respondents of the study attributed this low skill to the non-provision of facilities needed to apply information and digital literacy skills as well as the inability of the regulatory bodies (in this case, the Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria) to regulate curriculum on digital literacy skills.

Chukwueke and Idris (2023) noted that it is highly important to address the digital literacy skills of librarians before placing a high premium on the deployment and implementation of modern technologies in library service delivery. This is important because skills are one of the essential requirements for the adoption and utilization of new technologies. Additionally, Olijo (2018) opined that even though progress has been recorded in the area of hardware and software competence, the challenge of low utilization is a limitation in harnessing the potential of new technologies. This, according to the author, could be attributed to poor knowledge and low usage of installed systems leading to poor return on investments. To this end, Endouware and Dushu (2021); and Fakunle et al. (2022) advocated a study of the digital literary skills of library professionals, which is important because poor knowledge of digital technologies will likely have a corresponding negative use. Digital literacy skills describe the possession of knowledge, skills, and behaviour relevant to the use of digital technologies such as tablets, laptops, smartphones, and desktop PCs among others. This concept of digital skills is used for the capacity to use and as well understand content from digital platforms. However, Endouware and Dushu (2021) noted that in 21st-century society, libraries are expected to integrate digital media platforms into their activities. This is particularly important because library users have also changed their expectations of libraries as they expect these libraries to deploy digital technologies in delivering services to users. Ale and Omeneke, (2017) corroborate users have newer expectations from libraries as a result of changes in technologies. To this end, Connor (2007) carried out a study and reported that Web 2.0 is essential in 21st-century libraries. Barnhart and Pierce, (2012) are of the view that the global acceptance of digital technologies places a demand on academic libraries to adjust to remain relevant. Youngkin (2014) acknowledged the important role of librarians and, their capacity to make use of digital technologies in their daily activities.

Not minding the impediments to possession of digital literacy skills, the study of Ojedokun (2014) which focused on the information literacy competence of librarians in South West Nigerian university libraries revealed that such skills are highly practical in the areas of enhancing effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity at work. It is also on this ground that the author recommended regular training and retraining through professional development workshops, librarians' access to regular use of the Internet, and the

review of the curriculum of the library schools to incorporate the teaching of digital literacy skills with particular emphasis on the practical components. This is not different from the submission of Emiri (2015) who investigated the digital literacy skills among librarians in university libraries in the 21st century in Edo and Delta States, Nigeria, and found that electronic mailing, social networking, use of PDAs, mobile phones and Internet surfing are the major digital literacy skills amongst librarians. Emiri (2015) also revealed that librarians acquired such skills through colleagues' assistance, trial and error, IT programs, and formal education while librarian's level of use of digital literacy skills is low. Based on this, the author recommended that the management of university libraries should provide training for librarians to help update their knowledge in the application of digital skills. This is with a high emphasis on recognizing and giving more attention to digital competence during the recruitment of librarians.

Nonetheless, with the massive introduction of ICT libraries and in the view of closing the digital divide, possession of good digital literacy skills becomes very important. Earlier supporting the view, Nagashetti and Kenchakkanavar (as cited in Fakunle, et. al., 2022) gave the reason to be the recent takeover of the globe by technological advancements. This, in the view of Fakunle, et. al. (2022) has led to the strong influence of ICTs on the ways through which we communicate, interact, read, or write. The authors further note that human beings with the capacity to adapt to different environmental conditions have developed and acquired certain tactics or skills, to fit in, and function in this digital era. Contradictorily, very few individuals possess the required skills to use the digital collection for their varying degrees of information needs (Igbo & Imo, 2020). To this end, it is very clear that much has been said concerning digital literacy skills. However, these studies did not deal with the digital literacy skills of librarians as a solution to the digital divide in Taraba State. Hence, a literature gap that the present study seeks to fill.

Method

The descriptive design was adopted for this study using a total population of 112 which comprises librarians in all eleven (11) academic libraries in Taraba State. These libraries include the College of Agriculture Science and Technology Library, Jalingo; College of Education Library, Zing; College of Science and Technology Library, Takum; College of Nursing and Midwifery Library, Jalingo; Danbaba Danfulani Suntai Library, Taraba State University, Jalingo; Federal Polytechnic Library, Bali; and Muwanshat College of Health Science and Technology Library, Jalingo. Others include Prof. Abubakar Adamu Rasheed Library, Federal University, Wukari; Rufkatu Asibi Kuru Danjuma Library, Kwararafa University, Wukari; Peacock College of Education Library, Jalingo; and Taraba State Polytechnic Library, Suntai. The choice of these libraries is due to the nature of the study which focused on the academic libraries in Taraba State. Furthermore, the category of library staff chosen is those with university degrees in library and information science (that is bachelor's, master's, and PhD). Staff of the libraries with national diplomas, and certificates and those in administrative/executive cadres were excluded from the study. Additionally, the entire population of 112 was studied. A 50-item researcher-made questionnaire was used for data collection. The instrument is titled: Digital Literacy Skills and Digital Age Questionnaire (DLSDAQ). However, to ensure that the instrument for data collection measures what it is intended to measure, the questionnaire was validated by three (3) experts from Taraba State University, Jalingo. The instrument was further subjected to a pilot test using the test-re-tests method, which yielded a correlation coefficient value (r) of 0.88. 112 copies of the questionnaire were administered but 109 copies were retrieved, dully filled, and found suitable for data analysis. This gave a response rate of 97.3% and was considered good enough. The data collected for this study were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean scores and standard deviation with the adoption of a criterion mean of 2.50. The implication was that any item whose mean score is greater than or equal to the criterion mean ($X \geq 2.50$) was considered as agreed, while any item with a mean score less than the criterion mean ($X < 2.50$) was considered as disagreed. Results were presented using frequency tables.

Results

Research Objective 1: To examine the digital literacy skills possessed by librarians in academic libraries at Taraba State

Table 1 shows the data from responses on the digital literacy of librarians in academic libraries in Taraba State, Nigeria. There are ten (10) item statements covering responses on the digital literacy of library staff. The table shows a total disagreement among the respondents on their opinion on the digital literacy skills possessed of librarians as it yielded a cluster average mean score of 2.49 with a standard deviation (St. Dev.) of .92. The cluster average mean value for Table 1 is below the criterion mean of 2.50 set for this study, hence, the decision of disagreement. Furthermore, the responses per item statement show the agreement of

the following item statements by the majority of the respondents. They include: I can use the Internet in search of information 3.40(.86); I can use the Internet to communicate information 2.50(.84); I can conduct website evaluation 2.88(.86); I can use Boolean logic 2.91(.91); and I can design a database 3.27(.84). Furthermore, majority of the respondents that constitute 1.70(1.09), 2.39(.69), 2.08(1.05), 1.94(.80), and 1.84(1.23) disagreed with the following item statements: I can use the computer systems for information dissemination, I can use different software, I can design a simple webpage, I can obtain product keys for software, and I can populate a database.

This study showed that the majority of the respondents disagreed with 5 of the 10 item statements (see item statements 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10) on digital literacy possessed by librarians in the academic libraries studied as reported in Table 1. This disagreement of the item statements accounts for a cluster average mean value of 2.49 with a standard deviation of 0.92.

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of responses on digital literacy skills possessed by librarians in academic libraries in Taraba State.

S/n	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	St. Dev.	Remark
1	I can use the Internet in search of information	64	32	6	7	3.40	.86	Agreed
2	I can use the Internet to communicate information	22	13	72	2	2.50	.84	Agreed
3	I can use computer systems for information dissemination	10	23	-	76	1.70	1.09	Disagreed
4	I can conduct website evaluation	31	37	38	3	2.88	.86	Agreed
5	I can use Boolean logic	40	19	50	-	2.91	.91	Agreed
6	I can use different software	13	17	79	-	2.39	.69	Disagreed
7	I can design a simple webpage	14	22	32	41	2.08	1.05	Disagreed
8	I can design a database	50	44	9	6	3.27	.84	Agreed
9	I can obtain product keys for software	6	13	58	32	1.94	.80	Disagreed
10	I can populate a database	21	11	7	70	1.84	1.23	Disagreed
Cluster Average						2.49	.92	Disagreed

Research Objective 2: To examine areas in which librarians in academic libraries in Taraba State apply their digital literacy skill

Table 2 presents data from responses by librarians on areas in which librarians in academic libraries in Taraba State apply their digital literacy skills. There are twenty (20) item statements covering responses on various aspects of services undertaken by librarians in the digital age. The result reports a total agreement by the respondents (librarians) on areas in which librarians in Taraba State apply their digital literacy skills as it accounts for a cluster average mean score of 2.98 with a standard deviation (St. Dev.) of .78. The agreement is because the cluster average mean exceeds the criterion mean of 2.50 set for this study.

Furthermore, the result shows that the majority of the respondents agreed to some of the item statements such as: I deploy my digital literacy skills in delivering digital reference services 3.52(.69); I apply my skills in conducting information scouting services 3.46(.55); I apply my skills in offering Internet services 3.44(.57); I apply my skills in the use of Artificial Intelligent (such as Chat GPT) 3.14(.87); I apply my skills in carrying out adaptive learning services 2.77(1.07); I apply my skills in engaging in online marketing platforms 3.28(.67); I apply my skills in conducting bibliographic search services 2.99(.74); I apply my skills when undertaking literature review services 3.25(.61); I apply my skills when performing books and articles publication services 3.19(.83); I apply my skills when advertising the library on the media 3.29(.79); I apply my skills in the selection of the right databases for the library 3.23(.65); I apply my skills when engaging in library website maintenance 3.16(.77); I apply my skills in creating digital humanity services 2.73(1.03); I apply my skills in website development services 2.76(.77); I apply my skills when offering library blogging services 2.65(.88); I apply my skills when using presentation software to deliver my services 2.89(.74); and I apply my skills when delivering “Ask a Librarian” services 3.12 (.45).

However, the majority of the respondents that constitute mean scores and standard deviation of 2.07(1.10), 2.32(.86), and 2.41(.92), disagreed with the following item statements: I apply my skills in

delivering research data consultation services, I apply my skills when offering digital scholarship support services, and I apply my skills when offering virtual library services, respectively.

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of responses by librarians on areas in which librarians in academic libraries in Taraba State apply their digital literacy skill

S/n	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	St. Dev.	Remark
11	I deploy my digital literacy skills in delivering digital reference services	65	40	-	4	3.52	.69	Agreed
12	I apply my skills in conducting information-scouting services	53	53	3	-	3.46	.55	Agreed
13	I apply my skills in offering Internet services	52	53	4	-	3.44	.57	Agreed
14	I apply my skills in the use of Artificial intelligence (such as Chat GPT)	41	50	10	8	3.14	.87	Agreed
15	I apply my skills in carrying out adaptive learning services	31	43	14	21	2.77	1.07	Agreed
16	I apply my skills in engaging in online marketing platforms	41	61	4	3	3.28	.67	Agreed
17	I apply my skills in conducting bibliographic search services	29	50	30	-	2.99	.74	Agreed
18	I apply my skills when undertaking literature review services	37	62	10	-	3.25	.61	Agreed
19	I apply my skills when performing book and article publication services	44	48	11	6	3.19	.83	Agreed
20	I apply my skills when advertising the library on the media	50	45	10	4	3.29	.79	Agreed
21	I apply my skills in the selection of the right databases for the library	38	58	13	-	3.23	.65	Agreed
22	I apply my skills when engaging in library website maintenance	37	55	13	4	3.16	.77	Agreed
23	I apply my skills in creating digital humanity services	28	43	19	19	2.73	1.03	Agreed
24	I apply my skills in website development services	18	51	36	4	2.76	.77	Agreed
25	I apply my skills when offering library blogging services	20	40	40	9	2.65	.88	Agreed
26	I apply my skills when using presentation software to deliver my services	21	58	27	3	2.89	.74	Agreed
27	I apply my skills in delivering research data consultation services	12	33	15	49	2.07	1.10	Disagreed
28	I apply my skills when delivering "Ask a Librarian" services	19	84	6	-	3.12	.45	Agreed
29	I apply my skills when offering digital scholarship support services	8	39	42	20	2.32	.86	Disagreed
30	I apply my skills when offering virtual library services	12	41	36	20	2.41	.92	Disagreed
Cluster Average						2.98	.78	Agreed

Research Objective 3: To examine the perceived effects of digital literacy skills possessed by the librarians in academic libraries in Taraba State on their adaptation to the digital age.

Table 3 presents data generated on the perceived effects of digital literacy skills possessed by the librarians in academic libraries in Taraba State on their adaptation to the digital age. There are twenty (20) item statements covering responses on the perceived effects of the librarians' digital literacy skills. The result reports a total agreement by the respondents (librarians) as it accounts for a cluster average mean score of 3.24 with a standard deviation (St. Dev.) of .73. The agreement is because the cluster average mean exceeds the criterion mean of 2.50 set for this study.

Furthermore, the result shows that the majority of the respondents agreed to some of the item statements such as: My digital literacy skills enables me to effectively deliver digital reference services 3.58(.50); It enables me to conduct information scouting services 3.33(.77); It assist me in undertaking Internet services 3.38(.66); The skills enable me to use Artificial Intelligent (such as Chat GPT) 3.17(.66); It assist me in efficiently carrying out adaptive learning services 3.40(.75); The skills enable me to fully utilize online marketing platforms 2.94(.81); It assist me in efficiently carrying out adaptive learning services 3.17(.78); It enables me to efficiently undertake literature review services using different databases 3.08(.82); It enables me to excellently performs books and articles publication services 3.11(.74); It enables me to effectively advertise the library on the media 3.32(.67); It enables me in the selection of the right databases for the library 3.52(.69); My digital literacy skills enables me to fully engage in library website maintenance 3.46(.55); It enables me in the delivery of digital humanity services 3.44(.57); It gives me the ability to effectively engage in website development services 3.14(.87); It gives me the ability to effective offer library blogging services 2.77(1.07); It enables me to efficiently use presentation software to deliver my services 3.28(.67); It enables me to comfortably deliver research data consultation services using SPSS or any other platforms 2.99(.74), It enables me to effectively deliver "Ask a Librarian" services 3.25(.61), I can effectively offer digital scholarship support services 3.19(.83), and The skills assist me when offering virtual library services 3.29(.79).

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of responses by librarians on the perceived effects of digital literacy skills possessed by the librarians in academic libraries in Taraba State on their adaptation to the digital age

S/n	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	St. Dev.	Remark
31	My digital literacy skills enable me to effectively deliver digital reference services	63	46	-	-	3.58	.50	Agreed
32	It enables me to conduct information-scouting services	54	39	14	2	3.33	.77	Agreed
33	It assists me in undertaking Internet services	52	46	11	-	3.38	.66	Agreed
34	The skills enable me to use Artificial Intelligent (such as Chat GPT)	35	58	16	-	3.17	.66	Agreed
35	It assists me in efficiently carrying out adaptive learning services	58	40	8	3	3.40	.75	Agreed
36	These skills enable me to fully utilize online marketing platforms	29	47	30	3	2.94	.81	Agreed
37	It assists me in conducting bibliographic search services	39	53	15	4	3.17	.78	Agreed
38	It enables me to efficiently undertake literature review services using different databases	37	48	20	4	3.08	.82	Agreed
39	It enables me to perform book and article publication services excellently	36	49	24	-	3.11	.74	Agreed
40	It enables me to effectively advertise the library on the media	44	59	3	3	3.32	.67	Agreed
41	It enables me the select the right databases for the library	65	40	-	4	3.52	.69	Agreed

42	My digital literacy skills enable me to fully engage in library website maintenance	53	53	3	-	3.46	.55	Agreed
43	It enables me the deliver digital humanity services	52	53	4	-	3.44	.57	Agreed
44	It gives me the ability to effectively engage in website development services	41	50	10	8	3.14	.87	Agreed
45	It gives me the ability to effectively offer library blogging services	31	43	14	21	2.77	1.07	Agreed
46	It enables me to efficiently use presentation software to deliver my services	41	61	4	3	3.28	.67	Agreed
47	It enables me to comfortably deliver research data consultation services using SPSS or any other platform	29	50	30	-	2.99	.74	Disagreed
48	It enables me to effectively deliver “Ask a Librarian” services	37	62	10	-	3.25	.61	Agreed
49	I can effectively offer digital scholarship support services	44	48	11	6	3.19	.83	Disagreed

Discussion

The study reported the possession of few digital literacy skills by the librarians in Taraba State. This is evident considering the agreement with the possession of only five (5) out of 10 digital literacy skills investigated. The digital literacy skills found to be possessed by the librarians include the ability to use the Internet in search of information, the ability to use the Internet to communicate information, the ability to conduct website evaluation, the ability to use Boolean logic, and the ability to design a database. In light of this, the study refers to the earlier study of Anyaoku et al. (2015b), which investigated the information literacy practices of librarians in universities in South East Nigeria and found that the librarians are highly skilled in Internet information search and retrieval, creating web pages, use of reference managers and Boolean search techniques. This finding contradicts the report of the present study based on the disagreement with the possession of digital literacy skills in the areas of the ability to use computer systems for information dissemination, the ability to use different software, design a simple webpage, obtain product keys for software, and populate. Hence, there a little variation in findings. The variation could likely be a result of variations in time, geographical location, and respondents.

On the areas the librarians apply their digital literacy skills, the study found different areas of application. They include delivering digital reference services, conducting information scouting services, offering Internet services, using Artificial intelligence (such as Chat GPT), carrying out adaptive learning services, engaging in online marketing platforms, conducting bibliographic search services, undertaking literature review services, performing books and articles publication services, advertising the library on the media, selecting the right databases for the library, library website maintenance, creating digital humanity services, website development services, library blogging services, when using presentation software, and when delivering “Ask a Librarian” services. The extent to which these services are delivered could be best imagined considering the low level of possession of digital literacy skills as reported in research object one of this study. Furthermore, Okeji et al (2020) assessed the digital literacy skills of 21st-century librarians in private university libraries in Anambra State and found that academic librarians in private universities in Anambra State possess digital literacy skills, which they apply in delivering their services. To this end, a partial reflection of the findings of the present study. Consequently, the study further agrees with that of Anyaoku, et al. (2015a) who investigated information literacy skills and perceptions of librarians in colleges of education in Nigeria and reported the lowest ability of the library to carry out a search using Boolean operators and ability to use appropriate presentation software to present information. However, the study of a non-significant relationship between the digital literacy of library staff and the delivery of services in academic libraries in Taraba State is a clear indication that the library staff is yet to fully uncover the full potential of digital ability in delivering their services. This could be a result of different traits or inhibiting factors to the proper application of digital technologies in libraries. Except this is done, the library staff may still lack the ability to understand the pride of place of digital literacy in their activities.

The study found numerous perceived effects of the possession of digital literacy skills on the librarians' adaptation to the digital age. These effects can be seen in the areas of enabling them to effectively deliver digital reference services, conduct information scouting services, undertake Internet services, and use Artificial intelligence (such as Chat GPT). Other perceived effects include assisting them in efficiently carrying out adaptive learning services, carrying out adaptive learning services, utilizing online marketing platforms, efficiently undertaking literature review services using different databases, excellently performing books and articles publication services, effectively advertising the library on the media, selecting the right databases for the library, enables them to fully engage in library website maintenance, enables them in the delivery of digital humanity services, engaging in website development services, effectively offering library blogging services, efficiently use presentation software to deliver my services, enables them to comfortably deliver research data consultation services using SPSS or any other platforms, enables them to effectively deliver "Ask a Librarian" services, effectively offering digital scholarship support services, and assist them when offering virtual library services. Given these effects, the study largely agrees with the submission. To this end, reference is made to the study of Endouware and Dushu (2021), which reported that digital literacy skills are essential for the delivery of library services in the 21st century. Agreeable Emiri (2015) submitted that digital literacy skills are beneficial to professionals across disciplines because they assist in carrying out their day-to-day activities, especially, in the digital age.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Addressing the digital divide has remained the major focus towards tackling the challenges bedevilling the deployment of modern technologies into library service delivery. If this digital divide is allowed to continue, libraries, especially academic libraries in Nigeria will continue to suffer major setbacks other than inadequate funding, which has often characterized the major challenge facing Nigerian libraries. Given this, the study investigated the possession of digital literacy skills by librarians as an end to the digital divide felt in academic libraries in Taraba State, Nigeria. The study found the possession of few digital literacy skills by these librarians, which they apply in different areas. It is, however, doubtful, based on assumption, to say that these areas are fully undertaken, due to the possession of few skills. The study further found numerous perceived effects of the librarians' digital literacy skills on their adaptation to the digital age. Based on the findings, the study concludes that the acquisition of digital literacy skills and their rightful application remains the panacea to the digital divide prevalent in academic libraries in Taraba State when compared with other libraries outside the country. To this end, the study makes the following recommendations:

1. There is a need for library administrators to provide support/incentives that will encourage the acquisition of digital literacy skills by librarians. In doing so, the librarians will appreciate the need to acquire such skills
2. It is also recommended that librarians should scale up their interest in digital literacy skills to close the digital gap often experienced when compared to other countries.
3. Policymakers should come up with policies and programs that support digital literacy skill acquisition. This should further be enforced as a criterion for selecting and recruiting librarians at various levels
4. Further studies should be conducted in other parts of the country for a better understanding of the digital literacy skills of librarians and their readiness to bridge the digital divide.

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ADOPTION OF INCLUSIVE INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE ORGANISATION SYSTEMS IN LIBRARIES: IMPLICATIONS FOR INFORMATION ACCESSIBILITY IN DIVERSE CULTURES

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Abstract

This paper assessed how inclusive information services can be delivered through the adoption of inclusive information and knowledge organisation systems in libraries, thereby facilitating enhanced access to information in diverse societies. The reviewed literature reveals that the knowledge organisation methods in use by modern libraries have been inadvertently subjected to the limits of the understanding of their creators and the social influences of the culture of the classificationists and other knowledge organisation scholars. This often leads to difficulty in the bibliographic control of the information materials in diverse societies. The result is limited access to information. To address this imbalance, information professionals must ensure that adequate attention is given to the creation of mechanisms and frameworks to ensure the proper bibliographic control of the literature for the excluded through the adoption of knowledge organisation systems. This paper hereby recommends the creation of a national, regional or continental knowledge organisation standard and the introduction of an efficient National Union Catalogue for the harmonized creation of national/continental subject headings list for local contents.

Keywords: bibliographic control, inclusivity, diverse societies, library services, information services, knowledge organisation

Introduction

Every society strives towards enhancing the capacity of its members to enhance overall societal development. The deployment of individual skills and competencies in different areas of human endeavour results in the attainment of these societal goals and aspirations. This, of course, cannot be attained if such resources as information and knowledge are not evenly and fairly distributed. Libraries are among the various human institutions that host information in its most refined form, knowledge. Libraries are primarily established to select, acquire, organize, preserve, conserve, retrieve, and disseminate human recorded information and knowledge assets to help members of any given community attain their goals and objectives, including helping them to achieve a better understanding and adaptation into his immediate and even larger environment. The attainment of knowledge in human recorded documents, as domiciled in the library, provides man with the skills and competencies to strategically improve his livelihood and sustain his quest for better understanding and improvement of the society.

Man's desire to achieve equitable distribution of societal wealth and human resources, ushered in the concept of inclusion into the lexicon of a rather highly competitive world. This has helped to check and balance the age-long cliché of 'survival of the fittest'. The library and information sector has not been left out in the need for an inclusive society hence information which is considered a major factor of production is needed for inclusion. Failure to have an inclusive information society will leave a greater percentage of the society behind in terms of developmental strides. This creates social fission and further diminishes the aggregate human and social capital development.

Scholars, especially those in the information industry are at the forefront of the advocacy for social inclusion in every aspect of society. Moirangthe and Muritsabam (2022) observe that social Inclusion is now a universal concept and inclusivity in the library is no exception. World Bank (2013) observes that social inclusion improves the terms for individuals and groups to take part in society. It maintains that it is a process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of people, disadvantaged based on their identity, to take part in society. In the same vein, the Commission of the European Communities (2003) had earlier noted that social inclusion ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunity and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social, political, and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living that is considered normal in the society in which they live. Long before social inclusion became a universal issue, libraries around the world had already embraced the commitment to equity and

access for all its users irrespective of any kind of diversity, including people with physical impairment (Moirangthem & Phuritsabam, 2022). Libraries play an important role in increasing the social inclusion of people with special needs by providing the right information following their needs and making them well-informed and knowledgeable. Jaeger (2018) mentioned that libraries stand as the most inclusive community institution in U.S. society and have long included people with special needs as their community members. An important mandate of the library is providing equal access to information, in other words, equitable access to information resources. It is understood that accessibility and inclusion are at the very core of what libraries are all about (Small, Myhill, & Herring-Harrington, 2015).

An overview of the literature on inclusion in library and information services shows that inclusion has been tilted towards the physically challenged members of the society. Meanwhile, exclusion is not just a problem of physical features or physical abilities. Several people are excluded because of geography, technology, economic status, cultural differences, and political leanings, among others. One such area affected by cultural interference is the means of organising and creating access to information materials in libraries, knowledge organisation systems. For instance, Deodato (2010) supports the above argument by stating that knowledge organisation systems like subject headings and classification schemes tend to construct information and the world of knowledge in ways that reflect the biases of the cultures that produce them. Momeni (1985) states that although, these systems are aimed towards international application, they are generally Western-oriented and reveal certain national, religious and cultural biases. For instance, the DDC was considered to be WASPish (Western, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant). This creates an unfair treatment of literature from other parts of the world and cultures in the knowledge organisation system. The other often-neglected aspects of inclusion must be considered. Based on this premise, the study seeks to assess the delivery of inclusive information services through the adoption of inclusive information and knowledge organisation systems in libraries and its implication for information accessibility in diverse societies.

Concept of Inclusion and Diversity

Inclusion is not peculiar to information professions. It is a matter of social and multidisciplinary interest. According to the Commission of the European Communities (as cited in Adhikary, Karak, & Adhikary, 2019) social inclusion is a process which ensures that those individuals and communities at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in the economic, social, political and cultural lives, and to enjoy a standard of living that is considered normal in the society in which they live (and even work). It includes the conditions that allow them to partake and participate in decision making activities that affect their access to fundamental human rights. This definition emphasises poverty but social inclusion and exclusion cover issues that have to do with more than that. It exceeds inadequate financial capabilities but also includes the protection of individuals who are disadvantaged based on their identities and other demographic factors (Okechukwu & Ayandokun, 2022). That is why the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations (2016) defines it as the process of improving the terms of participation in society for people who are disadvantaged based on age, sex, physical challenges, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or another status, through enhanced opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights. It is as much a process as it is a goal, the objective of which is to erase its direct opposite, social exclusion.

According to Cahyaningtya and Priyanto (2021), the concept of social inclusion was first coined in Paris in the 1970s as a response to the welfare crisis in Europe. The concept of social inclusion also received much attention after being discussed at the World Summit for Social in Development Copenhagen, Denmark. The summit resulted in the agreement that social inclusion focused on:

- (a) eradication of poverty,
- (b) reduction of unemployment, and expansion of work opportunities (productive work and reduction of unemployment), and
- (c) social integration (creating an enabling environment for new entrants like immigrants to settle and thrive in their new communities).

O'mara and Richter (2011) explain diversity and inclusion separately. The authors define diversity as the variety of differences and similarities/ dimensions among people, such as gender, race/ethnicity, tribal/indigenous origins, age, culture, generation, religion, class/caste, language, education, geography, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, work style, work experience, job role and function, thinking style, and personality type. Meanwhile, inclusion is seen as how diversity is leveraged to create a fair, equitable, healthy, and high-performing organization or community where all individuals are respected, and feel free.

As a result of the central role information plays in the sustainability of the knowledge economy in the digital era, information services are expected to be given proper attention in meeting the demands of all the members of the society irrespective of the degree of diversity. Hence, it is expected that the means for providing such information services, such as the media (including conventional and social), the opinion shapers, the government, and libraries are made to discharge their duties as expected (Okechukwu & Ayandokun, 2022).

Information and Knowledge Organisation Systems in Libraries,

A library is a collection of written, printed and other graphic materials including films, slides, phonographic records, tapes etc., housed in organized order, and interpreted to meet broad and varying needs of users for information, knowledge, recreation and aesthetic enjoyment (Ezekwe & Muokebe, 2012). Nwokocho and Horsefall (2020) state that libraries are gateways to knowledge. They have traditionally existed to collect and organise, make access to knowledge more democratic, and preserve the record of ideas for future generations (Nwosu, Osuchukwu, Obuezie, & Kanu, 2020).

According to Otiike, Bouaamri, Barát and Kiszl (2021), libraries have always been considered a vital and integral organ in a society; they are established to meet the information needs of learners, researchers and other users in the community. To the pupils libraries are a source of information and also an avenue for developing and inculcating a reading culture, to students, they enhance effective teaching and learning, to the researchers, they are road maps to conducting research, discovery and publications, while to the local community, they offer an ample environment for community outreach programmes, engagement and awareness on local and international issues affecting them.

The information explosion era has affected humans in all ramifications of life such as the workplace, academic environment, political environment and the environment in which we live in general, thus, too much information can be overwhelming and stressful for people to locate and use, causing anxiety and fatigue for users and affecting result-oriented decision making (Ekwueme, 2020). The information and knowledge organisation systems in the library are needed in the areas of describing information materials and creating access to the vast amount of human recorded knowledge available in the library. These include library classification schemes, subject headings, authority files, thesauri, indexing, abstracting and filing systems, and descriptive (cataloguing) rules, among others. Zin and Santos (2011) note that the overwhelming quantity of knowledge requires structuring. Knowledge structuring is necessary for meeting two essential challenges: facilitating an efficient retrieval of the stored contents by providing logical access points, and facilitating a better understanding of the structure of the knowledge domain and the logical relations among its main parts.

Knowledge Organization (KO), as expressed by Hjørland, (2008) is about activities such as document description, indexing and classification performed in libraries, bibliographical databases, archives and other kinds of “memory intuitions” by librarians, archivists, information specialists, subject specialists, as well as by computer algorithms and laymen. . . . In the broader meaning, it entails the social division of mental labour, that is, the organization of universities and other institutions for research and higher education, the structure of disciplines and professions, the social organization of media, the production and dissemination of “knowledge” etc.

The 21st century is marked by information explosion. The volume of information resources at the disposal of information professionals and the diverse nature of the formats and audiences have become massively complex for information professionals to handle. Therefore, the use of sophisticated information and knowledge organisation systems is required. Jackson and Farzaneh (2012) claim that the amount of information that is created every two days is roughly equivalent to the amount of information that was created between the beginning of human civilization and the year 2003. The implication of this is that the library must as well, not just adopt standard and comprehensive classification and knowledge organisation systems, it must take into consideration, the complexities associated with its diverse group of users, and literature that serves their information needs, in the acceptability of the library's choice of headings, and the treatment of the literature targeted at the satisfaction of the information needs of the users.

Concept of Information Accessibility

Accessibility means that users can identify and use resources (Abdullahi & Aliyu, 2019). Accessibility could mean authorization, opportunity, or right to access records or retrieve information from different sources of information such as the Internet, radio, posters, bulletins, newspapers, journals and libraries and information centers (Tukur, Ibrahim, & Lawal, 2022). Tuyo, Ali and Shehu (2018) state that access to information refers to the means and mode through which information is made available by providing the entire range of possibilities for making information and information services available to the public. Accessibility of library and information resources is the ease of locating and retrieving a piece of information from the storage medium by the user. According to Nwangwu & Osiname (2009) the accessibility of information resources is a means to an end.

The central significance of accessibility to all recorded knowledge and experience is underlined by the absence of any restriction of guidance to the nature of the contents of the library (Qamar, as cited in Nwachukwu, Lucky, & Salami, 2014). Information accessibility is an important concept in the literature of Library and Information Science and general information services delivery. The availability of library resources does not guarantee accessibility. Yet, accessibility is a basic precursor to the use of library resources. Resources may be available in the library and even identified bibliographically as relevant to one's subject of interest, but the user may not be able to lay hands on them (Aguolu & Aguolu, 2002; Adeoye & Popoola, 2011). Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) further explained that accessibility is directly proportional to the use of information resources. This implies that it is those resources that are accessible with minimal efforts that can be used by library patron.

The proliferation of information sources and communication media has led to an exponential rise in the volume of information produced daily. As the human population increases, especially in heterogeneous and diverse societies like Nigeria, the nature and volume of information materials published increases. In the quest for the satisfaction of users' diverse information needs, accessibility must be considered a key factor. That is why libraries must engage in the use of bibliographic control mechanisms such as knowledge organisation systems to ensure that human recorded knowledge in diverse forms, and from diverse users is accessible. Therefore, it is through accessibility, facilitated by inclusive knowledge organisation systems, to the diverse human recorded knowledge that inclusion can be facilitated. Failure to create access to the diverse information needs of the larger society will lead to the exclusion of the under-privileged from access to information. And this is a threat to inclusive participation in societal development.

Rationale and Strategies for the Adoption of Inclusive Information and Knowledge Organisation Systems in Libraries

Social exclusion robs individuals of dignity, security, and the opportunity to lead a better life; and unless the root causes of structural exclusion and discrimination are addressed, it will be challenging to support sustainable inclusive growth and rapid poverty reduction (World Bank, 2024). Libraries can create social capital by offering diverse programmes and activities that can facilitate the plurality of society with differences, cultural backgrounds, economic status, and interests; and connect with other institutions in the community that can improve literacy (Wiyono, 2021). The argument here is that libraries based on social inclusion are libraries that facilitate communities to develop their potentials by viewing cultural diversity, willingness to accept change, and offering opportunities to strive for, protect and advocate culture and human rights. Literature exists on various subjects, and also originates from diverse sources. It is only sensible that adequate treatment is given to the processing of bibliographic items in order to facilitate accessibility. However, the biases associated with the culture and situation of the creators of most knowledge organisation systems sometimes deny users accessibility. As noted by Momeni (1985), although these systems are aimed toward international application, they are generally Western oriented and reveal certain national, religious and cultural biases.

Facilitating ease of access to the diverse information resources available in libraries and information centres therefore requires sustainable efforts and meticulously implemented strategies: Such strategies are outlined as follows:

- i. *Introduction of library policy on inclusion and diversity. If this will not be a stand-alone document, inclusion should be very pronounced in all other policies such as the Collection Development and Management Policy of the library. The Policy should outline the ratio of its publication that will address the excluded populace in its collection. This must be done in line with the results of the library's community analysis.*
- ii. *Creation of and adoption of in-house knowledge organisation systems in support of standard classification schemes and subject headings that often neglect excluded users of the library. This is the most vital aspect of the implementation state because only with this method will access be guaranteed, to acquired and available information users.*
- iii. *Capacity building for library staff on the creation of in-house classification and knowledge organisation methods. This will help in ensuring continuity and stability of the practice in the long-run.*
- iv. *Diversity in the recruitment process in the library. This will help the library bring in people of diverse socio-cultural backgrounds into its system. Each staff member is considered a representative of several diverse community groups.*

Challenges and Prospects of Enhancing Information Services and Accessibility through Inclusive Knowledge Organisation Systems

Inadequate bibliographic description is a threat to information accessibility and use. Inadequate bibliographic description does not give a true picture of available current information in a library, limits accessibility and creates obstacles to information retrieval (Ugah, 2007). Tomren (2003) argues that equal access to library materials is hindered by bias in subject cataloguing, both in major classification schemes (Library of Congress Classification and Dewey Decimal Classification) and major controlled subject vocabularies (Library of Congress Subject Headings and Sears Subject Headings). These classification systems and subject headings reflect the Eurocentric, male, and Christian orientations of their originators as well as the period in which they were constructed.

A classification scheme reinforces the social systems that were in place at the time and society in which the system was devised, and projects, no matter how subtly, covertly, explicitly, deliberately, inadvertently or ineffectively, the social, moral and intellectual values of that society. Hence, how we organize knowledge, including books on the shelf both reflects and shapes our perceptions about the proper order of things in the universe (Kua, 2008; Love, 2015). Tomren (2003) using the example of native Indian

literature states that both systems (LCC and DDC) also exclude numerous native concepts, lack specificity within native topics, fail to organize native material in ways conducive to retrieval, and at times use offensive or outdated terminology. The effect of this in library services delivery leads to a perceived lack of relevance, but more importantly, a lack of recognition of the sovereignty of American Indian nations. This results in hindering access to American Indian materials to all users, discouraging Native people from using libraries by reinforcing the image of the library as a non-Native institution, and reinforcing to the outside world the stereotypes that American Indians are part of the past and do not contribute relevant knowledge to contemporary society.

In the Nigerian context, Lund, Agbaji, Tijani and Omame (2019) revealed that 81% of academic libraries in the U.S. and 93% in Nigeria use LCC for classifying the majority of their collections; except for a library that currently uses DDC, in which case the employees tend to prefer DDC over LCC. This implies that Nigerian academic and even public libraries rely on foreign knowledge organisation systems that have been confirmed to have Western biases. Johnson (2017) states that the foundational structure of Dewey strongly prioritizes Western culture, concerns, and traditional identities. Fox, (2019) also iterates that 65 of 100 of the standard DDC hundreds of classes are devoted to Christianity and the New Testament alone. For the United States of America where the DDC and LC schemes were created, this may be understandable and applicable since 70.6% of Americans are Christians, while non-Christian faiths (Muslims, Buddhists, Jews, Hindus, and other world religions) account for 5.9% of the population (Pew Research Centre, 2019). However, for a heterogeneous, multi-religious and multicultural nation like Nigeria, this calls for concern because there is a balance between the major religions, Christianity and Islam, in the country, with pockets of African traditional and indigenous religions which are poorly treated in the DDC scheme. Also, in the LC Scheme, *BR* to *BX* is dedicated to the Christian Bible and Christianity alone, while the rest of the global religions (Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, Theosophy, etc) were treated under *BL* to *BQ*.



(Source: *Cataloguing and Classification Laboratory of the Department of Library and Information Science, Akamu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic Unwana, Ebonyi State, Nigeria*, Picture taken by the authors).

The diagram above depicts the biased treatment that shows lack of exhaustive treatment of the other global religion compared to Christianity and the Bible.

Another challenge is the lack of inclusion in the service orientation of several libraries. The services of some libraries are too monotonous and lack innovation. This makes the library less susceptible to innovative ideas that can embrace a diverse populace in its service delivery.

Conclusion

Societies with high level of diversity and heterogeneity like Nigeria require compatible knowledge organisation mechanisms to handle the vast amount of human recorded knowledge available in the country. The neglect of certain sectors of the society in terms of information accessibility is as bad as non-availability of the information in libraries and information centres. Provision of information services can only be said to be fulfilled if the information resources are usable and used. Their usability cannot be fully realised unless they are accessible. The implication is that the availability of information can only be meaningful when it is accessible. However, the knowledge organisation methods in use by modern libraries have been inadvertently subjected to the limits of understanding of their creators and the social influences of the culture of the classificationists and other knowledge organisation scholars. This often leads to difficulties in the bibliographic control of the information materials on diverse societies. The result is limited access to information.

Recommendations

To address the imbalance depicted, even pictorially and reflected in literature as explained above, information professionals must ensure that adequate attention is given to the creation of mechanisms and

frameworks to ensure the proper bibliographic control of the literature for the excluded. This paper hereby recommends the following:

- i. *The creation of a national, regional or continental knowledge organisation standard by a combination of efforts from national library associations and the national libraries across Africa. This will help put in place, a standard knowledge organisation mechanism that considers all the excluded sectors of the society.*
- ii. *Introduction of an efficient National Union Catalogue which all libraries, especially academic and public libraries must be involved in other to identify local/indigenous subjects that have not been properly catered for in international knowledge organisation systems. This will facilitate and harmonize the creation of a national/continental subject headings list for local content.*

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ADOPTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ACADEMIC LIBRARY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The benefits accrued to the engagement of social media for academic service delivery to the user community cannot be overemphasized, Users' attitudes to library services have changed in recent times especially due to the advent of ICT and the proliferation of information in various formats. Librarians therefore need to adapt to the new changes in attitude by meeting their needs in any convenient environment where the users exist. Most academic library users are expert users of social media and so librarians are expected to adopt the use of social media for library service delivery since the users are readily available on various social media platforms. Libraries in developing countries are yet to fully key into this and so this study seeks to explore the services that can be rendered on social media, the challenges of adoption and the benefits of adopting social media by libraries. The paper adopted a narrative review as a methodology for conducting research. It revealed the various services that could be rendered with the adoption of social media including; community analysis, inter-library loans, current awareness service, library marketing/advocacy, user education, service promotion and reservation service among others. It also revealed the challenges militating against the adoption of social media and the benefits of using social media for service delivery. It was therefore recommended that librarians should be trained to acquire the necessary skills that will aid the adoption and utilization of social media for library service delivery to users and that Management of institutions should support this movement and to also formulate favourable policies that will guide the adoption of social media for library service delivery

Keywords: *Social media, Community Engagement, Academic Libraries, Library users*

INTRODUCTION

Libraries are established to provide access to diverse information resources to a defined community of users. These communities vary based on the type of library and the purpose for which the library was established. There are five types of libraries which include the School libraries, Academic libraries, Special libraries, Public libraries and National libraries. School libraries are those found in primary and secondary schools to improve the reading habits of pupils/students and also to support the schools' curriculum. The community of users that exist in the school library include the students, teachers, school management and the parents of the students. Academic libraries however are the libraries established at higher institutions of learning like polytechnics, universities, colleges of education, seminaries and so on. They mainly support the learning and research activities of the institution and also aid in enriching the curriculum available in the institution. The users consist of the students, lecturers, faculty, management and the immediate community in which the institution is located. Special libraries however provide information and reference services to specialized groups of people who are focused on a particular knowledge area. Examples include libraries found in law firms or research institutes. The users of Public libraries consist of all members of the community in which the library is located, therefore, public libraries are expected to acquire information resources that will cater for all categories of users which include young, youth and old members of the community. National libraries are established by the federal government of a nation with specialized functions like Issuance of International Standard Book Number (ISBN) and International Standard Serial Number (ISSN), Compilation of National Bibliography and acquisition of foreign documents with national importance among others.

The focus of this article is on the academic library community. The crop of users that make up the community for academic libraries as discussed earlier include students, lecturers, faculty, management and

the immediate community. For libraries to effectively serve these users well, there is a need for constant engagement between the library and the various categories of the user community. These beneficial engagement could be strenuous due to the large number of users of an academic library therefore libraries are expected to come up with innovative channels to engage with the community of users. One major channel which is already adopted by most organizations is the use of social media, this was evident in the assertion of Tsiotsou (2020) that social media are beneficial because they do not only satisfy the needs, desires, and interests of customers, but also support interactivity for promotion and provide market intelligence to businesses. It was further stated that due to the tremendous social media growth, many companies are trying to connect themselves (and/or their brands) with customers via these platforms. Despite the benefits accrued to the use of social media in some organizations, the adoption in academic libraries or libraries generally is still very low, especially in developing countries like Nigeria.

Social media are considered the quickest-growing web technological application in every aspect of human life in the current 21st century. The innovation allows people across the world to freely interrelate with one another and has offered various means for businesses to reach their clients and engage with them in large numbers (Appel et al. 2020; Kolan & Dzandza 2018). Social media was described by Izuagbe et al. (2019) as a veritable platform through which libraries of all kinds can reach a wider audience which in turn facilitates high usage turn-over. The advent of ICT and the proliferation of various social media platforms has led to the adoption and usage of social media by young adults who make up the majority of users of the academic library. It is therefore pertinent for libraries to harness these platforms to engage with their users for better service delivery.

Statement of the problem

There have been several studies reporting the decline in the patronage of academic libraries by the user community. This category of users now relies on other sources of information to meet their information needs. Academic libraries however must always maintain relevance through constant patronage by users to justify the investment made by the parent body. The advent of Information and communication technologies has made this more difficult so libraries are expected to come up with innovative ways to remain relevant and one of the ways of achieving this is to have a social media presence which will enhance engagements with the library community. There have been several studies on the adoption and usage of social media by libraries but from observation, most libraries in developing countries have yet to fully adopt community engagement through the use of social media. It is on this premise that this study seeks to shed more light on academic community engagement through social media.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

It was revealed by Khuhro, et al. (2018), that for libraries to satisfy the expectations of library users, social networking services can and should be explored. More so that these services can help users get the information and needs they desire more quickly and efficiently. Florence, (2015) also stated that social media offers library information services that may be used to promote the library more effectively. Therefore adoption of social media for community engagement at this age cannot be ruled out as social media aids interactions between the library and the user community. Obi, et al. (2020) in their study of the influence of social media on library service delivery to students asserted that for university librarians to reach out to 21st century users better, communicate better with feedback and comply with innovations in this computer world, using social media becomes a must. The researchers also echoed that for this modern-day library to survive the present demand for information by customers in the digital age, Mobile technologies and social media must aggressively be integrated into its operations and services of libraries.

Despite the benefits obtainable by the adoption of social media, it was reported that the use of social media tools in libraries is still a relatively new area of study; Magoi et al. (2019) report that very few studies provide hard evidence on the usefulness of social media and the challenges associated with the use of social media by academic librarians in developing countries. Some studies, such as Matingwina (2014), Lwoga (2013) and Makori (2012), suggest that university libraries in Africa, are still in their infancy regarding the use of Web 2.0 tools. These developments suggest low exploitation of the potential of social media in Nigerian university libraries despite their critical role in enhancing library and information services delivery.

Yalung et al. (2020) alluded that social media has a great impact on its use by libraries as well as information organizations. It is an advantageous tool that can be used to reach out to library users and extend services through other libraries and social network sites. The application of social media is spreading day by day globally which allows users to acquire relevant information that would serve as an effective promotional means for academic libraries. For librarians to fully adopt the usage of social media for service delivery, they need to have grand knowledge of the services that can be enhanced by the adoption of social media, the challenges and the benefits they can derive by adopting social media to service delivery.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed narrative review as a methodology for conducting this research. This is adapted because a narrative review helps to summarize empirical findings on a concept or theme and relate it to the current

study. Paré et al., (2015) explained that narrative review summarizes studies on a subject of concern previously published. It concentrates on concepts, hypotheses, methods of study, or findings of the research. The literature reviewed focused on library services that can be carried out with the use of social media, the challenges confronting social media adoption in academic libraries and the benefits of adoption of social media for community engagement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Academic library services enhancement through social media.

Community Analysis: the goal of the academic library is to satisfy the information needs of the users consisting of students, lecturers, faculty, management and other members of the community. To achieve this, the library has to carry out community analysis from time to time by assessing the collection and evaluating the current needs of the users. Social media platforms like Facebook, X formerly Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and Thread are useful tools that can be used by libraries to obtain feedbacks on current needs from the user community.

Inter-Library Loan: Cooperating libraries can also use social media tools like e-mail address, X, Facebook and others to exchange messages promptly which will help enhance the delivery of inter-library loan services. Librarians do not need to travel down to other libraries to borrow books on behalf of users since communication can take place faster on social media. This was buttressed by the disclosure of Yalung et al., (2020) that social media has a great impact on its use by libraries as well as information organizations. It is an advantageous tool that can be used to reach out to library users and extend services through other libraries and social network sites.

Current Awareness Service: The library community needs to be kept abreast of various activities like recent acquisitions, new library services, various promotional campaigns and other essential information about the library and what better way to do that than the use of social media platforms like X, Facebook, Instagram, thread etc. Pictures of new acquisitions with brief information on the material can be uploaded on the listed platforms for users to see and be acquitted with the knowledge. Other new library services and promotional campaigns like World Book Day. Library and Librarians Day Celebrations can also be uploaded to create awareness among users on social media. This is supported by the admission of Saleh (2020) who stated that social media sites help in speedy transmittance of information in a current awareness service kind of way and also make it easier to access open and distance education, e-learning resources, and e-libraries.

Library Marketing/Advocacy: Social media channels can also be employed to create awareness of library services that can help generate revenues. Services like binding service, photocopying service, indexing and abstracting services and literature search services should be promoted through library social media pages. The social media pages can also be used to advocate for library needs and influence policy makers to make favourable policies that will lead to the advancement of library services. It was reported by Eje and Dushu (2018) that social media platforms aid in increasing the usage of educational and informational resources and usage of the resources available in the library is the goal of every library. Similar to that is the assertion by Yalung et al., (2020) that social media has so many benefits, for example, Facebook is commonly used to interact with users, share information about library events or news, share photos, and also market library services. Accordingly, Nduka (2015), inferred that the use of social media to market library resources and services saves time, is cost-effective and exciting, stimulates users, and facilitates access to and use of library resources and services. The media also facilitate instant information dissemination to communities creatively and allow library staff to reach more users. Library services will be patronized more if the users are made aware of the service and that will in turn lead to more profit for the library.

Library User Education: to make maximum use of the services and resources in the library, the library community, especially new users need to acquaint themselves with some requisite skills and knowledge which will enable them to harness the resources available optimally. This is usually done in an academic environment through orientation activities, classroom instruction and even guided tours of the library, but with platforms like Youtube, Instagram and LinkedIn, this user education can be converted to videos and uploaded on social media pages of the library and the necessary knowledge and skill will still be delivered to new users. Cheng, et al. (2020) avowed that libraries should take advantage of the engagement features by interacting with people through broadcasting live videos with the help of tools like Periscope, Facebook Live, and YouTube. Libraries can broadcast live videos of popular events held in the libraries such as talks of celebrities and famous authors. Recorded videos on user education can also be uploaded on Youtube and other social media platforms so that users can watch to get knowledgeable on how to use the library services and resources optimally.

Library Service Promotion: Social media allows the academic library to promote library services especially through constant posting of the various services obtainable in the library on social media. This is

evident in the submission of Akporhonor and Olise (2015) who contended that social media has become a dependable platform for the dissemination of information, a forum for feedback mechanism, research and as well for promotion. They further acknowledged that social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube and Wiki are useful for the promotion of library resources and services and the speedy collection of feedback from library patrons. Relative to that, Priolkar and Kumbhar (2015) studied the use of social media sites by library professionals and found that library professionals majorly use Facebook in disseminating information about library services to users of the library. Similarly, Cheng et al., (2020) elucidated that social media is having a massive impact on libraries and information centres to promote library services and sources, several social media bring all the library users community together in one spot to share their ideas and views about their relevant and specific information.

Mechanism for User-Feedback: Generally, social media allows for a two-way communication between the sender and the receiver, in earnest, there is always room for feedback when communicating on social media. Library services like reference services can then be carried out using social media since all reference queries can get instant responses on social media. Some libraries already have the “Ask a Librarian” service which responds to enquiries made by library users and potential library users. Libraries that currently do not have the “Ask a Librarian” service can leverage social media to render this service. In a study by Ayiah and Kumah (2011 as cited in Obi et al. 2019) the researchers confirmed that 75.8 % of the respondents in their study interacted with reference librarians concerning library services on social networks/media. In the same vein, social media also exploit a significant function in developing relationships with the community by letting users ask questions or provide feedback about library services (Jain, 2014). Shafawi and Hassan (2018) also stated that social media sites are considered the easiest way to update library outreach programs and exhibitions; they can be used as online customer services and interactive feedback platforms like the use of Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, Blogs, Widgets, YouTube, Flickr, and Instagram to name a few. The opportunity for feedback on social media can be beneficial to library service delivery in Academic libraries as users can freely express their opinion on satisfaction or dissatisfaction with library service and this will allow libraries to make informed decisions on how to serve the users better.

Reservation service: Reservation services can now be done remotely especially for libraries that are not yet automated or for libraries whose circulation module is not accessible remotely. Obi, et al. (2019) pointed out that answering reference questions, user education, current awareness services, alert users, display and exhibition, document delivery services and circulation services are library services rendered with the use of social media. Libraries can ensure that the resources circulate among users by tracking if there are pending reservations made on any material that is currently on loan through the use of social media. It was also revealed that reservation services, reference services, marketing of library services, current awareness services, user education programmes and multimedia sharing are some of the library services through which social media can enhance service provision in libraries. (Ifijeh 2014; Adetola & Okeoghene 2016; Bakare and Umar 2018 as cited in Saidu & Sani 2022). Therefore social media can enhance the reservation service of the library by ensuring material with heavy demand or materials that the library has limited copies circulate among users.

Challenges militating against the adoption of Social Media in Academic Libraries

Epileptic Power Supply: Developing countries like Nigeria are still struggling with constant power supply and this can hamper the smooth delivery of services through social media as gadgets like computers, phones and iPads need to be powered before accessing and using social media platforms. Unstable power supply was cited as a contributory factor to the low usage of social media by academic libraries (Adewojo and Mayowa-Adebara, 2016; Agyekum et al., 2016; Ahenkorah-Marfo and Akussah, 2016; Kumar, 2015; Moshah et al., 2015). In the same light, Shehu, et al., (2015) in their study of accessibility and utilization of internet service in Nigerian libraries highlighted several challenges faced by the staff while accessing the internet in Nigerian libraries. The majority of the respondents indicated that power outages and unavailability/inaccessibility of the internet were some of the challenges facing staff while accessing the internet in Nigerian libraries. It is therefore important that libraries have a constant supply of electricity and this can be achieved through the provision of alternative power backups like generator sets, solar power and UPS to support the supply of electricity in libraries.

Network Failure/Slow Speed of Internet Network Connectivity: Despite the advancement in network technology, there are still constant occurrences of slow speed of the internet and even total network failure from the service providers. This militates against the free flow of information on social media platforms as messages sent on the platform might take longer period to deliver. Studies reveal that poor technological infrastructure, and particularly slow speed of the internet especially in developing countries, have often frustrated social media users especially academic librarians who use social media as a tool for service delivery (Adewojo and Mayowa-Adebara, 2016; Ahenkorah-Marfo and Akussah, 2016; Kumar, 2015; Moshah et al., 2015; Rachman and Putri, 2018). Some other researchers also reported that limited internet access points, poor internet connectivity and limited bandwidth had a negative effect on social media usage

at selected university libraries (Agyekum et al. 2016; Chitumbo and Chewe 2015; Williams et al. 2019). Libraries are thereby advised to always subscribe to several internet providers so they can always switch to a better choice whenever there is a failure by another internet service provider.

Managerial support for the adoption of social media: accessing social media platforms requires the usage of some gadgets like computers, phones, tablets and even data subscriptions for internet access. This gadget costs money and may not be accessible to librarians and library staff. They are left at the mercy of the management of the institution and sometimes the management doesn't see it as a priority and this may affect the utilization of social media for user engagement. In the study by Bukar and Sheji (2023) the researchers opined that for libraries to offer effective and efficient services to their users, the libraries and information centre management should also provide enough internet facilities and power supplies to the library personnel and users. In another study by Adewojo and Mayowa-Adebara (2016) the researchers lamented the lack of management support as it significantly contributed to the non-use of social media tools among academic librarians in Nigeria. This was also echoed by Williams (2020) who made a similar observation about a lack of management support deterring effective social media adoption in Belgian and South African university libraries. The library management and management of institutions are encouraged to support the library by providing the needed support for the adoption of social media to library service delivery to the user community.

Unfavourable Institutional Policies: some policies that do not resonate with the adoption of social media still exist in some institutions, policies such as limiting students from using smart phones and banning or preventing access to some social media pages, especially in academic libraries. All these policies will not promote the adoption of social media for engagement of the user community in such institutions. This was revealed in a study that regardless of the potential benefits of social media to society at large and academic libraries in particular, there remains a challenge with access in some instances where some institutions of higher learning restrict or block the use of social networking sites citing network congestion or bandwidth overload (Baro et al., 2013 as cited in Chiparousha et al., 2024). In the same vein, Chitumbo and Chewe (2015), Mabweazara and Zinn (2016), Abok and Kwanya (2016) and Maisiri et al. (2015) reported that lack of clear policy on social media tools at the implementation stage deterred academic librarians from deploying social media tools at selected academic libraries in Zambia, Zimbabwe, South-Africa and Kenya. Also, Bryan and Larsen (2017) believed that libraries should have a social media policy for their employees in doing their jobs to avoid cybercriminals and other technological threats. In addition, Boruah, et al., (2022) did mention that the Social Media Policy (SMP) gives libraries instructions on how to utilize social media in an organized and systematic way to provide services and information, get user input, and maintain user involvement.

Inadequate skilled personnel: usage of social media requires some basic ICT skills and if these skills are absent, the adoption of social media in libraries will not be possible. This was highlighted by Bokoh et al. (2022) who hinted that libraries need to train new experts in fields including digital material creation, new metadata formats, software development, and systems administration. In the same light, Bukar and Sheji (2023) in their study recommended that library administration should give abundant opportunities for librarians to be trained and retrained in social media skills and developing technology. Similarly, it was reported that academic librarians' lack of requisite knowledge and confidence on how to use social media tools can be a stumbling block to social media use. Therefore, there is a need for academic librarians to undertake training on the effective use of social media especially in the context of their work (Agyekum et al., 2016; Maisiri et al., 2015; Moshia et al., 2015; Ternenge 2019). In a study by Tion et al., (2019) the researchers highlighted some of the issues with the adoption and use of social media in university libraries which include poor internet, lack of qualified staff, lack of proper skills and behaviour of library staff to adopt social media in their respective libraries to enhance their services. Librarians should be able to adapt to the ever-changing means of information service delivery by developing relevant skills needed to use the several social media tools to continually provide effective service delivery to the community of users.

Benefits of using social media for service delivery

Wider reach: social media platforms make it possible for others who are not registered users of the library to know about the services, resources and activities of the library which might lead to the library generating new users. This is in line with Jones and Harvey's (2019) remark that social media is the finest channel for connecting with potential library patrons. Additionally, it offers cosy and adaptable virtual platforms to attract library patrons. With social media, library services can be offered to the users of the library even when they are not physically present in the library. This was observed by Oyeniran and Olajide (2019) that social media's presence is almost everywhere and the vision of the library within the last few years has been that library services should go to users not necessarily that users should come physically to the library. The algorithm of social media is such that users who are friends with users of the library who are following the library's social media page can also access the contents of the library especially when it is shared by the library user.

Increased revenue: the library can generate more revenue through users' awareness of services like binding, photocopying, indexing and abstracting services. Social media can be used to reach a wider audience which in turn could cumulate to higher revenue. Bakare et al. (2018) conducted a study related to identifying the use of social media platforms to promote library services and profitable librarianship. The findings revealed that social media platforms facilitated two-way communication and ease of communication among library users. Furthermore, it provided a forum for feedback, increased the number of library users, and benefitted librarians from experiencing traffic which is generated as users visit their blog pages. When more users are aware of the services rendered in a library, especially services that can generate revenue like photocopying services, binding services and so on. This will lead to more patronage which will also increase to revenue generated by the library.

User engagement: Engaging with users physically in the library might be cumbersome but the adoption of social media can make this process seamless and less time-consuming. Eze (2016) stated that with the use of social media platforms, the library makes its services more engaging with the students without allotting a huge budget; thus, it is an advantage for librarians. With the use of social media platforms, participation and interaction with the community becomes more active, and dissemination of information become more dynamic when users read posted messages. EBSCO (2019) also outlines new arrivals and upcoming events as possible ways to engage with social media users and keep posts interesting.

Promotes Efficiency: Social media helps to promote efficiency in library service delivery as librarians can respond to users' queries faster and better online without the users necessarily visiting the library. This was pointed out by Kumar (2015) who divulged that social media can be used to strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of present communication channels. It was also highlighted in some other research that the ability of academic librarians to attend to some library patrons in remote locations using social media saved much time for library patrons, who in the past, would have had to visit the library physically (Anwar & Zhiwei, 2019; Rachman & Putri, 2018). Chiparausha et al. (2024) also noted that social media tools enable librarians to improve their job performance and job productivity and accomplish tasks faster.

Conclusion

Libraries social media page can be used to keep the image of the library alive as it facilitates two-way interaction between the librarians and the user community. For libraries to remain relevant and to continually meet the ever-dynamic needs of the users, libraries must move with the trend of adopting new technologies and social media tools to deliver effective and efficient services which will ensure services are delivered promptly to the users. The benefit accrued to the adoption of social media in service delivery to the user community is endless but librarians must be open to acquiring the skills required and the library management is expected to provide the necessary support to enable the library to tap into these numerous benefits.

Recommendations

For academic libraries to adopt service delivery through social media platforms, the following recommendations are hereby suggested.

- *Librarians in academic libraries and other type of libraries should be trained to acquire the skills necessary to master the rudiments of service delivery to the user community through social media*
- *The management of institutions and libraries need to be enlightened on the benefits of social media adoption by libraries through various advocacy campaigns so they can make favourable policies for social media adoption*
- *Enlightenment workshops and conferences should be organized by the Nigeria Library Association (NLA) and the Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) for the promotion of social media adoption by all libraries in the country.*

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ADVOCATING FOR THE INTEGRATION OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE ACQUISITION OF LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICES FOR SUSTAINED ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper revisits the concept of advocating, integrating, cultural diversity, inclusion, cultural diversity, acquisition of library resources and services and academic excellence. It discusses the nexus between cultural diversity and inclusion in library acquisition such as it is essential for building a safe and serene society, democracy, self-government, personal development, and social progress and aligns all to the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and much talked about the expectations of librarians on the acquisition of resources and services for integrating cultural diversity and inclusion. All the time, it concluded that the idea should be embraced by library management to sustain academic excellence in university libraries. Finally, advocating for integrating cultural diversity and inclusion in the acquisition of library resources and services for sustained academic excellence was highlighted. It advocated for the management of university libraries should advocate in their library strategic planning for the acquisition of resources on cultural diversity and inclusiveness for the marginalized.

Keywords: Advocating, Integrating, Cultural Diversity; Library Resources and Services; Academic Excellence. University Libraries.

Introduction

Fundamentally, academic excellence would best be archived through library resources and services acquisition for the integration of cultural diversity and inclusion. It is the best approach towards actualising peaceful co-existence and sustainable development of any individual, community, society and system of any type. It is also believed that to experience changes and transformation which could be intentional or unintentional at one time or the other, especially in areas such as socio-economic, socio-political, educational, moral, cultural, psychological, intellectual, etc, as well as to effectively and efficiently respond to anticipated and unexpected societal changes, circumstance and expectations library resources and services are essential for cultural diversity while at the same time cultural inclusion in society. It would have a profound impact on the developmental index of any society, and it is essential and ethical for sustained academic excellence. Paradoxically, the way and manner of such advocacy for integrating cultural diversity and inclusion in the acquisition of library resources and services occur should be strategic and systematic to effectively and efficiently respond to the needs of the moment. Thus, library resources and services of any type, environment and establishment, should be a catalyst and aimed at a paradigm shift to accommodate any form of the customer for sustained academic excellence and promote healthy diversity and inclusive society for the well-being of all. Specifically, the objectives of the paper are therefore to:

1. Provide conceptual explanation on the concept of advocating, integrating, cultural diversity, inclusion, cultural diversity, acquisition of library resources and services and academic excellence;
2. Discuss the state of the affairs;
3. Cultural diversity and inclusion in library acquisition: The Nexus;
4. Expectations of librarians on the acquisition of resources and services for integrating cultural diversity and inclusion for academic excellence;
5. The role of library schools on acquisition of resources and services for integrating cultural diversity and inclusion for academic excellence
6. Highlight the challenges of advocating for the integrating cultural diversity and inclusion in the acquisition of library resources and services for sustained academic excellence in university libraries;

7. Proffer possible ways forward to addressing the challenges.

Advocating

Conceptually, advocating is an organised act or an attempt to address, and change policy, practices, and/or attitudes by presenting evidence and arguments for how and why changes should happen. The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language (2013) conceived advocating as an act to speak or write in favour of, defending, recommending or pleading the cause of another. According to the Open Society Foundation, (2010) advocating is an act for change through building awareness, presenting evidence and arguments for why and how change should happen, engaging people who have the power to make those changes and the effort can be achieved through involving a mix of different activities such as direct lobbying, funding organizations, coalition building, strategic litigation and media outreach. Thus, advocating can be local, national, international or global in scope.

Integrating

Perceptively, integrating is to form, coordinate, blending into a functioning or unified whole. **McIntosh (2013) conceived integrating as mixing or joining a society or a group of people, often changing to suit their way of life, habits and customs. In another perception,** Gullede (2006) described integrating as a process, a condition, a system, and an end-state. Generally, integrating concerns makes a system or a society work together that was never intended to work together through some form of interface to achieve desired outcomes/goals.

Cultural Diversity

Conceptually, diversity can be viewed as ways in which people are of different ages, generations, races, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, intellectual and physical ability, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, level of education and faith, as well as skills, knowledge, experience and perspectives (Shared Leadership, 2023). Association of American Library (2012) construed diversity as a congruent set of behaviours, attitudes, and policies that enable a person or group to work effectively in cross-cultural situations, as well as the process by which individuals as systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, and other diverse factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms and values the worth of individuals, families, communities as well as protect and preserve the dignity of each. From another perspective Cong (2020) conceived diversity as an open-ended term which generally refers to a reality of coexistence of diverse knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, religions, languages, abilities and disabilities, genders, ethnicities, races, nationalities, sexual orientations, etc., of human beings.

Thus, cultural diversity can be conceived as the way people react to reality and the way people choose to live together with reality. It is the total way of people's life, how they are been understood irrespective of the mind, race, ethnicity, colour, nation, different beliefs, religions, cultural practices and behaviour to achieve interconnectedness of cultures, facilitated by technology, trade, beliefs, values and practices.

Inclusion

In another dimension, inclusion can be conceived as welcoming diversity, offering everyone a sense of belonging, differences are respected and valued in an environment free from discriminatory attitudes, and behaviours, people having equal opportunities and reasonable adjustments are made to accommodate differences where needed (Shared Leadership, 2023). It is the placement of individuals living with disabilities or in need of special support in education, integration of individuals or groups as well as meeting the social and academic needs, providing a needed special support actively achieve their goals and be respected, valued in the pursuit of their social and academic needs, support and be supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of life (Krischeler, Justin and Ineke, 2019). Inclusion can also be perceived as taking into account all social, cultural and linguistic diversity (including learning styles, abilities, disabilities, gender, family circumstances and geographic location) of individuals in decision-making processes (Allen, n.d).

Inclusion intends to ensure that all individuals, citizens, and library customers would have recognition, value, equitable access to resources and services, participate and have opportunities to demonstrate their ability, and differences as well as belong to a diverse society. An inclusive environment is holistic and it recognises the unique contributions of each individual and their family to make the diverse community rich as well as lay practices and the foundation for each individual to participate within a diverse community

Acquisition of Library Resources and Services

Depending on the prevailing circumstances, library resources can be seen as containers, vases, mediums or platforms in which information is contained. It could be information sources or a point of reference from which certain or other related information resources can be obtained as well as different types, content and formats in which information is safely kept/preserved, identified, verified, located, retrieved, access,

transfer, disseminate and utilised (Mohammed, 2017). He further buttresses that the acquisition of library resources can be in the form of acquiring databases, print and electronic documents such as books, references collections, textbooks and novels, ephemeral; periodicals and serial publication; government documents; correspondence and memos; and ICTs such computers, telephones of different brands and make, internet and another virtual network environment, etc for teaching learning, research and relaxation. Library services can be conventional and contemporary such as the automation of the system to allow the removal of information resources from the shelf for use at whatever for a defined period, especially under the loan schemes and to be returned on or before the due date; the copying of the information resources into customers personal computer, download to a reading devices, or stored in a customer's digital library, etc (having met the copyright obligation), leaving the original resources intact in the library system. Umar (2013) argued that the contribution of library resources and services is among the greatest expectations by societies across the world for their teaming citizens for the ever-changing needs of their citizens. The -growing demand for information in areas especially businesses and-ever-changing technologies has become a complex situation faced by societies' cultural diversity and inclusiveness. Thus, it calls for creative and innovative solutions to mitigate the cultural devastating effects on the societies.

Other library resources and services include printed books, papers delivered at professional meetings, dissertations/theses, newspapers and magazines, printed abstracts and indexes, manuscript and other primary source documents, printed journals, online abstracts, and indexes, online databases, e-journals, e-books, technical/scientific reports, discussion group, photograph, print and other visual sources, current awareness services, selective dissemination of information, newsgroup and alert service, library websites, online catalogue (OPAC), online database, online information services of all sorts, e-publications, online inquiry desk, current awareness services, selective dissemination of information, bulletin boards, complains/suggestions centres, exhibition stands, users education, social networking to reach millions of customers. In effect, whether the customers are physically able, disabled or differently able, there should not be discriminated resources and services provided to satisfy their needs

Academic Excellence

Academic excellence showcases an individual's ability to excel in school activities, education services, and quality character through teaching, learning and research being crucial factors. Khaleel and Rasha (2023) perceived academic excellence as an individual in school excelling through providing a serene environment for teaching, learning and research and bringing out the best student performance, impactful research, critical thinking, innovative skills, intellectual growth, and high academic standards. It is an excellent strive to achieve and establish an effective teaching-learning environment, methodologies, faculty expertise, research and innovation, and students' success and reputations through commitment and focus on core values (Alhosani, Rashid, Khaleel and Firas, 2023). In another dimension, Abubakar, (2024) argued that academic excellence is often taken for granted or overlooked by the academic community despite it being a responsibility that allows students/researchers to explore diverse perspectives and challenge established norms or practices that interfere with their research/inquiry. This assertion leads to Fredrich-Alexander-Universitat Erlangen-Nurberg (FAU) and the V-Den Institute's five key indicators of the Academic Freedom Index (AFI) dataset such as freedom to research and teach, freedom of academic exchange and dissemination, institutional autonomy, campus integrity, and freedom of academic and cultural expression. It is on this premise that academic excellence can be construed as the demonstrated ability to perform, achieve, and/or excel in scholastic activities through creating essential an environment that fosters the development of a community through diversity and inclusion, building culture of community engagement, learning about others, respect for individual differences, opinions in all forms, advancing knowledge, informed research and best practice as well as promoting environment that can grow learners intellectually, socially and ethically.

Generally, advocating for the integrating cultural diversity and inclusion in the acquisition of library resources and services for sustained academic excellence in university libraries can be conceived as an organised act to or an attempt to address, change policy, practices and/or attitudes by presenting evidence and argument tto form, coordinate, blend into a functioning or unified whole on how and why people will be allowed to choose to live together in reality without infringing their way of life, irrespective of their, race, ethnicity, color, nations, beliefs, religions, cultural practices as well as behaviours to achieve interconnectedness and ensure that all library customers have recognition, value, equitable access to resources and services to participate and have opportunities to demonstrate their ability, difference through access to library resources and services especially printed books, papers delivered at professional meetings, dissertations/theses, newspapers and other primary source documents, printed journals, online abstracts, and indexes, online databases, e-journals, e-books, technical/scientific reports, discussion group, photograph, print and other visual sources, current awareness services, selective dissemination of information, newsgroup and alert service, library websites, online catalogue (OPAC), online database, online information services of all sorts, social networking to showcases individual's ability to excel in school activities, education service, quality character, teaching, learning and research being crucial factors for inclusive society.

The State of the Affairs

Taking Nigeria as a case study, it is a country with diverse cultures, traditions and languages spoken by its estimated 215 million people. It is also argued that there are about 274 public and private universities with libraries and library customers from about 396 ethnic groups adhering majorly to two religions (Islam and Christianity) the third one being the Traditional Religion. It is also argued that in any democratic society, the free exchange of ideas is an important part of making sure that citizens are informed, and engaged in government programmes and activities to have adverse effects on the collective national unity, integration, cohesion, diffusion, progress and advancement economically, politically, culturally, socially, scientifically, and technologically

Despite Under the theme *Let's work together, let's Library*, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA ifla@ifla.org / <https://2023.ifla.org/>) explore how libraries can contribute to an inclusive society, one in which everyone has the opportunity to participate, it is observed that some of the books that shaped the lives of so many others are being banned and challenged by religious, cultural and traditional institutions who disagree with certain ideas or perspectives. Such books are written by indigenous people and members of the marginalized community who are part of the academic community. It is also observed that religious institutions and national assemblies called for book banning in this country which was against the defence of cultural diversity and inclusion claim. Nobody understands that more than we librarians. There are evidence of deep-rooted intra and inter-community, cultural, political, ethical, and religious tensions and conflicts among the marginalization especially the aged, race, cultural and linguistic background, intellectual and physical disability, gender identity, socio-economic background, education and faith. Thus, there is no doubt in the fact that an unlettered/illiterate society and individuals cannot participate fully in any socio-economic and political agenda for enhancing the development of a nation, just as a lettered/literate individuals society that is learned and individuals that cannot be easily cheated, exploited, maneuvered and toyed around. The impulse should not be for the library to become silent on the diversity, rather it should be to advocate for integration and inclusion in other to learn from or seek to understand the views that do not fit our own. Such an approach will profoundly guide and support what made the library profession great. A librarian can together advocate for our nation to become more informed and citizens in different capacities would make this country what we want it to be despite the political climate the idea may be attacked by those who either cannot or will not understand the vital and unique role librarians play in the life of our nation to make the widest possible range of viewpoints, opinions, and ideas available to everyone to be free from ignorance, robust exchange of ideas, embrace our shared humanity as always been at the philosophy of library.

Cultural Diversity and Inclusion in Library Acquisition: The Nexus

Libraries have an opportunity and a responsibility to advocate for cultural diversity and inclusion through the acquisition of library resources and services for academic excellence. Paul (2023) argued that libraries are essential to building a safe and serene society, democracy, self-government, personal development, and social progress and align all to the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. To that end, libraries and librarians should embrace equity, diversity and inclusion in every aspect of their profession and philosophy. In another dimension, Chikelu (2024) viewed that culture has its positive side, and value and this is as a result we are all products of culture and come from the cultural backgrounds. Additionally, Acho (2024) argued that until a nation has a proper cultural identity, a search or national identity will remain a mirage. By and large, American Library Association, (2021) affirm that the inherent dignity and rights of every person should be recognized, dismantle systemic and individual biases, confront inequality and oppression, yet enhance diversity and inclusion, advance racial and social justice in both our libraries, communities, profession and associations through creating awareness, advocacy, education, collaboration, services and provision of resources, spaces for the promotion of cultural diversity and inclusion. It is on this premise that the nexus between cultural diversity and inclusion in the acquisition of library resources as argued by Andersen (2018) that libraries have a responsibility to ensure providing fair and equitable access to marginalised community members through but not limited to the following:

- What services, programs, collections and resources reflect the diversity of our communities, especially those who may be marginalized in university libraries?
- Do all customers in university libraries have equitable access to library resources and services?
- To what extent do universities library policies and practices include all categories of customers?
- How do universities library advocate for those who are marginalised within the communities?
- To what extent universities library are working with academic communities to acquire and preserve cultural histories?
- To what extent do universities promote books, articles, videos and other resources by and about people from marginalised societies?
- To what extent do universities library speak out when the rights of marginalised people are restricted?

- To what extent universities library advocate for equitable access to information for all?
- How universities library create cultural and psychological safety for customers to feels welcome?

Regardless of which type of university library and the environment it is designed to serve, the basic mission and objectives should be to support and promote natural and social justice, equity, fair play and democratisation of information access and utilisation (Mohammed, 2017). It is within this perspective that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities under the principle of non-discrimination, equal opportunity, accessibility and full effective participation and inclusion in society become relevant and instructional for any type of library services provision. Additionally, the library services agenda should make provision for freedom to seek, identify, retrieve, receive, access, impart and utilise information and ideas of all kinds and quantum on an equal basis by all categories of customers through varied media most suitable to them and of their choice (Ezekiel and Sheikuma, 2021). This premise brought to light the need to adopt and embrace Marrakesh (2013) in the provision of library and information services. The Marrakesh Treaty aimed at dislodging all forms of discriminative tendencies in the acquisition, provision, access and utilisation of both print and electronic library resources and services by all categories of information seekers irrespective of their culture, physical and psychological challenges (WIPO, 2016). By and large, the Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), Ola Olukoyede has attributed the neglect of cultural values contributed to the high rate of corruption in Nigeria. Thus, there is a need to revive cultural values and inclusion as a tool to fight and eradicate corruption in the country (Acho, 2024). Thus, university libraries as citadels of knowledge and empathy can play an extraordinarily important role in shaping our history.

Expectations of Librarians on Acquisition of Resources and Services for Integrating Cultural Diversity and Inclusion for Academic Excellence

Under the theme *Let's work together, let's Library*, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA ifla@ifla.org / <https://2023.ifla.org/>) explore how libraries can contribute to an inclusive society, one in which everyone has the opportunity to participate. Key topics include:

- Personal development,
- The stimulation of reading,
- The development of language and digital skills,
- Free access to culture, and
- Digital knowledge and innovation as the heart of the information society.

In another dimension, Mohammed (2017) argued that in line with the 21st-century expectations in coping with the dictates of information needs by all and sundry, the basic questions that all types of libraries must continually seek answers to should include but not limited:

- What type and how many libraries and information centres are/should be involved in the advocacy crusade?;
- What information systems, resources, sources and services should be made available for the existing and anticipated customers?
- What type and extent of services should be provided?;
- How should the library and information services provision be funded and financed?
- What type and extent of cooperation, collaboration, partnership and network should be maintained between and among academic libraries and information centres?;
- What type of technology should be employed in the provision of library and information services to the varied customers?; and
- *What type and extent of education, training and motivation should the library and information centre staff benefit from?*

However, the implementation of the outcomes should be guided by the needs and expectations of the environment. That is, the physical environment, socio-cultural environment, economic environment, and political environment the library is situated and or should be served. Likewise, library strategic goals should be focused on collection development, research and diversity in the selection and acquisition of library resources, connecting users with such resources and understanding diversity.

The Role of Library and Information Schools

Education and training form the formidable pillar of integrating cultural diversity and inclusion for academic excellence. Mohammed (2000) argued that, in discussing the role of library schools for acquisition of resources and services for integrating cultural diversity and inclusion for academic excellence in Nigeria particularly in relation to global best practices, there is the need to recognize that the LIS curriculum design, content, structure, instructional materials for and method of teaching, learning and research to reflect the information need and requirement implicit in the socio-economic and cultural milieu of the society and the country at large.

Essentially, the library schools remain the core and most vital avenue of imparting knowledge pillar of integrating cultural diversity and inclusion for academic excellence. Umar (2016) argued that library schools are the corner stone of knowledge in communities because they assist the institutions imparting knowledge, developing information literacy skills necessary to become responsible, informed citizens who can excel in their academic pursuits. In addition, Bahramzadeh (2003) argued that factors such as culture, economic, political terrain, education etc., leads to a broad but unified cultural diversity and inclusion. Thus, the role of LIS schools are of much importance to act as facilitator, advisor, consultant, instructor, navigator, searchers, researchers, evaluators, organizer, promoters, communicators cultural diversity and inclusion for academic excellence in the minds of would-be librarians and other information professionals.

Challenges to Advocating for the Integrating Cultural Diversity and Inclusion in the Acquisition of Library Resources and Services for Sustained Academic Excellence in University Libraries

There are challenges to advocating for integrating cultural diversity and inclusion in the acquisition of library resources and services for sustained academic excellence in university libraries. Some of the challenges argued by Ekwowusi (2023) include library policies, supremacy of constitutions and national sovereignty, the religious dualism, socio-economic and environmental conditions of the country, as well as cultural backgrounds, philosophical convictions in civilisation, sticking to traditional values and traditions, the idea that it is suicidal to practice lifestyles that are alien to Africa. Similarly, inadequate inclusion of resources on cultural diversity by university libraries, inadequate advocate by management of the university library in their library strategic goals for cultural diversity, inadequate awareness, knowledge, ideas, facts and innovation useful for cultural diversity and inclusion in the society and nation at large and inadequate fund to provide a platform where information can be accessible to users of such information (Akanmu and Oladapo, (2019). Napp and Arjun (2019) are of the view that university libraries need diversity, they are the holders of diverse stories and diverse histories, and they are essential to nurture empathy, and understanding for others for academic excellence.

Conclusion

No doubt integrating cultural diversity and inclusion in the acquisition of library resources and services for sustained academic excellence in university libraries could bring to a large extent good societal transformations, inclusiveness, and innovations and create a new vista in the way and manner library services are delivered to customers in the 21st century. Essentially, it would transform the status quo of the libraries and their services for the good of national development, a sustainable future as well as enhance the vision, mission, goals and aspirations of university libraries towards fostering cooperation, building spirited teams, creating standards of academic excellence and guarantee effective and efficient information service delivery. Thus, the idea should be embraced by library management to sustain academic excellence in university libraries.

The Way Forward

In light of the foregoing, it is suggested that:

- The management of university libraries should advocate in their library strategic planning for the acquisition of resources on cultural diversity and inclusiveness for the marginalised.
- University libraries should organise effective open advocacy campaigns in partnership with different bodies such as schools, institutions, labour, and non-governmental organisations on cultural diversity and inclusion especially through effective advocacy strategies for the overall academic excellence and advancement of the individual, community and society in all dimensions and levels of needs and aspirations.
- Library schools' curriculums and policy should be redesigned and include resources and services to empower the marginalised individual, group and communities for the overall development and advancement of the library and information services to their user communities.
- University management should allocate more funds to the library to acquire library resources and provide a platform where information can be accessible to culturally diverse users.

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AGEISM AND TECHNOLOGY: EXPLORING THE IMPLICATIONS ON AGING LIBRARY USERS IN A DISRUPTIVE ERA

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Abstract

This paper examines the intersection of ageism and technology within the context of libraries, focusing on the implications for ageing users in a disruptive era. The study employs a systematic review to harvest literature from the databases of Emerald, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate. The importance of technology in modern society and the significance of libraries as community spaces for all ages are emphasized. The paper explores the evolution of libraries in the digital age along with the challenges and opportunities they present for aged users. Furthermore, the paper considers the implications for ageing library users, addressing access barriers, digital literacy challenges, socioeconomic factors, and psychological effects. Strategies for addressing ageism and technological barriers in libraries are also proposed. The paper emphasizes the importance of combating ageism and promoting technological inclusivity in libraries and calls for stakeholders to prioritize age-friendly approaches in library services and technology integration.

Keywords: Ageism, library, technology, ageing users, disruptive era, digital age.

Introduction

In an era defined by rapid technological advancement, ageism is the discrimination or prejudice against individuals based on their age that manifests in various facets of modern society. Within this landscape, the role of technology has become increasingly pivotal, shaping how individuals interact, access information, and participate in societal discourse. Amidst these changes, libraries stand as quintessential community spaces, fostering learning, connection, and inclusivity across generations. Ageism, often overlooked yet pervasive, marginalizes older adults in the digital age, hindering their access to and utilization of technological resources. The importance of technology in modern society cannot be overstated, as it serves as a gateway to information, communication, and opportunity (Zoorob et al., 2022). However, the digital divide disproportionately affects older populations, exacerbating social exclusion and perpetuating ageist stereotypes.

Ageism, the discrimination or prejudice against individuals based on their age, is a pervasive social issue that profoundly affects older adults' access to and use of technology. To begin with, ageism encompasses a range of negative stereotypes, attitudes, and behaviours directed towards older people solely based on their age (Manor & Herscovici, 2021). It can manifest in various forms, including stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and marginalization. For instance, older adults may be stereotyped as technologically incompetent, resistant to change, or unable to adapt to new technologies. These stereotypes contribute to the marginalization of older adults in technological spaces, hindering their access to and utilization of digital tools and resources (Ivan & Cutler, 2021).

Moreover, ageism significantly impacts older adults' access to and use of technology. As society becomes increasingly reliant on digital platforms and devices, older adults who face ageist barriers may struggle to participate fully in various aspects of modern life (Kottl & Mannheim, 2021). Limited access to technology can exacerbate social isolation, restrict access to essential services, and impede opportunities for lifelong learning and personal development (Barrie et al., 2021). Furthermore, ageism in technology can perpetuate inequalities, widening the digital divide between older and younger generations.

Examples of ageist attitudes in technological design and implementation further illustrate the pervasive nature of ageism in modern society. For instance, products and services designed without considering the needs and preferences of older users may inadvertently exclude them from accessing and using technology (Zoorob et al., 2022). User interfaces that prioritize aesthetics over usability may pose challenges for older adults with age-related impairments, such as diminished vision, hearing loss, or reduced dexterity. Similarly, ageist assumptions about older adults' technological capabilities may result in overly simplified interfaces or patronizing instructional materials, undermining older adults' confidence and autonomy in using technology. Explaining further, ageism represents a significant barrier to older adults' access to and use of technology, perpetuating inequalities and limiting opportunities for social participation and inclusion.

Libraries play a vital role in bridging this gap. Serving as inclusive community spaces for all ages, libraries have historically adapted to technological advancements, offering access to digital resources and

educational programs. Yet, amidst the disruptive forces of technological innovation, the implications for ageing library users remain a critical area of inquiry. By exploring into these complexities, Rosales and Fernandez-Ardevol (2020) mention that the challenges faced by older adults in accessing and using technology in library settings are quite complicated. Furthermore, this exploration can shed light on strategies to promote inclusivity and enhance the library experience for users of all ages. Therefore, the paper explores the intersection of ageism and technology within the context of libraries, exploring the multifaceted implications for ageing users in a disruptive era.

Objectives of the Study

The following specific objectives have been formulated to guide the study:

1. Determine the role of technology in libraries
2. Explore the implications for aging library users
3. Determine strategies for addressing ageism and technological barriers in libraries

Literature Review

The paper reviewed literature in line with the study's specific objectives. Literature were reviewed on the role of technology in libraries, the implications for aging library users and strategies for addressing ageism and technological barriers in libraries.

The Role of Technology in Libraries

Libraries have undergone a profound transformation in the digital age which is propelled by advancements in technology. The evolution of libraries in the digital age represents a paradigm shift in how information is accessed, curated, and disseminated. Gone are the days of card catalogues and dusty stacks; instead, libraries have embraced digital technologies to expand their reach and enhance their offerings. The digitization of library collections has made vast amounts of information accessible remotely which breaks down geographical barriers and democratizes access to knowledge (Baluk et al., 2021). Moreover, digital technologies have enabled libraries to diversify their services, offering e-books, online databases, multimedia resources, and virtual programming to meet the evolving needs of their patrons (Mace et al., 2022).

Technological advancements in library services and resources have revolutionized the way users engage with library materials and services. Online catalogues and discovery tools streamline the search process, allowing users to quickly locate relevant resources from the comfort of their homes. Furthermore, digitization initiatives have preserved fragile materials, such as rare manuscripts and historical documents, ensuring their longevity and accessibility for future generations (Wynia Baluk et al., 2021). Additionally, interactive technologies, such as augmented reality and virtual reality, have enriched the library experience providing immersive learning opportunities and enhancing engagement for users of all ages.

However, alongside these opportunities, technology also presents challenges for library users of all ages. Digital literacy gaps persist, particularly among older adults and marginalized communities, limiting their ability to navigate digital resources effectively (Birkland, 2022). Additionally, concerns about privacy and data security in an increasingly interconnected world raise ethical questions about the collection and use of patron information by libraries. Moreover, the rapid pace of technological change necessitates ongoing training and professional development for library staff to remain abreast of emerging technologies and best practices (Manor & Herscovici, 2021).

Despite these challenges, technology also offers opportunities for libraries to innovate and adapt to changing user needs. Online outreach initiatives, such as virtual reference services and social media engagement, enable libraries to connect with patrons beyond their physical walls, fostering a sense of community and collaboration (Baluk et al., 2021). Furthermore, emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, hold the potential to enhance library services through personalized recommendations, data analytics, and automation.

The role of technology in libraries is multifaceted which encompasses both challenges and opportunities for users of all ages. However, libraries need to address digital literacy gaps, safeguard patron privacy, and adapt to the evolving technological landscape to remain relevant in the digital age (Mace et al., 2022). Through strategic investment in technology and a commitment to inclusivity and accessibility, libraries can continue to fulfil their mission as vital centres of learning, discovery, and community enrichment.

Implications for Aging Library Users

As technology continues to permeate every aspect of modern life, older adults face unique challenges in navigating digital spaces, including within the context of libraries. Ivan and Cutler (2021) state that access barriers represent a significant hurdle for older adults seeking to utilize technology in libraries. Morris and Venkatesh (2000) observe that limited access to devices, such as computers, tablets, and smartphones, can restrict older adults' ability to engage with digital resources and services. Furthermore, disparities in

internet connectivity, particularly in rural or underserved communities, exacerbate access barriers, limiting older adults' opportunities for online learning, communication, and information access (Czaja & Lee, 2007).

Also, Eastman and Iyer (2005) state that digital literacy challenges further compound the difficulties faced by older adults in utilizing technology effectively. Many older adults lack the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate digital interfaces, search for information online, and discern reliable sources from misinformation (Ivan & Cutler, 2021). Moreover, age-related cognitive decline and physical impairments, such as reduced vision or dexterity, pose additional obstacles to digital literacy, making it challenging for older adults to adapt to rapidly evolving technologies.

Socioeconomic factors also play a significant role in influencing technology adoption among older adults (Zoorob et al., 2022). The authors argue that limited financial resources prevent older adults from purchasing devices or accessing high-speed internet services, further widening the digital divide. Additionally, disparities in education, employment, and access to formal training programs contribute to disparities in digital literacy and exacerbate social inequalities among older adults.

Going further, Barrie et al. (2021) mention that the psychological effects of feeling excluded or marginalized in technological environments have profound implications for ageing library users. Older adults may experience feelings of frustration, isolation, or anxiety when faced with unfamiliar digital technologies or when they perceive ageist attitudes from peers or library staff. Moreover, Birkland (2022) states that the fear of making mistakes or appearing incompetent in front of others deters older adults from seeking help or engaging with technology which perpetuates feelings of inadequacy and disempowerment.

Despite these challenges, libraries play a crucial role in addressing the needs of ageing populations and bridging the digital divide. Mace et al. (2022) submit that libraries empower older adults to develop digital literacy skills, build confidence, and access information and services online. In so doing, libraries leverage partnerships with community organizations, government agencies, and technology companies to expand access to devices, internet connectivity, and digital training opportunities for older adults. Given these, the implications for ageing library users in technological environments are complex and multifaceted. To foster an age-friendly and inclusive environment, libraries serve as catalysts for social change, empowering older adults to participate fully in the digital age and enriching their lives through technology.

Strategies for Addressing Ageism and Technological Barriers in Libraries

In today's digital age, libraries play a crucial role in promoting digital inclusion and combating ageism by addressing technological barriers faced by older adults. Baluk et al. (2021) state that one effective strategy for addressing ageism and technological barriers in libraries is to offer comprehensive training programs and resources tailored to the needs of older adults. These programs may include workshops, classes, and one-on-one tutoring sessions designed to improve digital literacy skills, such as navigating the internet, using social media, and accessing online resources. For this to happen, libraries empower older adults to overcome their fear of technology and build confidence in their digital abilities.

Further, Czaja and Lee (2007) posit that designing inclusive technological interfaces and services is another essential strategy for promoting accessibility and usability in libraries. Libraries collaborate with older adults and accessibility experts to design user-friendly interfaces that accommodate a diverse range of needs and preferences, including larger font sizes, high-contrast colours, and simplified navigation menus. Given this, libraries offer assistive technologies, such as screen readers and magnification software, to enhance accessibility for older adults with visual or hearing impairments.

Community outreach initiatives are also vital for bridging the digital divide among older populations and promoting digital inclusion (Mannheim et al., 2023). Libraries partner with local organizations, senior centres, and community groups to reach older adults where they are and provide targeted outreach and support services. Mobile library units, pop-up tech clinics, and home delivery services can bring technology training and resources directly to older adults who may face mobility or transportation challenges.

Adding to the foregoing, advocacy for policies promoting age-friendly technology and services in libraries is crucial for creating systemic change and advancing digital inclusion efforts. In doing so, libraries can engage with policymakers, government agencies, and technology companies to advocate for funding, legislation, and standards that prioritize age-friendly design principles and support digital inclusion initiatives for older adults (Zoorob et al., 2022). Additionally, libraries can serve as advocates within their communities, raising awareness about the importance of addressing ageism and promoting equitable access to technology for people of all ages.

Overall, addressing ageism and technological barriers in libraries requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses training programs, inclusive design, community outreach, and advocacy efforts. By implication, libraries can create welcoming and inclusive environments where older adults can develop the digital skills they need to fully participate in the digital age. Moreover, by promoting age-friendly technology and services, libraries help to build a more equitable and inclusive society for people of all ages.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore the implications of ageism and technology on aging library users in a disruptive era. The qualitative approach is particularly suitable for understanding

complex social phenomena, such as the experiences and perceptions of aging individuals to technology use within library settings. A systematic literature review was conducted to gather relevant studies and literature on the topic. The databases used for the literature search were Emerald, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate. These databases were chosen for their extensive coverage of academic and professional literature in the fields of social sciences, library and information science, and technology. Literature published between 2020 and 2024 was included to ensure the study reflects the most recent developments and trends. Keywords used in the search were "ageism and technology," "library users," and "disruptive era." Literature published before 2020 was excluded to maintain a focus on contemporary issues and advancements.

The search strategy involved using the selected keywords to identify relevant articles, books, conference papers, and other academic materials. Boolean operators (AND, OR) were used to refine the search and ensure comprehensive coverage. The initial search results were screened based on titles and abstracts to identify potentially relevant studies. Full-text versions of these studies were then reviewed to determine their relevance and inclusion in the final analysis. The data collected from the literature were analyzed systematically. Key information from each included study was extracted, including authorship, publication year, research methods, findings, and conclusions related to ageism, technology, and library users. A thematic analysis was conducted to identify common themes and patterns across the included studies. This involved coding the extracted data and grouping similar concepts and findings to form coherent themes. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process to ensure the integrity and validity of the study.

Discussion

The traditional model of libraries with card catalogues and physical stacks has largely been replaced by digital technologies, which have expanded the reach and enhanced the offerings of libraries. Digitization initiatives have democratized access to knowledge by making vast amounts of information accessible remotely, thereby breaking down geographical barriers (Baluk et al., 2021). Libraries now provide a diverse array of services, including e-books, online databases, multimedia resources, and virtual programming, which cater to the evolving needs of their patrons (Mace et al., 2022). Additionally, interactive technologies such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) have enriched the library experience by providing immersive learning opportunities and enhancing user engagement.

Despite the benefits of technological advancements, older adults face unique challenges in navigating digital spaces within libraries. Access barriers, such as limited availability of devices and poor internet connectivity, especially in rural areas, significantly hinder older adults' ability to utilize digital resources (Morris & Venkatesh, 2000; Czaja & Lee, 2007). Furthermore, digital literacy challenges are compounded by age-related cognitive decline and physical impairments, making it difficult for older adults to adapt to new technologies (Ivan & Cutler, 2021). Socioeconomic factors, including limited financial resources and disparities in education, further exacerbate the digital divide among older adults (Zoorob et al., 2022). Psychological effects such as feelings of frustration, isolation, and anxiety also impact older adults, especially when they perceive ageist attitudes from peers or library staff, which deters them from seeking help (Birkland, 2022). Libraries play a crucial role in addressing these challenges by providing digital literacy training, building confidence, and facilitating access to technology and online resources (Mace et al., 2022).

To promote digital inclusion and combat ageism, libraries must implement multifaceted strategies. Comprehensive training programs tailored to older adults' needs, including workshops, classes, and one-on-one tutoring sessions, can significantly improve digital literacy skills and build confidence in using technology (Baluk et al., 2021). Additionally, designing inclusive technological interfaces that accommodate diverse needs, such as larger fonts, high-contrast colors, and simplified navigation menus, enhances accessibility (Czaja & Lee, 2007). Libraries can further bridge the digital divide through community outreach initiatives, partnering with local organizations to provide targeted support services directly to older adults (Mannheim et al., 2023). Advocacy for policies that promote age-friendly technology and services is also crucial for creating systemic change. Libraries can engage with policymakers and technology companies to secure funding and legislation that supports digital inclusion for older adults (Zoorob et al., 2022). By adopting these strategies, libraries can create inclusive environments where older adults can develop the digital skills necessary to fully participate in the digital age, thereby fostering a more equitable and inclusive society.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has explored the multifaceted implications of ageism and technological barriers for ageing library users, highlighting the challenges they face in accessing and utilizing technology in library settings. From access barriers and digital literacy challenges to socioeconomic disparities and psychological effects, the obstacles encountered by older adults underscore the importance of addressing ageism and promoting technological inclusivity in libraries. Combatting ageism and promoting technological inclusivity is not just a matter of equity; it is essential for ensuring that libraries remain relevant and accessible to all members of society, regardless of age. By fostering inclusive environments, libraries could empower older adults to engage with technology confidently, access information and services online, and participate fully in the

digital age. Moreover, promoting age-friendly technology and services aligns with the fundamental mission of libraries to serve as democratic spaces that promote lifelong learning, community engagement, and social inclusion. Given the findings of this paper, the following recommendations were made:

1. There is a need for collective responsibility to prioritize age-friendly approaches in library services and technology integration. This includes investing in digital literacy programs, designing inclusive technological interfaces, and advocating for policies that support digital inclusion efforts for older adults.
2. Libraries can create welcoming and inclusive spaces for people of all ages, where everyone has the opportunity to thrive in the digital age.

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APPLICATION OF COLLABORATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR CONSERVATION OF LIBRARY BUILDING AND INCLUSIVE SERVICE DELIVERY BY UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated the application of collaborative framework for conservation of library building to improve the provision of inclusive library services delivery in university libraries in Enugu State. The study was guided by five research questions including to ascertain the rationale behind the conservation of the library building in the Nigerian university libraries in Enugu State. The study used a descriptive survey as its research strategy to evaluate the existing condition of the library buildings. The study's population was 228 being made up of 145 library staff members of the Nnamdi Azikiwe Library at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and 83 library staff members of the Enugu State University of Science and Technology Library. The questionnaire was utilized to gather data for this investigation. The information was analyzed using the mean score and standard deviation after it was arranged and displayed in a distribution table. From the findings, Funding limitations and Lack of conservation policy in the library were among the difficulties faced. Also, many encountered maintenance and accessibility issues. To solve these issues and guarantee inclusive library services, this research suggests a collaborative strategy including several stakeholders. To support a sustainable conservation effort, the framework incorporates of several tactics, including community involvement, resource mobilization, and stakeholder engagement. Also, these issues were resolved by taking proactive steps, including fundraising campaigns and the provision of adequate infrastructure. The collaborative framework will significantly improve the conservation of library building; according to the results, which will improve accessibility and inclusivity of library services. This study adds to the body of knowledge on inclusive library service delivery and library building conservation by offering a workable framework that can be modified and applied in comparable situations. It emphasizes how crucial it is for many stakeholders to work together, including university administrations, library personnel, students, the security department, the fire service department and the works department, to achieve sustainable conservation efforts and guarantee fair access to library resources.

Keywords: Collaborative framework, Conservation, Library building, Inclusive library services, University Libraries, Stakeholder engagement.

Introduction

Library buildings serve as locations where various populations can access information, engage in learning, and take part in cultural enrichment activities. They also serve as the basic infrastructure for the provision of inclusive library services. Maintaining these facilities' functioning and relevance in serving the needs of all library users including those from underrepresented and underserved groups requires ensuring their preservation and restoration (Ejiroghene, 2020). Additionally, given the complexity of maintaining library buildings, a collaborative framework is necessary. To solve issues to the protection of library buildings, the collaborative framework concept highlights the joint efforts of numerous stakeholders, including librarians, architects, preservationists, local communities, and legislators (Alex-Nmecha & Okoro, 2020). Collaboration between these various players makes it feasible to pool resources, exchange knowledge, and create long-term plans for the upkeep and preservation of library infrastructure. Libraries can successfully negotiate the challenges of building conservation by working together to maintain their facilities' accessibility and inclusivity for all members of society.

Conservation was described by Akor (2010), citing Popoola, as the policies and actions taken by library management to extend the life of their information resources by preventing harm or correcting degradation. Because conservation prevents harm or other changes, it is viewed as an improvement. It could also be seen as a direct physical intervention that stops or slows the physical deterioration of the library's resources and facilities. According to the National Conservation Advisory Council of the United States, which was quoted by Ozioko (2014), conservation is a general phrase that encompasses specific topics like preservation and restoration. The International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA)

established the Core Programme on Conservation and Preservation (PAC) as one of the new core programs at the IFLA Congress in Nairobi (1984), recognizing and acknowledging the significance of conservation for libraries. The principal objective of this initiative, which was formally introduced in April 1986 in Vienna, Austria, is to foster and advance the advancement of library conservation practices in libraries across the globe. Conservation is, therefore, an active, but preventative, strategy.

Conservation measures guarantee that data will be available for future generations of researchers, historians, and writers of national histories. Good conservation procedures for library buildings ensure that the environment is not safe for biological agents to cause deterioration. They also put in place measures to control environmental conditions and natural disasters. The archives of human civilization will be lost if the materials in these libraries disappear. Because of this, maintaining library buildings for inclusive library services in university libraries presents significant global difficulties that need to be addressed on a local, national, and international level. The physical upkeep of the library involves fixing windows and doors, painting, caulking any openings that could allow biological agents to enter and destroy the information resources, and installing thunderstorm protection, among other maintenance tasks.

Delivering inclusive library services is made easier by the preservation of library structures. Communities can access a variety of resources and services, such as educational materials, cultural relics, and community programs, by gathering in these structures (Ejiroghene, 2020). By maintaining library structures, we can make sure that they continue to be usable and open to everyone in the community, regardless of background or ability. Keeping these areas clean improves the overall user experience and fosters inclusivity and a sense of belonging among library users (Alex-Nmecha & Okoro, 2020). Furthermore, well-kept structures offer an atmosphere that is favorable for education, teamwork, and community involvement—all crucial elements of inclusive library services (Alex-Nmecha & Okoro, 2020). Additionally, preserving library buildings protects historical relevance and cultural legacy, enhancing community identity and pride (Lorver, 2020). Libraries may carry out their role of giving everyone equitable access to information and resources, which encourages social inclusion and builds a sense of community, by making sure that these structures continue to be operational and accessible (Bouaamri, 2023).

The study aims to create a collaborative framework for the preservation of library structures to improve the provision of inclusive library services in the university libraries in Enugu State. Southeast Nigeria's Enugu State is home to several colleges that work hard to offer resources and high-quality instruction to a wide range of students (Eze, 2024). Nevertheless, the provision of comprehensive library services is hampered by issues with accessibility and infrastructure upkeep (Chifamba & Pedzisai, 2022). Prior evaluations have indicated that university libraries around the region need to raise their quality (Obiamalu & Echedom, 2021). Furthermore, using modern technology and ICT resources is essential to improving library services (Onwubiko & Offor, 2023; Aniekwe, Ogwo & Ayolugbe, 2022). By involving stakeholders like librarians, architects, and conservationists in the development of sustainable strategies for maintaining library structures while guaranteeing accessibility and inclusivity, this collaborative approach seeks to address these problems (Shonhe & Marambe, 2019).

For information and research to be effectively disseminated within the university setting, library resources must be preserved and made accessible (Omekwu, 2016). In order to address the difficulties university libraries in Enugu State, Nigeria, confront in maintaining their priceless collections and offering inclusive services to a varied user base, it has been apparent in recent years that collaborative frameworks are an essential tool (Afolabi & Afolabi, 2019). The purpose of this study is to look into how university libraries in Enugu State might apply a collaborative framework to preserve library structures and improve inclusive service delivery. This study was justified by the identification of multiple causes that have made cooperative library conservation and service delivery necessary. Among these are the following (Onwubiko, 2018):

Dilapidated library buildings: Many university libraries in Enugu State have dilapidated physical infrastructure, with problems like leaky roofs, insufficient ventilation, and disintegrating walls endangering the security of both users and library resources (Ezema & Ugwuanyi, 2017).

Limited resources: Ifidon and Omekwu (2019) state that libraries frequently experience severe resource constraints that hinder their ability to adequately handle conservation concerns and offer complete services to patrons.

User diversity: A wide range of users with a variety of requirements are served by university libraries, including the general public, researchers, faculty, and students. Partnerships and creative thinking are needed to guarantee that all users have equitable access to library resources (Agbedo, 2018).

Technological advancements: Libraries must work together to exchange resources, knowledge, and experience in order to effectively preserve and distribute digital content, given the rapid growth of information technology (Ezema & Ugwuanyi, 2017).

Problem Statement:

Enugu State's university libraries struggle to preserve and maintain their physical spaces to provide comprehensive library services. The provision of equitable services to all customers is hampered by

elements including outdated infrastructure, scarce resources, and insufficiently accessible features (Akpom, Onyam, & Benson, 2020). Because of this, library professionals in Enugu State including the researcher are greatly concerned about the issues of maintaining library buildings for inclusive library service delivery, which is why this study was conducted.

Research Objectives:

The main objective of the study is to apply the use of a collaborative framework for the conservation of library buildings for inclusive library service delivery in university libraries in Enugu State. The specific objectives are to:

1. ascertain the rationale behind the conservation of the library building in the Nigerian university libraries in Enugu State.
2. apply the Collaborative and Legal Framework for the conservation of Library Buildings for the provision of inclusive library services in university libraries in Enugu State.
3. determine the conservation standards for library construction in Enugu State to provide inclusive library services.
4. identify the challenges associated with inclusive library service delivery in university libraries in Enugu State that are influencing the preservation of library buildings.
5. propose strategies on how to improve library building conservation for inclusive library service delivery in Enugu State's university libraries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Inclusive Library Services

For a variety of user groups to have fair access to resources and information, inclusive library services are essential. According to a study by Ezeabasili and Umeji (2018) on inclusive library services: an imperative for academic libraries in Nigeria, academic libraries are essential information sources that can support inclusion and peace education. This study emphasizes the advantages of inclusive library services. It also covered the resources required for these kinds of services and the difficulties academic libraries face in providing inclusive services.

Moirangthem and Phuritsabam (2022) stated that with the creative advocacy of inclusion in every aspect of the society, Social Inclusion is now a universal concept and inclusivity in the library is no exception. An inclusive Library is an important element for an inclusive education and thereby, an inclusive society. Accessibility is the key concern when it comes to inclusion in the library. This study focuses on the various issues of accessibilities in selected academic libraries located in the North Eastern Region of India.

A review of the literature by Green (2020) demonstrates the efforts made in academic and public libraries to provide the information that people facing mental health issues, including those with mental illness, need. It makes recommendations on how to better serve these customers who are visibly impaired and speak up for their information requirements.

Previous studies on Library Building Conservation Collaborative Frameworks

According to Rachman and Ratnasari (2022) studies on sustainability and climate change have drawn increasing attention from the international preservation and conservation communities. Studies on sustainability in the conservation and preservation of libraries, particularly in academic libraries, are still scarce nonetheless. The purpose of this study is to identify the current methods used by academic libraries for sustainable library conservation and preservation. The results of this study provided a foundation for gaining a thorough understanding of how university libraries are carrying out conservation and preservation initiatives that are sensitive to climate change.

Krtalić and Hasenay (2012) investigate a theoretical and methodological approach to preservation management in libraries based on the fundamental premise that preservation is an intricate and all-encompassing process with numerous, seemingly disparate components, the effectiveness of which rests in preservation management. Design/methodology strategy The paper proposes a five-component preservation management model and describes a technique for investigating the general preservation management setting using a case study of Croatia.

Abubakar (2016) carried out a study on the protection and preservation of information resources in academic libraries in Niger State, Nigeria. The topic of this study was information resource security and preservation techniques in academic libraries in Niger State, Nigeria. The study's five objectives and five research questions were formulated. For the investigation, a case study design was chosen. 35 respondents were chosen using the purposeful sample technique from a population of 297 staff members from each of the twelve university libraries in Niger State.

Olatokun (2008) conducted a survey study on methodologies and procedures used in Nigerian university libraries for preservation and conservation. The study looked into the various methods employed in several university libraries to conserve and preserve their library items. It specifically looked at the factors that lead to deterioration, the types of deterioration patterns and tactics used to regulate them, the existence of policies for preservation and conservation, and the limitations that prevent successful preservation and conservation. The survey approach was applied to fifteen university libraries that were specifically chosen.

Ejiroghene (2020) stated that to guarantee that library resources are reused in their original version for as long as feasible; the document tries to make preservation and restoration clear. To achieve this, researchers have looked into and recommended, among other things, that federal, state, local, private, and multinational companies take steps to address the issues about poor paper quality, improper storage, rough handling, pests, and knowledge of the likelihood of a disaster. They have also looked into electronic means of preservation and the difficulties and strategies associated with preserving digital materials.

Digital Technologies for Bridging the Digital Divide and Enhancing Library Access in University Libraries in Enugu State

Introduction

The difference between people who can access and use digital technologies and those who cannot is known as the "digital divide." The availability of information and resources, particularly library services, may be significantly impacted by this gap. With the provision of individualized learning opportunities, assistive tools for users with impairments, and remote access to resources, digital technologies hold the promise of closing the digital divide and promoting more equitable access to libraries. The use of digital technologies to close the digital gap and improve library access in university libraries in Nigeria's Enugu State will be examined in this study of the literature.

Analysis and Discussion

The employment of digital technology to close the digital gap and improve library access in university libraries in developing nations has been the subject of numerous studies. For instance, a 2017 study by Ezema and Ugwuanyi discovered that teachers and students in rural locations might have remote access to library resources through the use of digital technologies. The study also discovered that online tutoring services and virtual learning environments can be established using digital technology.

Digital technologies can be used to provide assistive technologies for users with impairments at university libraries, according to a different study by Onwubiko (2018). According to the study, libraries can assist patrons with visual impairments in accessing online resources by providing screen readers and other tools. To help those with hearing impairments access videos and other multimedia information, libraries can also offer closed captioning and transcripts.

The study literature offers compelling evidence that digital technologies can improve library access in Enugu State University libraries and help close the digital divide. Digital technology can be used by libraries to offer assistive technologies for users with impairments, individualized learning opportunities, and remote access to resources. Libraries may contribute to making sure that all faculty members and students have access to the data and tools they require to be successful in their studies and research by doing this.

METHODS

The research approach employed in this study was a descriptive survey. In order to characterize the features of a population, a descriptive survey is a type of research methodology that gathers information from a sample of the community. The 228 library employees of the Enugu State University of Science and Technology Library and the Nnamdi Azikiwe Library at the University of Nigeria in Nsukka served as the study's population. Since the population was manageable and not too big, sampling was not necessary. For this study, a questionnaire was used to collect data. Out of the 228 questionnaires distributed to the respondents 216 were filled completely and returned. There were three sections on the questionnaire:

Part A: Data on the respondents' gender, professional status and educational attainment were gathered in this part.

Part B: Data regarding respondents' knowledge and perspectives regarding the use of cooperative frameworks for inclusive service delivery and the preservation of library facilities were gathered for this section.

Part C: Data regarding respondents' experiences applying collaborative frameworks for inclusive service delivery and library building conservation was gathered for this section.

The standard deviation and mean score were used to examine the data. The standard deviation was utilized to gauge the replies' variability, and the mean score was used to calculate the average answer to each question. This suggests that a mean score of "2.50" and above shows acceptance of the mentioned item, while a mean score of 2.49 and lower indicates disagreement or rejection of the viewpoint expressed in the item.

RESULTS

Table 1: Gender Distribution of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	97	44.9%
Female	119	55.1%
Total	216	100%

Table one above shows the gender distribution of respondents. Based on the table, out of the 216 staff studied, 97 (44.9%) were male. While 119 (55.1%) were female.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents based on their Professional Status

Professional Status	Frequency	Percentage
University Librarian	0	0%
Deputy Uni. Librarian	3	1.3%
Principal Librarian	9	4.2%
Senior Librarian	21	9.7%
Librarian I	43	19.9%
Librarian II	28	13%
Assistant Librarian	62	28.7%
Non-professionals	50	23.1%
Total	216	100%

Table two above shows the distribution of respondents based on their Professional Status in Nnamdi Azikiwe Library (NAL), UNN and ESUT. Out of the 216 staff studied. 3(1.3%) are Deputy Uni. Librarian; 9(4.2%) are Principal Librarian; 21(9.7%) are Senior Librarian; 43(19.9%) are Librarian I; 28(13%) are Librarian II; 62(28.7%) are Assistant Librarian. While 50(23.1%) were Non-professionals.

Table 3: Mean Responses on the Rationale behind the Conservation of library buildings in university libraries in Enugu State, Nigeria

S/N	Item statements	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	St. D	Decision	Rank
1	It protects library resources against natural disasters like flooding, earthquake	188	28	0	0	3.87	0.34	1 st	Accepted
2	It helps to protect library resources against manmade disasters like fire	188	28	0	0	3.87	0.34	1 st	Accepted
3	conserving library building makes library resources accessible	180	36	0	0	3.83	0.37	3 rd	Accepted
4	It provides equipment to protect the original materials while in use	180	36	0	0	3.83	0.37	3 rd	Accepted
5	It helps to promote an end to wasteful use of non-renewable information resources.	176	40	0	0	3.81	0.39	5 th	Accepted

6	It promotes and encourage vest practices in records management	176	40	0	0	3.81	0.39	5 th	Accepted
7	It provides an extremely attractive environment for the use of books	156	60	0	0	3.72	0.45	7 th	Accepted
8	It provides security and safety of library resources	144	72	0	0	3.67	0.47	8 th	Accepted
10	It makes library resources usable	144	72	0	0	3.67	0.47	8 th	Accepted
9	It ensures long term survival of library resources	140	76	0	0	3.65	0.48	10 th	Accepted
11	It preserves human heritage and writing	140	76	0	0	3.65	0.48	10 th	Accepted
12	It saves cost of acquiring new resources	140	76	0	0	3.65	0.48	10 th	Accepted

Keys: SA- Strongly Agreed; A= Agreed; D – Disagree; SD – Strongly Disagree; St. D – Standard Deviation

According to the findings, the main and highly ranked justifications for the conservation of library building for inclusive library service delivery in university libraries in Enugu State, Nigeria are: to protect library resources against natural disasters like flooding and earthquakes (3.87 mean score); they also help to protect library resources against man-made disasters (3.87 mean score). Additionally, conserving library building makes library resources accessible with a mean score of (3.83) and it provides equipment to protect the original materials while in use (3.83) ranked third. The lowest reason for the conservation of library building for inclusive library service delivery in university libraries in Enugu State (mean score of 3.65) was given as because it saves the expense of purchasing new resources. All the items were accepted as reasons for the conservation of library building for inclusive library service delivery in university libraries in Enugu State.

Table 4: Mean Responses on the Legal and Collaborative Framework on the conservation of Library building in University Libraries in Enugu State, Nigeria

Legal and collaborative framework		HA	A	LA	NA	Mean	St. D	Decision	Rank
1	Every library management should have legal agreement with building contraction of the library	140	64	12	0	3.59	0.60	1 st	Accepted
2	The legal agreement between the contractor must spell out duties and responsibilities of the parties	132	80	4	0	3.59	0.53	1 st	Accepted
3	There should be library building collaboration between the library and works department	120	68	20	8	3.39	0.81	3 rd	Accepted
4	The library should have a working relationship with fire service department	104	76	32	4	3.30	0.79	4 th	Accepted
5	A working relationship with a security department is critical	64	96	56	0	3.03	0.75	5 th	Accepted
6	The opportunity of a staff in charge of ground and building is critical for the conservation of library building	76	104	36	0	3.01	1.01	6 th	Accepted
7	The legal agreement must contain the sustainability of the library building	56	76	80	4	2.85	0.83	7 th	Accepted
8	The legal agreement must also contain issues on shorter, midterm and long-term maintenance of the building	56	68	80	12	2.78	0.90	8 th	Accepted
9	Conservation practices must confirm to international best practices	56	68	80	12	2.78	0.90	8 th	Accepted
10	There must be punishment for willful damage of library building	52	32	116	16	2.56	0.94	9 th	Accepted

The aforementioned outcome indicates that the main collaborative and legal frameworks for inclusive library service delivery in university libraries in Enugu State, Nigeria, are every library management should have a formal agreement with the contractor for the building contraction of the library (3.59) and the legal agreement between the contractor must spell out duties and responsibilities of the parties, which also has a 3.59 mean score. Other high responses include that the library should collaborate with the works department on the building, as indicated by the 3.39 mean score; it should also have a working relationship with the fire service department, as indicated by the 3.30 mean score; a working relationship with the security department is crucial, as indicated by the 3.03 mean score; and having staff responsible for the ground and building is essential for the preservation of the library building, as indicated by the 3.01 mean score. The least on mean responses on the legal and collaborative framework on the conservation of library building in university libraries in Enugu State, Nigeria is that there must be punishment for willful damage of library building with a mean score of 2.56. All items were accepted.

Table 5: Mean Responses on the Conservation criteria for library building towards effective information preservation in university libraries in Enugu State, Nigeria

S/N		SA	A	D	SD	Mean	St. D	Decision	Rank
1	Sustainability: forward-looking provisions to accommodate changes in the information management environment	112	84	20	0	3.43	0.66	1 st	Accepted
2	Security: adequate and continuous protection against environmental and physical damages	96	88	28	4	3.28	0.76	2 nd	Accepted
3	Effectiveness: The buildings guarantee and provide adequate capacities for the preservation of information resources	96	84	28	8	3.24	0.82	3 rd	Accepted
4	Adaptability: Coping and adjusting with change that might affect the preservation of information resources	76	112	20	8	3.19	0.75	4 th	Accepted
5	Diversity: Range of designs and spaces to accommodate difference types of information resources	84	88	36	8	3.15	0.83	5 th	Accepted
6	Completeness: Interior and exterior design of the library building adequately cater for the preservation of divert or types of information resources	80	88	40	8	3.11	0.83	6 th	Accepted

Keys: SA- Strongly Agreed; A= Agreed; D – Disagree; SD – Strongly Disagree; St. D – Standard Deviation

Table 5 indicates that the primary conservation criteria for inclusive library service delivery in university libraries in Enugu State, Nigeria with the goal of effectively preserving information are: sustainability: looking ahead and making provisions to accommodate changes in the information management environment, with a mean score of 3.43; security: a 3.28 mean score that indicates adequate and ongoing defense against physical and environmental harm; Effectiveness: With a mean score of 3.24 and states that the buildings should guarantee and provide adequate capacities for the preservation of information

resources, Adaptability: Coping and adjusting with change that might affect the preservation of information resources with a mean score of 3.19. The least mean score of 3.11 was given as Completeness: Interior and exterior design of the library building should adequately cater for the preservation of divert or types of information resources.

Table 6: Mean Responses on the challenges associated with conserving library building in university libraries in Enugu State, Nigeria

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	St. D	Decision	Rank
1	Inadequate funding	100	76	32	8	3.24	0.84	1 st	Accepted
2	Nonchalant attitude of library staff	100	68	32	16	3.17	0.94	2 nd	Accepted
3	Lack of conservation policy in the library	92	80	32	12	3.17	0.88	2 nd	Accepted
4	Low level of awareness of importance of conservation among information professionals	96	64	48	8	3.15	0.89	4 th	Accepted
5	Harsh environmental conditions in the tropical Africa	84	80	44	8	3.11	0.86	5 th	Accepted
6	Lack of trained manpower in conservation of library building	92	72	36	16	3.11	0.94	5 th	Accepted
7	Inadequate infrastructure	80	92	32	12	3.11	0.86	5 th	Accepted
8	Erratic power supply	80	92	28	16	3.09	0.89	8 th	Accepted

Keys: SA- Strongly Agreed; A= Agreed; D– Disagree; SD– Strongly Disagree; St. D– Standard Deviation

As can be seen from the results above, the main obstacles to conserving library buildings for inclusive library service delivery in university libraries in Enugu State, Nigeria, are: inadequate funding, which rank at 3.24; nonchalant attitude of library staff and lack of conservation policies in the library that ranked 3.17 respectively. Additional challenges include the low level of awareness among information professionals about the importance of conservation (3.15 mean score); harsh environmental conditions in tropical Africa, lack of trained personnel for library building conservation; and inadequate infrastructure (all ranked at 3.11 mean score respectively). Erratic power supply is the least difficult task, with a mean score of 3.09. All items we accepted as challenges associated with conserving library building in university libraries in Enugu State, Nigeria. The finding is in accordance to Alegbeleye (2006) who found out that, there is generally, a low level of awareness as to the importance of conservation in prolonging the live span of information resources even among information professionals in Nigeria.

Table 7: Mean Responses on the strategies to enhance conserving library building in university libraries in Enugu State, Nigeria

S/N	Strategies	VA	A	FA	NA	Mean	St. D	Decision	Rank
1	Regular power supply	164	52	0	0	3.76	0.43	1 st	Accepted
2	Adequate funding for the library	152	60	4	0	3.69	0.50	2 nd	Accepted
3	Adequate infrastructure	148	68	0	0	3.69	0.47	2 nd	Accepted

4	Provision of security gadgets as well as enough security personnel	144	68	4	0	3.65	0.52	4 th	Accepted
5	Formulating a library policy on the conservation of library building	140	76	0	0	3.65	0.48	4 th	Accepted
6	Avoid eating in the library compound	136	80	0	0	3.63	0.48	6 th	Accepted
7	Proper cleaning and cleaning and dusting of the library materials	132	80	4	0	3.59	0.53	7 th	Accepted
8	Regular fumigation of the library compound	140	64	12	0	3.59	0.60	7 th	Accepted
9	Training of personnel of the library on proper conservation technique	124	92	0	0	3.57	0.50	9 th	Accepted

Keys: VA- Very Appropriate; A - Appropriate; FA- Fairly Appropriate; NA – Not Appropriate; St. D – Standard Deviation

According to the results above, regular power supply (3.76 mean score), adequate library funding (3.69 mean score), and adequate infrastructure (3.69 mean score) are the main tactics for improving the conservation of library buildings in university libraries in Enugu State, Nigeria. Other factors include provision of security gadgets as well as enough security personnel and formulating a library policy on the conservation of library building; these two factors were ranked combined with a mean score of 3.65; Steer clear of eating within the library compound (with a mean score of 3.63); properly clear clean, dust, and clean library materials (3.59); regularly fumigate the library compound (3.59); and Training of personnel of the library on proper conservation technique with a mean score of 3.57. The finding is in accordance to Agada and Ehoniyotan (2016) who in a study stress that application of rodenticides and insecticides is also another strategy of preservation and conservation in libraries. The authors also explained that this method involves a process used to ward of rat or exterminate rat, cockroaches and other insects, which are a threat to library resources.

Conclusion

To provide inclusive library services in university libraries in Enugu State, Nigeria, the study looked at library building conservation. The survey found that in university libraries in Enugu State, Nigeria, the main justifications for preserving library buildings are that it helps safeguard library materials from man-made disasters like fire as well as natural disasters like earthquakes and flooding. The study also found that university libraries in Enugu State, Nigeria, had a sufficient legal and collaborative framework for the preservation of library buildings. The study concluded that the main obstacles to the preservation of library buildings in university libraries in Enugu State, Nigeria, are a lack of funding, lackadaisical attitudes among library employees, a lack of conservation policies in the library, a low level of awareness among information professionals of the significance of conservation, the harsh environmental conditions in tropical Africa, a shortage of personnel with the necessary training in library building conservation, inadequate infrastructure, and unstable power supplies.

Finally, the study found that consistent power supply, sufficient library funding, and enough infrastructure are the key tactics for improving and conserving library buildings in university libraries in Enugu State, Nigeria. Others include creating a library policy on building conservation and providing

enough security guards and security devices. Steer clear of eating within the library grounds; properly, dust, and clean library materials; periodically fumigate the grounds; and train library staff on appropriate conservation methods.

Recommendations:

The study's conclusions lead to the following recommendations:

1. The library building needs to be constructed with a strong foundation to prevent the destruction of the information resources beneath it that it collapses.
2. The administration of the university library should make an effort to purchase all the equipment required to prevent the library building from rapidly deteriorating.
3. To prevent rain or flooding from destroying the materials in the libraries under study, the damaged walls and connecting roofs should be fixed.
4. University libraries should have a continuous power source.

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ASSESSMENT OF AVAILABILITY OF MULTILINGUAL COLLECTIONS IN BOMADI BRANCH OF THE DELTA STATE PUBLIC LIBRARY

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Abstract

This study examined the availability of multilingual collections in the Bomadi branch of the Delta State Public Library using a descriptive research design. The study population was 1,146 registered users of the library branch, whereas, the sample consisted of 243 library patrons, selected through purposive and convenience sampling techniques. A questionnaire served as a data collection tool. It was validated by senior university lecturers in Library and Information Science. Pilot testing was skipped based on the understanding that a valid test tends to be reliable. The data gathered were analysed using weighted mean and standard deviation. Results showed that multilingual collections were moderately available in the public library branch; English was the most common language used in these collections; the collections were mostly available in print format, while politics, history and languages were the major subjects treated in these collections. The researchers called on the Delta State government and the Delta State public library to increase budgetary allocation to the state public library and to collaborate with sister local and international public libraries respectively, to build adequate multilingual collections.

Keywords: Availability, Multilingual collections, Public libraries, Bomadi, Delta State Public library

Introduction

The public library is a library which provides information resources to meet the diverse information needs of all categories of people in a village, district, town or country without giving preference to any of their characteristics, qualities, status or levels. Zaid and Zaid (2017) opined that the public library is established to provide information services to the populace at no or little cost, regardless of their level in the society, their job, gender and age. By extension, they are institutions that cater for the information demands of a community, without any regard for language limitations (Ly, 2018). The public library achieves this by providing a range of services such as lending information resources such as books, magazines, newspapers, DVDs and CDs; providing internet access; conducting story reading/holiday programs for children and after-school homework clubs for students and rendering reference services (Dapo-Asaju et al., 2021). These services are rendered to its patrons, which range from the most-educated to the starkly-illiterate; from the poorest to the richest; from the rural residents to the urban residents; and from the least-privileged to the most-privileged in the society (Dapo-Asaju et al., 2021). With this, the 21st-century public library intends to achieve one of its main targets, which is to promote discussions among people of diverse cultures and to encourage multiple ways of life by establishing contact with all local community members, especially people who possess diverse life styles (Tanackovic et al., 2012). In achieving this goal, public libraries across the globe have been providing a group of information resources which are written in the language of the people of the community whose information needs it is designed to satisfy. This assortment of information resources which is referred to as multilingual collections in some public libraries such as Halifax Public Libraries (Hill, 2018), or world languages collection in other public libraries such as the Greater Victoria Public Libraries (Ma, 2015), can be described as a set of information items in a public library which is written in the diverse languages of a people of a community.

Public libraries provide multilingual collections probably in adhering to the call that multilingual collections should be provided and created access to, in a manner that reflects the variety of ways in which people live and of the languages in which they speak (IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto, 2012). Moreso, the Reference and User Services Association section of the American Library Association ([RUSA], 2007) asserted that the task of proving this collections should not be seen as an excess work load but as an inseparable part of the duty of libraries to serve all members of their user community equally,

without considering the ethnic group any member belongs to, or the way of life or language he or she has or speaks respectively. As noted by Hill (2018), performing this task is paramount to Canadian public libraries. Their counterparts in America have also been collecting information items in languages aside from English, recruiting personnel who can speak more than one language or exhibit more than one culture, organizing English-as-a-second-language courses, etc., to meet the information needs of the varied population of people who have migrated to America (Burke, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

In recent times, public libraries across the world are building multilingual collections to preserve the history, traditions and customs of the local community they serve. The practice has enabled their user community not only to have a sense of belonging, but also to have self-esteem. It has also helped them to connect with the origin of their existence. Given the relevance of these collections, researchers have set out to study issues revolving around the availability of multilingual collections in public libraries across the globe. However, while previous related studies are available in countries like America, Canada, Israel etc., no research of this kind appears to have provided insight into issues bordering on the availability of multilingual collections in public libraries in Nigeria. If a study of this nature is not conducted in Nigeria, public libraries in the country may fail to function effectively as agents of preservation and conservation of local history, customs and traditions and the local people may not have a sense of belonging and self-esteem. The study, therefore, examined the availability of multilingual collections in the Bomadi branch of the Delta State Public Library.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to examine the availability of multilingual collections in the Bomadi branch of the Delta State Public Library. It was meant to:

1. Determine the level of availability of multilingual collections in the Bomadi branch of the Delta State Public Library;
2. Assess the predominance of the languages of the multilingual collections available in the Bomadi branch of the Delta State Public Library;
3. Identify the predominance of the formats of the multilingual collections available in the Bomadi branch of the Delta State Public Library; and
4. Ascertain the predominance of the subjects covered in the multilingual collections available in the Bomadi branch of the Delta State Public Library.

Research Questions

The study attempted to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the level of availability of multilingual collections in the Bomadi branch of the Delta State Public Library?
2. How predominant are the languages of the multilingual collections available in the Bomadi branch of the Delta State Public Library?
3. In what formats are multilingual collections predominantly available in the Bomadi branch of the Delta State Public Library?
4. How predominant are the subjects covered in the multilingual collections available in the Bomadi branch of the Delta State Public Library?

Review of Related Literature

Level of Availability of Multilingual Collections in Public Libraries

It has been observed that, while library collections should reflect the various languages the people of a community speak, it is not necessarily possible for public libraries to develop a collection of information resources which completely represents such variety (Atlestam et al., 2011). However, expert observations and empirical evidence indicate various levels at which multilingual collections are available in public libraries across the world. Earlier, the Evergreen branch of the Everett (Wash.) Public Library was found to possess no foreign language resources (Goffredo 2002). A similar finding was obtained from a subsequent research by Picco (2008) that the items at three Montreal libraries do not represent how diverse the population of Montreal was. However, further research results became positive. For instance, Rogers (2011) found that the Greater Victoria Public Library has a heterogenous collection. In analyzing the services public libraries in Israel provide to immigrants from the Former Soviet Union and Ethiopia, [Shoham](#) and [Rabinovich](#) (2013) discovered that numerous books in Russian are available in the libraries while Amharic literature is unavailable. The fallout of the study by Ly (2018) suggests that, out of the seventeen non-official languages surveyed in the multilingual collection of Toronto Public Library, the information resources available in the library catalogue were less than the population of the patrons who speak the languages in which they were written. The findings further reveal that the non-English languages have

fewer digital resources available for their language groups. It also indicates that, apart from print books, there were a lot of DVDs and music CDs in foreign languages, compared to its availability in English and French.

Language Representativeness

Research has also unraveled that multilingual collections in public libraries tend to reflect the different languages of the people of the community they serve. Rogers (2011) found that the Toronto Public Library possess a multilingual collection in 40 languages besides English, with Chinese being the most-circulated language, followed by Hindi and Tamil Urdu. In another research, Ly (2018), however, found that the same public library accommodates information items in 307 languages, with more concentration on official language materials. The research also reveals that, out of the 17 non-official languages that were studied in the collection, all were underrepresented in the collection. By extension, its branch libraries house information items in Chinese, French, Hindi and Spanish (Toronto Public Library, 2017). Concerning public libraries in America, the languages of the collections of the Donnell Library Center of the New York Public Library range from 55 to 60 (Rogers, 2011). Moreover, while its collection covers about 50 languages, the Seattle Public Library actively engages in the collection development of information resources in about 14 languages, including Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Russian, Spanish, French, Italian, German, Polish and South African languages such as Somali and Oromo (Rogers, 2011). Ma (2015) noted that most of the multilingual materials at the Greater Victoria Public Library have been completely catalogued in both English and the original language. Public Library Association (2012) noted that while the Philadelphia Free Public Library has a “Translation Station” flip chart that facilitates patrons' understanding of many languages ranging from Arabic to Vietnamese, the Piscataway Public Library in New Jersey acquired books in Chinese and Gujarati at the beginning of the introduction of its World Languages Collection to meet the information needs of its diverse user community. At the Vancouver Public Library in Canada, Chinese and French materials appear to be the most commonly written in Vancouver, followed by Vietnamese and then Tagalog (Vancouver Public Library, 2017). In another research, it was discovered that 80% of respondents from eThekweni Municipal Public Libraries agreed that the library collection sufficiently represented the community languages, whereas, twenty percent of respondents held contrary opinions (Padayachee, 2018). Result from a following study suggests that Spanish-language books constituted only two percent of the total stock of books in all Omaha Public Libraries (Armshaw, 2020). In another research, it was found that the Swedish City Library has literature in many languages beside the three most prominent languages which include Swedish, English and Spanish. These languages include Arabic, Kurdish, Persian and French. Findings further indicate that the library has more than fifty languages and more than sixty languages in its adults section and its children's section respectively. Moreover, the library contains multilingual literature in over 60 languages (Gupta, 2014). On the other hand, public libraries in Israel were found to maintain a collection of materials for immigrants in simple Hebrew (Shoham & Rabinovich, 2008).

Diversity of Format of Multilingual Collections in Public Libraries

Research and expert notions have also pointed out that multilingual collections in public libraries could be available in different formats. IFLA (2009) noted that multilingual collections are most probably available in the form of print books. This was confirmed in a study by Ly (2018) that, across all languages, the Toronto Public Library collection consisted mostly of regular print books. Employing a survey, the Donnell Library Center of the New York Public Library was found to possess about 180,000 books and videos in its multilingual collection (Rogers, 2011). On the other hand, the Greater Victoria Public Library has expanded the format of its multilingual collection from books to music CDs, DVDs, electronic books (e-books) and audiobooks (Ma, 2015). Multilingual collections in public libraries in Canada were even found to be more, as Dilevko and Dali (2002) identified seven language groups of materials in one hundred and sixty-six Canadian public libraries, including reference books, newspapers, magazines, videos and Digital Versatile Disc (DVDs), audiocassettes and compact discs (CDs), ESL materials, and computer software. Jain and Jibril (2016) found that the four Boswianian public libraries mainly adopt face-to-face methods and CDs to create access to indigenous knowledge. In improving the reading habits of indigenous groups in South Africa, Mhlongo and Ngulube (2019) discovered that South African public libraries provide information resources to this category of South-African people in such formats as books, DVDs, CDs, and e-books. Concerning American immigrants, Gitner (1998, as cited in Dilevko and Dali, 2002) noted that the Queens Borough Public Library goes the extra mile to provide general popular materials from their home countries on the same topics that its provide its English-speaking customers, i.e., fiction, parenting, cookbooks, biographies, romances, children's books, videos, and music Cds.

Subject Representativeness

Studies have shown that multilingual collections in public libraries tend to treat different subjects. Blackburn (2017) found that the Alice Springs Public Library has a vast collection of history, with a focus on cultural aspects of indigenous groups. In the same year, Johnston (2017) uncovered that the Norwegian Public Library in the Cities of Oslo, Moss and Horton, provides a language café for immigrant groups to

have conversations on topics related to culture, traditions, current issues or daily activities. Two years later, Rosyid and Rukiyah (2019) observed that the Banten Province Library and Archives contains a Banten Corner room that provides a special collection of local content on history, culture and customs.

Methods

The study adopted a descriptive research design. This choice was considered appropriate for the study because the research was meant to assess the availability of multilingual collections in a public library by analysis of opinions. This is in line with Nworgu's (2015) assertion that this design is intended to gather and systematically describe facts or information about a given population. The population of the study comprised 1,146 registered users of the Bomadi branch of the Delta State Public Library. This figure was obtained by making a preliminary visit to the library and inspecting the circulation files of the Circulation Desk of the library. Out of this figure, a sample of two hundred and ninety-seven users was predetermined using the Taro Yamane sample size determination formula.

A questionnaire was employed for data collection. This instrument was adopted because the researchers decided to engage only educated library users. The draft of the questionnaire was validated by two senior Library and Information Science lecturers at Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. However, the reliability test was skipped because a valid test tends to be reliable (Nworgu, 2015). The questionnaire was composed of two parts: Section A and B. Section A covered information about the personal details of the library users while Section B gathered information about the “availability of multilingual collections in the library”. This section was divided into four clusters: Cluster A, B, C and D. Cluster A. Cluster A which gathered data on the “level of availability of multilingual collections”, was weighted on a 5-point rating scale of Highly Available (5), Available (4), Moderately Available (3), Slightly Available (2) and Not Available (1). On the other hand, Clusters B, C and D which gleaned data on the “predominance of the languages of the multilingual collections”, “predominance of the formats of the multilingual collections” and “predominance of the subjects covered in the multilingual collections” were all weighted on a 4-point rating scale of Very Predominant (4), Predominant (3), Not Sure (2) and Not Predominant (1).

The researchers visited the library at weekends and purposively and conveniently distributed 297 copies of the draft of the validated questionnaire to the educated library patrons who used the library but 243 copies were retrieved and found usable for data analysis. This yielded a response rate of 81.82%. Data collection spanned four weeks. The resultant data were analysed using weighted mean and standard deviation.

The researchers established cut-off point of 3.00 for Cluster A, while criterion point of 2.00 was set for Clusters B, C and D. It was decided that Cluster A items whose weighted means fell within the limits of 4.50-5.49”, “3.50-4.49”, 2.50-3.49, 1.50-2.49 and “0.50-1.49” were to be considered as Highly Available, Available, Moderately Available, Slightly Available and Not Available respectively. The grand mean was also interpreted in the same way. As for Clusters B, C and D, it was decided that items with weighted means which fell within the ranges of 2.50-3.49, 1.50-2.49 and “0.50-1.49” were to be regarded as Very Predominant, Predominant, Not Sure and Not Predominant. The aggregate mean was also explained in the same manner.

Results

This part of the study presented a tabular display of the fallouts of the research based on the research questions earlier posed to guide the study.

Research Question 1: What is the level of availability of multilingual collections in the Bomadi branch of the Delta State Public Library?

Table 1: Mean ratings and standard deviation of responses on the level of availability of multilingual collections in the Bomadi branch of the Delta State Public Library

S/N	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remark
1.	multilingual reference materials	3.55	0.36	A
2.	Multilingual indigenous knowledge materials	2.47	0.25	SA
3.	multilingual books	4.51	0.45	HA
4.	multilingual non-book materials (electronic information resources)	1.56	0.16	SA
5.	multilingual children literature	2.49	0.25	SA
	Grand Mean and Standard Deviation	2.92	0.29	MA

Key: HA=Highly Available; A=Available; MA=Moderately Available; SA=Slightly Available; NA=Not Available

Table 1 indicates that the grand mean is 2.92. This figure falls within the range of 2.50-3.49, which was earlier set as “Moderately Available”. Thus, multilingual collections are moderately available in the Bomadi branch of the Delta State Public Library.

Research Question 2: How predominant are the languages of the multilingual collections available in the Bomadi branch of the Delta State Public Library?

Table 2: Mean ratings and standard deviation of responses on the predominance of the languages of multilingual collections available in the Bomadi branch of the Delta State Public Library

S/N	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remark
1.	English	3.48	0.35	VP
2.	Hausa	0.55	0.06	NP
3.	Yoruba	1.40	0.14	NP
4.	Igbo	1.45	0.15	NP
5.	Fulfulde	0.50	0.05	NP
6.	Ibibio	1.40	0.14	NP
7.	Kanuri	0.52	0.05	NP
8.	Tiv	0.52	0.05	NP
9.	Izon	2.45	0.25	NS
10.	Urhobo	2.47	0.25	NS
11.	Itsekiri	1.58	0.16	NS
12.	Igala	1.51	0.15	NS
	Grand Mean and Standard Deviation	1.48	0.15	NP

Key: VP=Very Predominant; P=Predominant; NS=Not Sure; NP=Not Predominant Table 2 reveals that English is very predominant in the multilingual collections available in the Bomadi branch of the Delta State Public Library.

Research Question 3: In what formats are multilingual collections predominantly available in the Bomadi branch of the Delta State Public Library?

Table 3: Mean ratings and standard deviation of responses on the predominance of formats of multilingual collections available in the Bomadi branch of the Delta Public State Library

S/N	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remark
1.	Printed multilingual materials	3.47	0.35	VP
2.	Non-printed (online) multilingual materials	1.45	1.15	NP
2.	multilingual materials on Compact Disc (CD)	0.56	0.06	NP
3.	multilingual materials on Digital Versatile Disc (DVD)	1.43	0.14	NP
5.	multilingual materials on audiocassettes	1.43	0.14	NP
	Grand Mean and Standard Deviation	1.67	0.17	NS

Key: VP=Very Predominant; P=Predominant; NS=Not Sure; NP=Not Predominant

Table 3 shows that the multilingual collections in the Bomadi branch of the Delta State Public Library are mostly available in print format.

Research Question 4: How predominant are the subjects covered in the multilingual collections in the Bomadi branch of the Delta Public State Library?

Table 4: Mean ratings and standard deviation of responses on the predominance of subjects covered in the multilingual collections in the Bomadi branch of the Delta State Public Library

S/N	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remark
1.	History	3.51	0.35	VP
2.	Languages	3.53	0.35	VP
3.	Literature	2.57	0.26	P
4.	General Knowledge	3.33	0.33	P
5.	Indigenous knowledge	0.50	0.05	NP
6.	Art	1.45	0.15	NP
7.	Science	2.44	0.24	NS
8.	Technology	1.42	0.14	NP
9.	Agriculture	1.45	0.15	NP
10.	Health	2.52	0.25	P
12.	Religion	2.51	0.25	P
13	Politics	3.55	0.35	VP
14.	Economics	3.27	0.33	NS
	Grand Mean and Standard Deviation	2.29	0.23	P

Key: VP=Very Predominant; P=Predominant; NS=Not Sure; NP=Not Predominant

Table 4 reveals that politics, history and languages are the major subjects treated in the multilingual collections available in the Bomadi branch of the Delta State Public Library. This is followed by general knowledge, literature, health and religion.

Discussion

The study examined the availability of multilingual collections in the Bomadi branch of the Delta State Public Library. The study demonstrated that multilingual collections were moderately available in the Bomadi branch of the Delta State Public Library. The finding agrees with Atlestam et al. (2011) who assert that it is not necessarily feasible for public libraries to have a perfect multilingual collection (Atlestam et al., 2011). On the contrary, it disagrees with the outcome that Israeli public libraries contain a large collection of information resources in Russia, except literature on Amharic (Shoham & Rabinovich, 2013). The negative attitude of the Nigerian government towards funding Nigerian public libraries could have prevented the public library branch from providing a large multilingual collection.

The study also revealed that English is very prominent in the multilingual collections available in the library. The result agrees with Ly's (2018) finding that the Toronto public library houses information resources in 307 languages, with more concentration on official language materials. It is, however, contrary to the finding by Padayachee (2018) that the generality of respondents from eThekweni Municipal Public Libraries agreed that the library collection adequately represented the community languages (Padayachee, 2018). The result that the public library branch multilingual collection were most-commonly written in English could be attributed to the tendency of public libraries to provide a collection of information resources in a language which could be read and understood by all categories of people in the society. English is the official and general language spoken in Nigeria. This could have made the public library branch to have given priority to acquiring information items in English.

The research also showed that multilingual collections in the library were mostly available in print format. This aligns with IFLA's (2009) observation that multilingual collections are most likely available in the form of print books. The outcome of the present study may be due to the objective of public libraries to provide all categories of people with access to information resources. The print format enables information to be accessed by people who do not have computers, other digital devices or access to the Internet.

Finally, it unfolded that politics, history and languages were the major subjects treated in the

multilingual collections available in the library. The result aligns with Blackburn's (2017) research outcome that the Alice Springs Public Library contains a vast collection of information items on history, with concentration on cultural aspects of indigenous groups. Public libraries tend to provide information resources which reflect the identity of the people whose information needs they attempt to satisfy. This could be accountable for the current finding.

Conclusion

The research investigated the availability of multilingual collections in the Bomadi branch of the Delta State Public Library. The study provided the understanding that multilingual collections available in the Bomadi branch of the Delta State Public Library were in moderate quantity and were mostly written in English. The collections were mainly available in print format, whereas a greater proportion of the collections treated politics, history and languages.

Recommendations

Given the findings of the study, the following suggestions were made:

1. The Delta State government should increase budgetary allocation to the state public library to enable its branches to make adequate financial provision for the development of multilingual collections;
2. The public library branches should partner with local and international public libraries to acquire more multilingual collections and to learn the best practices in building these collections.

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Sample Distribution of Respondents of the Study

S/N	Categories of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1.	Secondary School Leavers	30	12.35%
2.	Primary School Teachers	29	11.93%
3.	Secondary School Teachers	38	15.64%
4.	Higher Education Students	146	60.08%
	Total	243	100%

ASSESSMENT OF DIGITAL COMPETENCE NEEDS OF PROFESSIONALS IN PROMOTING ACCESS TO ELECTRONIC INFORMATION RESOURCES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated assessment of digital competence needs of professionals in promoting access to electronic information resources in academic libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria. Three research questions and three hypotheses were used for the study. Descriptive research design was used with a population of 50 information professionals in the 3-university institutions in Rivers State. Census sampling technique was used. An 18-item questionnaire titled: "Assessment of Digital Competence Needs of Professionals in Promoting Access to Electronic Information Resources Questionnaire" (ADCNPPAEIRQ) was used. Cronbach alpha statistics was used to obtain 0.78 reliability. Mean and standard deviation were employed for the analysis of the research, while z-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses. Result revealed that, the digital competences' skills of Information Professionals need in promoting access to electronic information resources are a strong digital literacy/information skill, technical proficiency, sound management skills on preservation of electronic materials and knowledge of best practices in digital asset management. Some challenges were revealed to include technological complexity, lack of access to formal training programmes, resistant to embracing new digital technological tools and lack of financial support etc. Major recommendation was, Information Professionals should provide user support and training programmes to help patrons navigate electronic resources effectively. This includes offering workshops, tutorials, and one-on-one consultations to teach users how to search, access, and evaluate digital content.

Key Words: Information; Information professional; Competence-digital; Digital information-management; Academic library; Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

In the digital age, public academic libraries play a crucial role in providing access to electronic information resources to support teaching, learning, and research. The competence of Information Professionals in navigating and promoting access to these resources is essential for ensuring that users can effectively utilize the wealth of digital materials available. This paper aims to assess Information Professionals' digital competence in public academic libraries and its impact on promoting access to electronic information resources. Assessing Information Professionals' digital competence is essential for evaluating their effectiveness in promoting access to electronic information resources in academic libraries. Their proficiency in managing digital collections, providing user support, teaching information literacy skills, and leveraging technology enhances the accessibility and usability of electronic resources for library users (Lannon & Gregson, 2018).

By ensuring that Information Professionals possess the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources, institutions can enhance user experiences and maximize the benefits of digital information resources for academic communities. Information Professionals' digital competence refers to their ability to effectively navigate, manage, and utilize digital technologies and resources within the context of library services. This includes skills such as proficiency in using digital tools, managing electronic databases, providing user support for electronic resources, and integrating new technologies into library services (Lannon & Gregson, 2018). On the other hand, electronic information resources in academic libraries encompass a wide range of digital materials, including scholarly journals, e-books, databases, digital archives, and multimedia content. These resources are accessed and utilized by library patrons for research, teaching, and learning purposes (Chowdhury & Chowdhury, 2007).

Information Professionals' proficiency in utilizing digital tools, managing online databases, and navigating information technology infrastructure directly influences the accessibility and usability of electronic resources for library users (Corrall, 2017). Notwithstanding, the dynamic nature of digital technologies and information resources presents additional complexities. The impact of such digital competence enables Information Professionals to provide comprehensive user support by assisting in the

utilization of advanced search functionalities, integrate new technologies such as artificial intelligence to enhance access to electronic resources and create innovative user experiences, promote open access repositories/digital archives to expand access to scholarly literature and educational materials and to address accessibility needs and ensure that electronic resources are accessible to all users (Corrall, 2017).

Digital Competences Information Professionals need in Promoting Access to Electronic Information Resources in Public Academic libraries

These competencies encompass technical skills, information literacy, and an understanding of copyright and licensing issues, among others. Here are some essential digital competencies that Information Professionals need to promote access to electronic information resources in academic libraries:

1. **Digital Literacy and Information Literacy Skills:** Information Professionals must possess strong digital literacy skills to effectively navigate electronic information resources, databases, and online catalogues. Additionally, they should demonstrate information literacy skills to assist users in critically evaluating and utilizing digital content (Yang & Wu, 2019).
2. **Technical Proficiency:** Information Professionals should be proficient in using library management systems, digital repositories, and other technological tools to organize and manage electronic resources efficiently. Technical skills are crucial for troubleshooting access issues and ensuring seamless integration of electronic resources into library services (Lin & Lin, 2017).
3. **Digital Resource Management:** Information Professionals should be adept at managing digital resources, including cataloguing, organizing, and preserving electronic materials. They should understand metadata standards and best practices for digital asset management (Corrall, 2017).
4. **User Support and Training:** Information Professionals should provide user support and training programmes to help patrons navigate electronic resources effectively. This includes offering workshops, tutorials, and one-on-one consultations to teach users how to search, access, and evaluate digital content (Chitale & Kharat, 2018).
5. **Continuous Professional Development:** Information Professionals should engage in continuous professional development activities to stay updated on emerging trends, technologies, and best practices in electronic resource management. Participation in conferences, workshops, and online courses can enhance Information Professionals' digital competence and ensure the effective promotion of electronic information resources (Lin & Lin, 2017).

Challenges Information Professionals Encounter in the Development of Digital Competences in Promoting Access to Electronic Information Resources

These challenges can range from technological barriers to organizational constraints. Here are some common challenges librarian's encounter:

1. **Technological Complexity:** Rapid advancements in technology and the ever-changing landscape of electronic information resources can make it challenging for Information Professionals to keep pace. Learning new tools, platforms, and software applications requires time and effort (Nicholas & Rowlands, 2008).
2. **Limited Training Opportunities:** Many Information Professionals may lack access to formal training programmes or professional development opportunities focused on digital competences. Without adequate training, Information Professionals may struggle to acquire the necessary skills to effectively promote electronic resources (Corrall, 2017).
3. **Resistance to Change:** Some Information Professionals may be resistant to embracing new technologies and digital tools due to fear of the unknown, reluctance to step out of their comfort zone, or concerns about job security. Overcoming resistance to change requires effective change management strategies. This affect many in developing necessary skills responsible for promoting access to information resources in libraries (De Saulles, 2012).
4. **Resource Constraints:** Academic libraries often face budgetary constraints and limited resources, which can hinder investments in staff training, technological infrastructure, and digital resources. Lack of financial support may impede efforts to develop digital competences among Information Professionals (Brophy & Bawden, 2005).
5. **User Support Demands:** Increased reliance on electronic resources may lead to greater demands for user support and assistance from Information Professionals. Handling user inquiries, troubleshooting access issues, and providing guidance on using digital tools can strain librarian resources (Tenopir, King & Bush, 2004).
6. **Privacy and Security Concerns:** Information Professionals must navigate privacy and security concerns associated with electronic resources, such as protecting user data and ensuring compliance with data protection regulations. Safeguarding sensitive information and maintaining user confidentiality are paramount (Watson, 2012).

Impact of Information Professionals' Digital Competence on Access to Electronic Information Resources

Information Professionals' proficiency in utilizing digital tools, managing online databases, and navigating information technology infrastructure directly influences the accessibility and usability of electronic resources for library users. The various ways this could be facilitating access to electronic information resources in academic libraries as figured by researchers are as follows:

1. **Efficient Resource Management:** Information Professionals with strong digital competence can effectively manage electronic information resources, including cataloguing, indexing, and organizing digital collections. This ensures that resources are readily accessible and searchable for users, enhancing their ability to locate relevant materials (Chowdhury & Chowdhury, 2010).
2. **Enhanced User Support:** Digital competence enables Information Professionals to provide comprehensive user support, assisting patrons in navigating complex databases, troubleshooting technical issues, and utilizing advanced search functionalities. Information Professionals' ability to offer tailored guidance enhances users' experience and promotes effective resource utilization (Corrall, 2017).
3. **Integration of New Technologies:** Information Professionals with digital competence are adept at integrating new technologies and digital tools into library services. They can leverage emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, data analytics, and virtual reality to enhance access to electronic resources and create innovative user experiences (Lannon & Gregson, 2018).
4. **Effective Information Literacy Instruction:** Information Professionals' digital competence enables them to deliver effective information literacy instruction, teaching users how to critically evaluate electronic resources, cite digital materials ethically, and navigate copyright and licensing issues (Elmborg, 2006).
5. **Promotion of Open Access Resources:** Information Professionals with digital competence play a key role in promoting open access resources and advocating for the adoption of open access publishing models (Tennant, Waldman & Jacques, 2016).
6. **Addressing Accessibility Needs:** Information Professionals can implement accessibility features, provide alternative formats, and advocate for inclusive design practices to enhance accessibility for all users. Without knowledge of accessibility standards and assistive technologies, Information Professionals may overlook the importance of making electronic resources accessible to users (Bull, & Hansen, 2017).
7. **Continuous Improvement and Innovation:** Information Professionals' digital competence fosters a culture of continuous improvement and innovation within academic libraries. Digital incompetence among Information Professionals can result in missed opportunities for collaboration and innovation (Chowdhury & Chowdhury, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

Information Professionals play a pivotal role in facilitating access to electronic information resources that are crucial for supporting teaching, learning, and research endeavours within academic communities. Facilitating such electronic information resources requires Information Professionals to be knowledgeable and have necessary skills needed to carry out their responsibility effectively. Considering the weak and epileptic operation of digital resources in academic libraries in Rivers State, it seems Information Professionals lack digital literacy/information skills and technical proficiency to assist users in critically evaluating and utilizing digital content and using library digital repositories and other technological tools to organize and manage electronic resources efficiently.

Some seems to lack management skills on preservation of electronic materials in their formats and knowledge of best practices in digital asset management. There are issues relating to lack of understanding of copyright laws and licensing agreements by Information Professionals related to electronic resources to ensure compliance and facilitate legal access for library users. This gap in assessment methodologies hinders the accurate measurement of Information Professionals' proficiency in key areas such as digital resource management, user support, and technology integration (Bull & Hansen, 2017). In addition to this, there may be discrepancies between perceived and actual digital competence among Information Professionals. While Information Professionals may self-report proficiency in certain digital skills, their ability to apply these skills in practical library settings may vary and may affect the efficacy of access to library resources and utilization.

This misalignment underscores the importance of developing robust assessment mechanisms that accurately gauge Information Professionals' digital competence in promoting access to electronic information resources. Moreover, resource constraints and competing priorities within academic libraries in Rivers State may hinder efforts to prioritize digital competence development initiatives among Information Professionals. Addressing this problem will not only ensure that Information Professionals are

equipped with the necessary skills to promote quality access to electronic information resources to users in academic libraries in Rivers State but also contribute to the overall advancement of library services in the digital age.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study investigated assessment of Information Professionals' digital competence in promoting access to electronic information resources in academic libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study focused on the following:

1. *Examine the digital competences skills Information Professionals need in promoting access to electronic information resources in academic libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria.*
2. *Find out the challenges Information Professionals encounter in the development of digital competences in promoting access to electronic information resources in academic libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria.*
3. *Examine the impact Information Professional's digital competence have on access to electronic information resources in academic libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria.*

Research Questions

1. *What are the digital competent skills Information Professionals need in promoting access to electronic information resources in academic libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria?*
2. *What are the challenges Information Professionals encounter in the development of digital competences in promoting access to electronic information resources in academic libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria?*
3. *What impact does Information Professional's digital competence have on access to electronic information resources in academic libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria?*

Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of information professionals in federal universities and State universities on the digital competence skills Information Professionals need in promoting access to electronic information resources in academic libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of information professionals in federal and State universities on the challenges Information Professionals encounter in the development of digital competences in promoting access to electronic information resources in academic libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Ho₃: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of information professionals in federal and State universities on the impact Information Professional's digital competence have on access to electronic information resources in academic libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Methodology

Descriptive research design was used with a population of fifty (50) information professionals (IPs) in the 3-university institutions in Rivers State. They are University of Port Harcourt (Federal) (20), Rivers State University (State) (19) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (State) (11). Fifty (50) IPs in the 3 universities representing 100% of the population were used as sample respondents due to the small number of Ips in the universities. The sampling technique used to achieve this is census sampling, meaning all were sampled. An 18-item questionnaire titled: Assessment of Digital Competence Needs of Professionals in Promoting Access to Electronic Information Resources Questionnaire" (ADCNPPAEIRQ) was used to get information. Out of the fifty (50) copies administered, only 47 copied were retried.

The 4- points modified likert rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points; Agree (A) = 3 points; Disagree (D) = 2 points; and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point) was used as a response guide to the respondents. An average reliability coefficient of 0.89 was gotten through Cronbach alpha statistics. Mean and standard deviation were employed to respond to the research questions and z-test statistics was used for testing the hypotheses at 0.05 significance level.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What are the digital competences skills Information Professionals need in promoting access to electronic information resources in academic libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of Information Professionals in Federal and State Universities on the digital competences' skills Information Professionals need in promoting access to electronic information resources in academic libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria.

S/N	Items	Information Professionals in Federal University (17)		Information Professionals in State Universities (30)		$\bar{X}_1\bar{X}_2$	Remark
		\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD		
1	Strong digital literacy/information skills to assist users in critically evaluating and utilizing digital content	3.22	1.33	3.72	1.25	3.47	Agreed
2	Technical proficiency in using library digital repositories and other technological tools to organize and manage electronic resources efficiently	3.60	1.57	3.46	1.39	3.53	Agreed
3	A sound understanding of copyright laws and licensing agreements related to electronic resources to ensure compliance and facilitate legal access for library users.	3.57	1.55	3.49	1.52	3.53	Agreed
4	Collaborative ability to promote awareness of electronic information resources and facilitate their integration into the academic curriculum	3.42	1.45	3.38	1.43	3.4	Agreed
5	Sound management skills on preservation of electronic materials in their formats	3.32	1.38	3.39	1.43	3.36	Agreed
6	Knowledge of best practices in digital asset management	2.91	1.14	2.13	1.19	2.52	Agreed
Average mean/standard deviation		3.34	1.40	3.26	1.37		

Table 1 indicated that items number 2 and 3 had the highest mean scores of 3.53 meaning the digital competences' skills Information Professionals need in promoting access to electronic information resources in libraries are technical proficiency in using library digital repositories and other technological tools to organize and manage electronic resources efficiently and a sound understanding of copyright laws and licensing agreements related to electronic resources to ensure compliance and facilitate legal access for library users. Item 1 had 3.47, meaning Information Professionals need possess a strong digital literacy/information skill to assist users in critically evaluating and utilizing digital content. Item 4 had 3.4, which means that Information Professionals need collaborative ability to promote awareness of electronic information resources and facilitate their integration into the academic curriculum. Item 5 had 3.36 meaning they need sound management skills on preservation of electronic materials in their formats and knowledge of best practices in digital asset management and item 6 with 2.52 which means that they also need Knowledge of best practices in digital asset management respectively.

Research Question 2: What are the challenges Information Professionals encounter in the development of digital competences in promoting access to electronic information resources in academic libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean/standard deviation Analysis of Information Professionals in Federal University and State Universities on the challenges Information Professionals encounter in the development of digital competences in promoting access to electronic information resources in academic libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria.

S/N	Items	Information Professionals in Federal University (17)		Information Professionals in State Universities (30)		$\bar{X}_1\bar{X}_2$	Remark
		\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD		
1	Technological complexity as a result of rapid advancements in technology which makes it challenging for Information Professionals to keep pace	3.22	1.33	3.72	1.25	3.47	Agreed
2	Information Professionals lack of access to formal training programmes focused on digital competences due to limited training opportunities	3.60	1.57	3.46	1.39	3.53	Agreed
3	Information Professionals resistant to embracing new digital technological tools which affects the development of necessary skills responsible for promoting access to information resources in libraries	2.91	1.14	2.5	1.5	2.71	Agreed

4	Information Professionals may feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of electronic information resources available, making it difficult to curate and promote relevant resources effectively	3.42	1.45	3.38	1.43	3.4	Agreed
5	Lack of financial support which impede efforts to develop digital competences among Information Professionals	3.32	1.38	3.39	1.43	3.36	Agreed
6	Increased reliance on electronic resources which leads to greater demands for user support and assistance from Information Professionals	3.57	1.55	3.49	1.52	3.53	Agreed
Average mean/standard deviation		3.34	1.40	3.32	1.42		

Table 2 indicated that item number 2 and 6 had the highest mean scores of 3.53 meaning the challenges Information Professionals encounter in the development of digital competences in promoting access to electronic information resources in public academic libraries are Information Professionals lack of access to formal training programmes focused on digital competences due to limited training opportunities and increased reliance on electronic resources which leads to greater demands for user support and assistance from Information Professionals. Item 1 had 3.47, which means Information Professionals faces technological complexity as a result of rapid advancements in technology which makes it challenging to keep pace. Item 4 with 3.4, meaning they face challenges of feeling overwhelmed by the sheer volume of electronic information resources available, making it difficult to curate and promote relevant resources effectively. Item 5 with 3.36 which depicts lack of financial support which impede efforts to develop digital competences among Information Professionals and item 3 with 2.71 which have to do with Information Professionals resistant to embracing new digital technological tools and this affects the development of necessary skills responsible for promoting access to information resources in libraries and the development of necessary skills responsible for promoting access to information resources in libraries.

Research Question 3: What impact does Information Professional's digital competence have on access to electronic information resources in academic libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean/standard deviation Analysis of Information Professionals in Federal University and State Universities on the impact Information Professional's digital competence have on access to electronic information resources in academic libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria.

S/N	Items	Information Professionals in Federal University (17)		Information Professionals in State Universities (30)		\bar{X}_1, \bar{X}_2	Remark
		\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD		
1	Competent Information Professionals barely empower users with essential digital literacy skills	1.87	1.28	2.13	1.19	2	Disagreed
2	Information Professionals lack access to formal training programmes focused on digital competences due to limited training opportunities	2.89	1.18	3.18	1.31	3.04	Agreed
3	Digital competence enables Information Professionals to address accessibility needs and ensure that electronic resources are accessible to all users	2.99	1.24	3.08	1.26	3.04	Agreed
4	Information Professionals with strong digital competence can curate and promote open access repositories/digital archives to expand access to scholarly literature and educational materials	3.00	1.23	2.60	1.22	2.8	Agreed
5	Digital competence enables Information Professionals to integrate new technologies such as artificial intelligence to enhance access to electronic resources	2.91	1.14	3.60	1.57	3.26	Agreed
6	Digital competence enables Information Professionals to provide comprehensive user support by assisting in the utilization of advanced search functionalities	3.29	1.37	3.40	1.43	3.35	Agreed
Average mean/standard deviation		2.83	1.24	3.00	1.33		

Table 3 indicated that item number 6 had the highest mean scores of 3.35 meaning the first impact is that, digital competence enables Information Professionals to provide comprehensive user support by assisting in the utilization of advanced search functionalities. Item 5 with 3.26, meaning digital competence enables Information Professionals to integrate new technologies such as artificial intelligence to enhance access to electronic resources. Items 2 and 3 had 3.04 which means that Information Professionals lack access to formal training programmes focused on digital competences due to limited training opportunities and digital competence enables Information Professionals to address accessibility needs and ensure that electronic resources are accessible to all users. Item 4 had 2.8 which means that, Information Professionals with strong digital competence can curate and promote open access repositories/digital archives to expand access to scholarly literature and educational materials. Meanwhile, item 1 had a mean score of 2 which is below the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating that competent Information Professionals empower users with essential digital literacy skills.

Test of Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of information professionals in federal university and State universities on the digital competence skills Information Professionals need in promoting access to electronic information resources in academic libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 4: z-test Analysis of the Difference between the Opinions of Information Professionals in federal university and State universities on the digital competence skills Information Professionals need in promoting access to electronic information resources academic libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Subject	N	\bar{x}	SD	Df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Level of Sig	Remark
Information Professionals in Federal University	17	1.93	1.26	2	0.19	± 1.96	0.05	Accepted
Information Professionals in State Universities	30	2.16	1.33	45				

The result of table 4 showed that the z-calculated value of 0.19 is less than the z-critical value of ± 1.96 at degree of freedom of 45 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted and upholds that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of Information Professionals in federal university and state universities on the digital competence skills they need in promoting access to electronic information resources in academic libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of information professionals in federal university and state universities on the challenges Information Professionals encounter in the development of digital competences in promoting access to electronic information resources in academic libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 5: z-test Analysis of the Difference between the Opinions of Information Professionals in Federal University and State Universities on the challenges Information Professionals encounter in the development of digital competences in promoting access to electronic information resources in academic libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Subject	N	\bar{x}	SD	Df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Level of Sig	Remark
Information Professionals in Federal University	17	3.37	1.42	2	0.04	± 1.96	0.05	Accepted
Information Professionals in State Universities	30	3.19	1.49	45				

The result of table 5 shows that the z-calculated value of 0.04 is less than the z-critical value of 1.96 at degree of freedom of 45 at 0.05 level of significance. We therefore fail to accept the null hypothesis and uphold that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of Information Professionals in federal university and state universities on the challenges they encounter in the development of digital competences in promoting access to electronic information resources in academic libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Ho₃: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of information professionals in federal university and State universities on the impact of librarian's digital competence on access to electronic information resources in academic libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 5: z-test Analysis of the Difference between the Opinions of Information Professionals in Federal University and State Universities on the impact of Information Professional's digital competence on access to electronic information resources in academic libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Subject	N	\bar{x}	SD	Df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Level of Sig	Remark
Information Professionals in Federal University	17	3,37	1.42	2				
				45	0.44	± 1.96	0.05	Accepted
Information Professionals in State Universities	30	3.19	1.49					

The result of table 5 shows that the z-calculated value of 0.39 is less than the z-critical value of 1.96 at degree of freedom of 45 at 0.05 level of significance. We therefore fail to accept the null hypothesis and uphold that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of information professionals in federal university and State universities on the impact of librarian's digital competence on access to electronic information resources in academic libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The result of this research work is in concurred to the study of Yang and Wu (2019) whose work revealed that Information Professionals must possess strong digital literacy skills to effectively navigate electronic information resources. The study of Lin and Lin (2017) go in same line by revealing that, technical skills are crucial for troubleshooting access issues and ensuring seamless integration of electronic resources into library services databases, and online catalogues.

The result of this work coincides with the findings of Nicholas and Rowlands (2008) who found that the challenges Information Professionals encounter to include rapid advancements in technology and the ever-changing landscape of electronic information resources can make it challenging for Information Professionals to keep pace. This also corroborates the findings of Corral (2017) which revealed that, many Information Professionals may lack access to formal training programmes or professional development opportunities focused on digital competences.

The result of this work also upheld the findings of Chowdhury and Chowdhury (2010) who also revealed that, one impact of Information Professionals' digital competence on access to electronic information resources is that Information Professionals with strong digital competence can effectively manage electronic information resources, including cataloguing, indexing, and organizing digital collections. This ensures that resources are readily accessible and searchable for users, enhancing their ability to locate relevant materials.

Summary of Findings

It was found that, the digital competences' skills Information Professionals need in promoting access to electronic information resources are a strong digital literacy/information skill, technical proficiency, a sound understanding of copyright laws and licensing agreements, sound management skills on preservation of electronic materials and knowledge of best practices in digital asset management.

It was also found that, the challenges Information Professionals encounter in the development of digital competences in promoting access to electronic information resources are technological complexity, Information Professionals lack of access to formal training programmes, resistant to embracing new digital technological tools and lack of financial support which impede efforts to develop digital competences among Information Professionals.

It was also found that, the impact librarian's digital competence has on access to electronic information resources in public academic libraries is that, digital competence enables Information Professionals to provide comprehensive user support by assisting in the utilization of advanced search functionalities, integration of new technologies etc. All the hypotheses were accepted, meaning there is no significant difference in the opinions of information professionals in federal and state universities on all issues raised.

Conclusion

In the rapidly evolving digital landscape of modern academia, academic academic libraries serve as vital hubs for accessing electronic information resources essential for teaching, learning, and research. However, the effective promotion of access to these resources heavily relies on the digital competence of Information Professionals because Information Professionals' digital incompetence poses significant challenges to access to electronic information resources in academic libraries. Addressing these challenges

requires investment in training and professional development programmes to enhance Information Professionals' digital skills and knowledge, thereby ensuring that they can effectively support users in accessing and utilizing electronic resources.

Recommendations

1. There is need for university institutions to collaborate with library management to train Information Professionals through conferences, workshops, and webinars to develop their literacy skills on how to effectively handle electronic information resources.
2. Information Professionals should provide user support and training programs to help patrons navigate electronic resources effectively.
3. Information Professionals need to be well-versed in licensing agreements and copyright regulations governing electronic resources to ensure compliance and facilitate legal access electronic resources efficiently.

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AWARENESS, ACCESS AND USAGE OF ELECTRONIC DATABASES BY UNDERGRADUATES OF LADOKE AKINTOLA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

Electronic databases offer strong value to academicians in teaching, learning, and research. However, various studies reported a relatively low awareness and usage of electronic databases among students. The purpose of the study was to investigate the level of awareness, accessibility, and usage of electronic databases among undergraduates of Ladoke Akintola University of Technology. The population of the study was 25,878, out of which a sample size of 400 undergraduates was drawn using the Tara Yamane (1967) formula. The study utilized questionnaires with a Likert-five-point rating scale as the study instrument. The instrument was administered using the simple random sampling technique to 400 undergraduate students. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean scores with the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Findings indicated that the majority of undergraduate students at the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology were not aware at all of electronic databases, while some of the respondents were averagely aware. A fraction of the undergraduates are aware of electronic databases and reported moderate accessibility of electronic databases. Furthermore, the study revealed that the undergraduates made sporadic use of electronic databases to retrieve scholarly articles, learn extensively on a topic, to complete research works, write reports, and update knowledge on current research. Consequently, lack of/poor internet connectivity, poor electricity supply, need to subscribe before accessing full-text documents, poor information literacy skills, difficulty in locating relevant items, difficulty in locating electronic databases relevant to study, and reluctance to adopt new information retrieval systems were observed as the challenges encountered when utilizing electronic databases. The study recommended improving awareness and usage of electronic databases to include: embarking on awareness programs, honing information literacy skills of undergraduates, provision of bandwidth, subscription to relevant electronic databases, purchase of power stations and training and retraining of librarians.

Keywords: Access, Awareness, Usage, Electronic Resources, Undergraduate, Databases, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Academicians

INTRODUCTION

The advent of Electronic Information Resources (EIR) brought about a variety of electronic resources such as e-journals, CD-ROM, e-newspapers, e-magazines, multimedia products, the internet, and electronic databases. Kambur and Yildirim (2023) refer to electronic databases as organized sets of scholarly and professional publications (e-books or e-journals) in an electronic form that provides a platform for the user to access scholarly information contained in several journals and electronic books in different disciplines. Electronic databases have become more critical in academic society for teaching, research, learning, and other activities revolving around information delivery in tertiary educational institutions (Mohammed & Ibrahim 2023). It stressed the importance of Electronic databases wither attendance value to academicians for teaching, learning, and research. Pryzytula (2024) further pointed to the importance of electronic databases in academic institutions as vital and providing immense opportunities for academicians and researchers as well as students to access and use information resources.

Several studies (Briffa, Jaftha, Loreto, Pinto, Chircop, and Hill, 2020; Yusuf and Farouk 2017, Sinh and Nhung, 2012) reveal that electronic databases can be used for numerous purposes that enhance the learning process, improve academic performance, and facilitates research. However, other studies (Egberongbe 2011; Uzuegbu, Chukwu, and Ibegwam, 2012; Akinola, Shorunke, Ajayi, Odefadehan, and Ibikunle, 2018), show that the usage of electronic resources by students and researchers is very poor whereas other studies have indicated high use (Ahmad 2013, Larson 2017).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. ascertain the level of awareness of undergraduates to the availability of electronic databases at the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology.
2. determine the extent of accessibility of electronic databases to undergraduates at the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology.
3. examine the frequency of use of electronic databases by the undergraduates at the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology.
4. identify the purpose(s) for the usage of electronic databases by undergraduates at the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology.
5. identify the challenges to awareness, access, and usage of electronic databases by the undergraduates at the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To achieve the objectives of this study, the study attempted to provide answers to the following research questions:

- What are the levels of awareness of undergraduates to the availability of electronic databases at the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology?
- What is the extent of accessibility of electronic databases to undergraduates at the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology?
- What is the frequency of use of electronic databases by the undergraduates at the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology?
- What is the purpose(s) for the usage of electronic databases by undergraduates at the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology?
- *What are the challenges to awareness, access and usage of electronic databases by the undergraduates at the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology?*

LITERATURE REVIEW

Electronic databases provide a platform for students to search for scholarly information that consists of numerous journals in particular disciplines that can be accessed online by students (Edesiri, 2018). Khan and Haridasan (2015) posit that electronic databases have become an important source that supports learning and research activities at academic institutions. Eiriemiokhale (2020) reveals that an electronic database is a valuable and up-to-date source of information that is indispensable to learning, teaching, and research. The study emphasized the importance of electronic databases as a growing phenomenon that will continue to propel research in the tertiary institutions. Dongardive (2015) posits that electronic databases remain the most effective way to provide access to electronic books or journals in university libraries.

Several studies have researched the level of awareness of electronic resources by users and Edesiri (2018) shows that lack of awareness of the existence of relevant electronic databases is a major impediment to access and use of electronic databases for learning among students. Baro, Endouware, and Ubogu (2011) argued that awareness may lead to the usage of electronic databases but that is not always the case. Adam (2017) and Naqvi (2012) reported the majority of their respondents were fully aware of the availability of electronic databases. Conversely, Alawiye, Amusa, Ajiboye, and Adegbaye (2016) reported a very low level of awareness of electronic databases among the respondents.

Access to information is vital for successful and efficient research at universities (Ani, Ngulube, and Onyancha, 2015). Aina (2014) reported that electronic databases were not fully accessible. Also, Abdulganiyu et al (2019) recorded a low level of accessibility to electronic databases in their research. Conversely, Yusuf and Farouk (2017) stated that accessibility to electronic databases in the research conducted was easy.

Access to the usage of electronic databases by undergraduates, postgraduates, lecturers, and other researchers has become popular among undergraduate students in Nigeria's tertiary institutions (Anaraki and Babalhaveji 2013). Similarly, Uzuegbu, Chukwu, and Ibegwam (2012) reported that their respondents did not utilize electronic databases because they were not aware of the resources. On the other hand, Sinh and Nhung (2012) reported that there was high awareness but low utilization. The conclusion of (Basiru and Okwilagbe, 2018; and Ahmad; 2013) was that there was high utilization of electronic databases among respondents. On the contrary, Nkoyo and Nsanta (2016) reported underutilization of electronic databases among respondents.

Bashorun, Bashorun, Olarongbe, and Akinbowale (2022) found that users of the library used the databases because of the currency of e-journals' articles and rich content to meet the information literacy of

undergraduates through the availability of electronic resources. Niqvi (2012) in his study identified that respondents used electronic databases to download articles and for their research. Other purposes for utilization include updating knowledge. Sinh and Nhung (2012) reported that respondents use electronic databases for learning, research, and teaching purposes and to keep themselves updated. Adam (2017) reported the purpose of utilizing electronic databases to include research, teaching, studying, and self-development. Yusuf and Farouk (2017) highlighted research work, current awareness, preparing notes, internal and external presentations, and writing reports as the purpose of utilizing electronic databases among respondents.

Nicholas, Williams, Rowlands and Jamali (2010) reported the main difficulties of accessibility of electronic databases to include the institution not subscribing to full-text journals, the researchers being asked to pay for download, and the request of a password, which researchers do not possess. Aina (2014) concluded some databases were not fully accessible for usage due to challenges like inadequate internet facilities and electricity supply. Abdulganiyu et al (2019) indicated a lack of search skills, difficulty in locating relevant items, lack of assistance from library personnel, and inaccessibility of usernames and passwords required to access some online databases as challenges affecting the use of electronic databases. Edesiri (2018) identified a lack of awareness of the existence of relevant electronic databases, the inconsistency of electricity supply, and lack of/inadequate information skills as challenges affecting the use of electronic databases.

The framework adopted for this study is the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Davis et al (1989). TAM was developed to explain the factors that determine computer acceptance. There are two key variables in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which are perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU). In addition, the variables of the theory relate to the research problems currently being treated. The theory explains the extent of the use of databases based on the overall simplicity and ease of operating the electronic databases and the impact and benefits of usage.

METHODOLOGY

A survey research design was adopted in conducting the research. The target population for the study was 25,878 undergraduates of Ladoke Akintola University of Technology and a sample size of 400 was drawn using Taro Yamane method. The questionnaire was validated with three senior lecturers at the Department of Library and Information Science, University of Ilorin, and the Cronbach's alpha method was used to test the internal consistency of the questionnaire. The data was analyzed using a simple frequency, mean, and simple percentage method that facilitates easy understanding, better illustration, and easy interpretation of data collected, which generated appropriate table that answered the research questions, while results were presented in tables. The SPSS version 25 package was used for the analysis of data collected.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research objective 1: ascertain the level of awareness of undergraduates to the availability of electronic databases at the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology.

Table 1: Awareness of Electronic Databases

Electronic Databases	EA	MA	SWA	SLA	NA	Mean
1. HINARI	63 (15.8%)	55 (13.8%)	16 (4%)	8 (2%)	258 (64.5%)	2.14
2. AGORA	35 (8.8%)	74 (18.5%)	32 (8%)	15 (3.8%)	244 (61%)	2.10
3. ARDI	47 (11.8%)	36 (9%)	34 (8.5%)	18 (4.5%)	265 (66.3%)	1.96
4. OARE	38 (9.5%)	49 (12.3%)	26 (6.5%)	23 (5.8%)	264 (66%)	1.94
5. JSTOR	49 (12.3%)	49 (12.3%)	40 (10%)	16 (4%)	246 (61.5%)	2.10
6. IMF E-Library	53 (13.3%)	45 (11.3%)	27 (6.8%)	19 (4.8%)	256 (64%)	2.05
7. ScienceDirect	57 (14.2%)	55 (13.8%)	28 (7%)	15 (3.8%)	245 (61.3%)	2.16
8. PROQUEST	42 (10.5%)	47 (11.8%)	27 (6.8%)	16 (4%)	268 (67%)	1.95
9. Medline	49 (12.3%)	50 (12.5%)	24 (6%)	16 (4%)	261 (65.3%)	2.03
10. Web of Science	45 (11.3%)	50 (12.5%)	22 (5.5%)	19 (4.8%)	264 (66%)	1.98

Source: Field Survey (2021).

Findings from this study shows that some of the respondents are averagely aware of the existence of electronic databases while majority of the respondents are not aware at all about electronic databases. The awareness of electronic databases among undergraduates of Ladoke Akintola University of Technology is in this order ScienceDirect, HINARI, AGORA, JSTOR, IMF E-Library, Medline, Web of Science, ARDI, PROQUEST and OARE. The electronic databases that has the highest level of awareness is ScienceDirect with a 38.75% awareness level, meanwhile, the electronic database with the lowest level of awareness is OARE with a 34% awareness level.

This data conforms to Alawiye, Amusa, Ajiboye, and Adegbaye's (2016) research findings that reported a low level of awareness of electronic databases among respondents. Conversely, the study disagrees with Adam (2017) and Naqvi (2012) who reported a high level of awareness of electronic databases among their respondents. The findings of the study also conform to Aina's (2014) research findings that showed that the level of awareness of electronic databases varied among respondents.

The study agrees with Aina (2014) that posits that there must be increase in awareness of electronic resources at institutions. This recommendation is important because of Alawiye, Amusa, Ajiboye and Adegbaye (2016) and Kwadzo (2015) position that awareness of a resource facilitates its usage.

Research objective 2: determine the extent of accessibility of electronic databases to undergraduates at the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology.

Table 2: Accessibility to Electronic Databases

Electronic Databases	N = 400					Mean
	RA	MA	SWA	NA	DK	
1. HINARI	64 (16%)	47 (11.8%)	19 (4.8%)	6 (1.5%)	264 (66%)	2.10
2. AGORA	29 (7.2%)	72 (18%)	43 (10.8%)	6 (1.5%)	250 (62.5%)	2.06
3. ARDI	39 (9.8%)	40 (10%)	40 (10%)	11 (2.8%)	270 (67.5%)	1.92
4. OARE	28 (7%)	57 (14.7%)	33 (8.3%)	14 (3.5%)	268 (67%)	1.91
5. JSTOR	39 (9.8%)	51 (12.8%)	48 (12%)	10 (2.5%)	252 (63%)	2.04
6. IMF E-Library	66 (16.5%)	41 (10.3%)	26 (6.5%)	7 (1.8%)	260 (65%)	2.12
7. ScienceDirect	46 (11.5%)	64 (16%)	34 (8.5%)	7 (1.8%)	249 (62.3%)	2.13
8. PROQUEST	45 (11.3%)	52 (13%)	22 (5.5%)	14 (3.5%)	267 (66.8%)	1.99
9. Medline	37 (9.3%)	56 (14%)	34 (8.5%)	10 (2.5%)	263 (65.8%)	1.99
10. Web of Science	52 (13%)	49 (12.3%)	25 (6.3%)	10 (2.5%)	264 (66%)	2.04

Source: Field Survey (2021).

Result from the survey carried out shows that majority of the respondents do not know about the accessibility of electronic databases because they are not aware of electronic databases generally. However, some of the respondents that are aware of electronic databases indicated them to be moderately accessible in this order: ScienceDirect, IMF E-Library, HINARI, AGORA, JSTOR, Web of Science, PROQUEST, Medline, ARDI and OARE.

The research finding agrees with Yusuf and Farouk (2017) research conclusion that stated that accessibility to electronic databases was easy. On the other hand, the data disagrees with Aina (2014) research findings that reported that HINARI electronic database was not accessible at all. The data further disagrees with Abdulganiyu, Mshelia and Bello (2019) research findings that reported low accessibility to electronic databases among respondents.

Research objective 3: examine the frequency of use of electronic databases by the undergraduates at the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology.

Table 3: Frequency of usage of Electronic Databases

Items	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean
1. <i>I use electronic databases frequently</i>	63 (15.8%)	35 (8.8%)	157 (39.3%)	48 (12%)	97 (24.3%)	2.80
2. <i>I use electronic databases occasionally</i>	39 (9.8%)	45 (11.3%)	184 (46%)	61 (15.3%)	71 (17.8%)	2.80
3. <i>I do not use electronic databases</i>	141 (33.5%)	9 (2.3%)	62 (17.3%)	88 (22%)	100 (25%)	3.01
4. <i>I rarely use electronic databases</i>	66 (16.5%)	52 (13%)	153 (38.3%)	77 (19.3%)	52 (13%)	3.01
5. <i>I use electronic databases as last resort</i>	45 (10.5%)	67 (16.8%)	180 (45.5%)	64 (16%)	45 (11.3%)	3.01

Source: Field Survey (2021).

Findings from this research show the frequency of use of electronic databases. The majority of the undergraduates at the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology do not make use of electronic databases, however, those who utilize these resources rarely use them or use them as a last resort. The findings of this study showed that the respondents only made sporadic use. Progressively, a few respondents assert that they use electronic databases frequently, while a few respondents indicated that they use electronic databases occasionally.

The data agrees with Nkoyo and Nsanta (2016) research findings that indicated that respondents underutilized electronic databases. In contrast, the data disagrees with Adam (2017) and Ahmad (2013) who reported an average high use of electronic databases among respondents and high usage of electronic databases among respondents respectively.

The study conforms to Wagay and Dutta (2024) research findings that stated that respondents did not make use of electronic databases because they were not aware of their availability. The study also agrees with Basiru and Okwilagbe, (2018) opinion that the level of awareness does not equate to usage of electronic databases, because most of the respondents who indicated awareness of some electronic databases, still reported little to no usage of these electronic databases.

Research objective 4: identify the purpose(s) for the usage of electronic databases by undergraduates at the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology.

Table 4: Purpose for Utilizing Electronic Databases

Items	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean
1. <i>I use electronic databases to learn extensively on a topic</i>	111 (27.8%)	86 (21.5%)	184 (46%)	9 (2.3%)	10 (2.5%)	3.70
2. <i>I use electronic databases to complete research works</i>	87 (21.8%)	107 (26.8%)	195 (48.8%)	7 (1.8%)	4 (1%)	3.67
3. <i>I use electronic databases to write reports</i>	81 (20.3%)	91 (22.8%)	203 (50.7%)	14 (3.5%)	11 (2.8%)	3.54

4. <i>I use electronic databases when I need scholarly articles</i>	133 (33.3%)	64 (16%)	188 (47%)	5 (1.3%)	10 (2.5%)	3.76
5. <i>I use electronic databases to update my knowledge on current researches</i>	65 (16.3%)	78 (19.5%)	197 (49.3%)	21 (5.3%)	39 (9.8%)	3.27

Source: Field Survey (2021).

The findings of this study showed that undergraduates utilized electronic databases for different reasons. These reasons range from when they need scholarly articles, when they want to learn extensively on a topic, when they have to complete research works, when they need to write reports to when they need to update knowledge on current research.

The data agrees with Sinh and Nhung (2012) in their study that assessed the main purpose of utilizing electronic databases. The results showed that 45.6% of respondents use electronic databases for learning, 29.7% utilize them for doing research, 20.6% use databases to keep themselves updated, and 4.1% use databases for teaching purposes. The data also agrees with Niqvi (2012) who reported that electronic databases could be utilized to update knowledge. Furthermore, the data agrees with Yusuf and Farouk's (2017) findings that reported that the majority of the respondents utilized electronic databases to write reports and to complete research works.

Research objective 5: identify the challenges to awareness, access and usage of electronic databases by the undergraduates at the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology.

Table 4.4.5: challenges affecting the use of Electronic Databases

N = 400

Items	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean
1. <i>Lack of/poor Internet connectivity</i>	161 (40.3%)	47 (11.8%)	178 (44.5%)	8 (2%)	6 (1.5%)	3.88
2. <i>Poor electricity supply</i>	122 (30.5%)	74 (18.5%)	192 (48%)	6 (1.5%)	6 (1.5%)	3.75
3. <i>Poor information literacy skills</i>	116 (29%)	57 (14.2%)	202 (50.5%)	15 (3.8%)	10 (2.5%)	3.64
4. <i>Difficulty in locating relevant items</i>	103 (25.8%)	65 (16.3%)	203 (50.7%)	16 (4%)	13 (3.3%)	3.57
5. <i>Need to subscribe before accessing full-text documents</i>	132 (33%)	54 (13.5%)	192 (48%)	14 (3.5%)	8 (2%)	3.72
6. <i>Reluctance to adopt new information retrieval system</i>	61 (15.3%)	55 (13.8%)	208 (52%)	28 (7%)	48 (12%)	3.13
7. <i>Difficulty in locating electronic databases relevant to the course of study</i>	92 (23%)	79 (19.8%)	202 (50.5%)	19 (4.8%)	8 (2%)	3.57
8. <i>Lack of interest in the use of electronic databases</i>	45 (11.3%)	47 (11.8%)	203 (50.7%)	38 (9.5%)	67 (16.8%)	2.91

Source: Field Survey (2021).

Response to the question on the challenges faced in the utilization of electronic databases being surveyed indicated numerous challenges. The challenges range from lack of/poor internet connectivity, poor electricity supply, need to subscribe before accessing full-text documents, poor information literacy skills, difficulty in locating relevant items, difficulty in locating electronic databases relevant to the study, and reluctance to adopt new information retrieval systems. The respondents however disagreed that lack of interest in the use of electronic databases is one of the challenges affecting utilization of electronic databases.

The findings of this study agree with Aina (2014) who posits that electronic databases were being underutilized because some databases were not fully accessible for usage due to challenges like inadequate internet facilities and electricity supply. The study also agrees with Edesiri (2018) who identified the major issues of utilizing electronic databases to be a lack of awareness of the existence of relevant electronic databases, the inconsistency of electricity supply, and lack of/inadequate information skills.

Furthermore, the study agrees with Nicholas, Williams, Rowlands, and Jamali (2010) research findings stating that institutions not subscribing to full-text journals is one of the challenges encountered when utilizing electronic databases. The data also conforms to Abdulganiyu et al (2019) research conclusion that a lack of search skills affects the use of electronic databases.

CONCLUSION

Electronic databases provide access to a range of rich information and scholarly resources that impact learning, teaching, and research activities positively, yet the majority of the undergraduates at Ladok Akintola University of Technology are not aware of the availability of these e-databases. On the other hand, it was found in this study that lack of interest in the use of electronic databases is not one of the reasons why undergraduates do not use electronic databases. Hence, if adequate measures can be put in place to increase the awareness level of undergraduates and other facilities needed to access electronic databases, there could be a rise in the utilization of electronic databases among undergraduates of Ladok Akintola University of Technology.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study:

1. **Awareness Programmes:** *Olusegun Oke Library should embark on various public awareness programmes and mechanisms that will facilitate increased awareness of undergraduates about the availability of electronic databases.*
2. **Information Literacy Skills:** *The library should take it upon themselves to organize training sessions that will hone the information literacy skills of undergraduates, by teaching them basic search skills required to retrieve relevant information from any source.*
3. **Availability of bandwidth:** *The library and the higher institution of learning at large should make provision of bandwidth with fast internet connectivity for undergraduates to enhance use of search engines and utilization of electronic databases.*
4. **Subscription to relevant electronic databases:** *The library should subscribe to electronic databases relevant to the curriculum of the institution so that undergraduates can have access to full-text documents.*

Furthermore, the following are recommended:

- a. Purchase and building of power station to ensure regular power supply to solve the challenges of poor electricity supply.
- b. Librarians should be engaged in training and re-training to help them keep up with trends and developments in the field.

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BI/MULTILINGUAL SUPPORT FOR INCLUSIVE SERVICE DELIVERY AMONG POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS OF ARABIC LANGUAGE IN TWO UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN SOKOTO STATE, NORTH-WEST NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study explore Bilingual and Multilingual support for inclusive service delivery to postgraduate students of Arabic language in two university libraries in Sokoto, North-West Nigeria. Making provision for bilingual and multilingual support to library users, for offering inclusive service delivery is of paramount importance. This study adopted qualitative research design, and used focus group discussion for data collection. Three research objectives guided the study to determine multilingual support practices for inclusive service delivery to postgraduate students of Arabic, identify multilingual challenges associated with accessing and utilizing Arabic information resources, and propose solutions to address the challenges inhibiting inclusive service delivery to postgraduate students of Arabic in the two universities. Twelve participants (P1 – P12) were purposively selected and used for the study. The major findings reveals lack of adequate multilingual support for accessing information resources in the digital library section of the two libraries. The findings further reveals lack of proficiency in both English and Arabic languages has been a major barrier that inhibit inclusive access and effective utilization of information resources and services by postgraduate students in the two university libraries. Furthermore, the multilingual support for inclusive service delivery based on print information resources highly satisfactory. However, the challenges of Bilingual and Multilingual support for inclusive service delivery are associated with lack of awareness and low ICT skills of the postgraduate students of Arabic. The study therefore, made recommendations which include offering language support programmes, training for acquisition of ICT skills, adequate provision of library staff with proficiency in Arabic language, and incorporation of inclusion practices into overall library operations. Thus, library managers have to be more proactive towards developing and implementing policies and practices to address the challenges of inclusive service delivery to minority user groups.

Keywords: Multilingual Information access, Inclusive Library Services, Multilingual Library Support.

Introduction

The academic libraries worldwide, particularly the university type, play a crucial role in providing support for teaching, learning and research activities in their parent institution. However, as universities strive to become more diverse and inclusive, the need for multilingual support and inclusive service delivery has also become increasingly crucial. This is particularly relevant for postgraduate students of Arabic language programmes, who often face unique challenges and barriers in accessing library resources and services due to language and cultural differences. In Nigeria, the Arabic language presents a significant challenge for library systems and resources that have been primarily designed for English language (Al-Suqri, 2011). Postgraduate students of Arabic language programmes may encounter difficulties in using library catalogues, accessing materials in their language of instruction, or effectively communicating their information needs to library staff. These challenges can hinder their academic progress, research endeavors, and overall learning experience (Ishimura & Bartlett, 2014; Pun, 2017). Furthermore, the lack of multilingual support and inclusive services can perpetuate feelings of marginalization and exclusion among Arabic-speaking students, impacting their sense of belonging and engagement within the university community (Pun, 2017; Ullah & Memon, 2021). This is particularly a matter of serious concern as diversity and inclusivity have become core values in higher education globally. Thus, it is imperative for university libraries to striving to create a welcoming and supportive environments for students from diverse backgrounds. Therefore, making provision for bilingual and multilingual (Bi/Multilingual) support to library users, for inclusive service delivery is of paramount importance.

The university library consists of three major user groups, namely, faculty members, students and researchers. Different forms of services are offered to these user groups in order to satisfy their needs. It means deliberate efforts have to be made to ensure maximum utilization of the available resources and services by users. In this regard, access provision is a key requirement that involved acquisition and systematic organization of information resources for efficient and effective user services. Access provision is concerned with getting the contents of information resources readily available, physically or virtually, for easy access and use by the users. While user services as stated by Mole (2023), involves assisting users to make effective use of the resources of the library for the satisfaction of their needs. Mole further pointed

that, there are three major aspects of library work: administrative services, technical services, and user services. In managing user services, the job of professional librarians is to assist their clients find the information he/she need. This can be achieve by making analysis of users' needs, determine the relevant information sources, make search for it, to ensure it is readily available. In addition, user services involved instructional role; to guide users on how to find and evaluate sources of information.

In university libraries, services are introduced to meet the specific needs of all target user groups. However, many a times there is the possibility that certain services offered to users cannot satisfy them due to various inhibiting factors (Eguibe, Kalu & Usied, 2021). The inhibiting factors to accessing library resources and services could be language barrier, non-integration of appropriate technologies, staff incompetence, or administrative inefficiencies. Moreover, library services are offered in response to users' demands. But, from experience and observations, these researchers noted that, there are users who cannot express their demands for services due to lack of proficiency or basic language skills, used for instruction or other communications in the library environment. The possible solution to this problem is provision of bilingual and multilingual support services. In Nigeria, English is the official language that is use for government administrative functions, education, businesses, and so on. Hence, English has been the primary language of instruction in all educational institutions from basic to tertiary levels. Without Bi/Multilingual support for some Arabic students with deficiency in basic communication skills in English language, the affected users will remain excluded from effective utilization of the library information resources. Furthermore, the lack of necessary support could result into users having limited access to relevant information resources. Providing Bi/Multilingual support services to library users whose language of instruction is different from the general or primary language of instruction used in the university has become necessary for achieving inclusive service delivery.

Arabic is one of the international language of study in some Nigerian educational institutions. In most academic libraries, the information resources for the study of this language are manage as special or separate collections. However, in order to further enhance inclusivity, it is necessary to provide Bi/Multilingual support services to the users of these special collections. Indeed some of the users lack proficiency in the use of language of instruction of their university. Nigeria is a multicultural nation and its libraries serve different categories of user groups that are diverse in terms of language, ethnic identity, and so on. As such bilingual and multilingual issues should be recognize and incorporated in all aspects of library operations and services. For example, Aliero and Furfuri (2023) cited Jorgenson and Burress, who stress that educational institutions are places of cultural diversity, with their clients from diverse identity. As such their information resources and services should reflect those cultural identity and language diversity. Diversity is among the major characteristics of library users in Nigeria's multicultural society. Therefore, the multicultural nature of Nigeria informed its linguistics diversity.

In fact, Nigeria's linguistics diversity enrich its cultural heritage, but in the educational context, it presents challenges to education, communication and other services provision. Therefore, in order to ensure inclusiveness of access and service delivery to users of the university libraries, efforts to address the linguistics diversity should focus on promotion of bilingual and multilingual knowledge and practices. This study, focuses on practice of Bi/multilingual support for inclusive service delivery to postgraduate students of Arabic language in Abdullahi Fodiyo Library Complex, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto; and Inuwa Abdul-Kadir Library, Sokoto State University, Sokoto.

Statement of the Problem

In a country like Nigeria, with its linguistic diversity and multicultural communities, making provision for Bi/Multilingual support to faculty members, students, and researchers, will no doubt, add value to the crucial roles of libraries in the society. It is a fact that because of the technological advances, innovations and creativity, language barriers are gradually becoming less problematic to users of information (Nzomo, Ajiferuke, Vaughan & Mckenzie, 2016). Therefore, undertaking a study to explore the practices of Bi/Multilingual support offered to students who speak English only as additional language other than Arabic which is their primary language of instruction is timely and worthwhile. Moreover, the specific roles of Bi/Multilingualism in academic libraries has not been documented comprehensively (Little & Murray, 2024). Little and Murray further noted that from the beginning of 1960s to mid-2000, issues of Bi/Multilingual support in libraries were not understood and address adequately. Specifically, in Nigerian university libraries, there has been provision for resources and services to support teaching, learning, and research in non-English as medium of instruction programmes, such as Arabic. However, the challenges for offering the Bi/Multilingual support to ensure inclusivity in accessing and utilizing the resources and services of the university libraries has not been address adequately. It is against this backdrop, that this study seeks to explore the practices of Bi/Multilingual support services offered to postgraduate students of Arabic language in two universities in Sokoto State, to identify challenges associated with accessing and utilizing the resources for inclusive service delivery, and propose viable solutions to address those challenges. In other words, what are the Bi/Multilingual support offered to postgraduate students of Arabic language, and challenges inhibiting inclusive service delivery to this user groups in the two university libraries in Sokoto State?

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the practices of Bi/Multilingual support services accessible and utilized by postgraduate students of Arabic language in two university libraries in Sokoto State, North-West, Nigeria. The specific objectives of this study are:

1. *To determine Bi/Multilingual support for inclusive services to postgraduate students of Arabic language in Abdullahi Fodiyo Library Complex, and Inuwa Abdul-Kadir Library, Sokoto State.*
2. *To identify multilingual challenges associated with accessing and utilizing resources and services by postgraduate students of Arabic language in the two university libraries.*
3. *To propose solutions to address the challenges inhibiting inclusive service delivery among postgraduate students of Arabic language in the two university libraries.*

Conceptual Clarifications

Bi/Multilingual are two related concepts that denote bilingualism and multilingualism, which technically belong to linguistic discipline. However, attempt was made to make some clarifications on the two concepts in relation to the context of this study. There are two opposing views of scholars on how to define bilingualism and multilingualism. According to Agbedo (2019), there are those group of scholars that favours narrow definition because to them, a person should be considered bilingual only when he/she is close to two monolinguals. However, the second group of scholars argues for a broad definition which refer to bilingualism/multilingualism as common human condition that makes a person to function at some level in more than one or two languages. In this study therefore, bilingual refer to a person that possess high levels of proficiency in two languages that can enable him/her to function effectively in both written and oral communicative competence. While multilingual is concerned with ability of a person to function to some level, in more than one or two languages. Thus, these two concepts goes together as bi/multilingual.

In library applications, bilingual support involves making provision of services, information resources, information access facilities/technologies, and reference service assistance offered in two languages, to ensure that inclusive service delivery is achieved for users' satisfaction. Multilingual support is also aimed at performing similar functions as bilingual support but in a broader way. Inclusive service in libraries involved the use of strategies to create an enabling environment whereby all categories of users, regardless of any language difference, will have the necessary opportunities of accessing and utilizing the library services. This implied that, in all aspects of library operations, services and policies, inclusivity should be recognized.

Review of Related Literature

The provision of multilingual support and inclusive service delivery for postgraduate students of Arabic language programmes in university libraries is a critical issue that has garnered increasing attention in recent years. This literature review aims to explore and synthesize existing research and scholarly works related to this topic. It will equally highlights some the challenges faced by Arabic-speaking students, the strategies and initiatives implemented by libraries, and the potential impact on student success and institutional inclusivity. Bi/Multilingual proficiency is necessary for librarians to carry out their routine jobs that involved making selection, acquisition, cataloguing, answering reference inquiries, bibliographic instruction, literature searches, as well as communication with faculty members, students, and researchers. Vetruba (2010) reported that from early 2000, many university libraries began to encounter challenges of finding librarians with basic knowledge in foreign languages to provide multilingual support to faculty and students, and to also manage foreign language collections. In response to this challenge, the academic libraries in the developed countries began to address multilingual issues for their operational efficiency and customers' satisfaction.

Several studies reveals the unique challenges faced by Arabic-speaking students in accessing and utilizing library resources and services. Al-Suqri (2011) examined the information-seeking behavior of Arabic language students at Sultan Qaboos University and found that language barriers, unfamiliarity with library systems, and a lack of Arabic-language resources hindered their ability to effectively access and utilize the library services. Similarly, Ishimura and Bartlett (2014) observed that language differences can create significant obstacles for students from Arabic-speaking backgrounds, in understanding library terminology, communicating their information needs, and comprehending library information literacy and tutorials. Cultural differences and communication barriers can further exacerbate these challenges. As noted by Ullah and Memon (2021), Arabic-speaking students may face difficulties in expressing themselves effectively or understanding the basic routine in libraries due to cultural differences in communication styles and norms. This can lead to frustration, misunderstandings, and serious disconnect from their library.

In order to overcome the challenges, many university libraries and related institutions have implemented various strategies and initiatives to enhance multilingual support and promote inclusive service delivery for Arabic-speaking students. One prominent approach is the development of multilingual library websites, catalogs, and user interfaces (Pun, 2017; Ullah & Memon, 2021). By providing Arabic language options

and translations, libraries can facilitate navigation and access for Arabic-speaking users, enabling them to more effectively search for and locate relevant resources. Balarabe (1992) noted that, in Nigeria, language barrier is one of the major problems associated with management of Arabic information resources. However, Balarabe further applauded the giant strides made by Sokoto State History and Culture Bureau, in creating a Unit headed by Arabic specialist who offers services such as translation, transliteration, editing and publishing selected Arabic holdings. These services provides users and researchers from different places with equitable and inclusive access to information resources that satisfy their needs. Another key strategy is the acquisition and promotion of library collections in Arabic, including both print and digital resources (Al-Suqri, 2011; Ishimura & Bartlett, 2014). This not only expands the availability of academic and research materials for Arabic language students but also demonstrates the library's commitment to inclusivity and responsiveness to diverse student needs.

A multilingual section was established for children's library at Sheffield, England. This provision was found to have contributed significantly towards better understanding of the library resources, and the library users were given a sense of identity and belonging (Little & Murray, 2024). Thus, the beneficiaries of the multilingual provision will not only have the strong feeling of inclusiveness but they also have the opportunity to make effective utilization of the library's information resources to satisfy their needs. In the present digital age, multilingual information access tools are increasingly emerging to provide opportunities for libraries and librarians to achieve customer satisfaction. Satisfaction here means tailoring the relevant information resources towards meeting the needs of students, faculty and researchers in the discipline of Arabic language. There are different language access tools that can be adopted in digital libraries to enable users have access to contents of texts in multiple languages. According to Nzomo. Ajiferuke and Mckenzie (2016), multilingual access tools include:

- i. *Multilingual interface for accessing electronic resource databases, OPACs and website of a library;*
- ii. *Multilingual library users' guide for facilitating access to information resources and services;*
- iii. *Display of computer keyboards with multiple characters or correct display of fonts,*
- iv. *Machine for translation of retrieved documents;*
- v. *Multilingual dictionaries and thesauri;*
- vi. *Search options for cross language information retrieval.*

The above Bi/Multilingual support tools are in digital format. Under the conventional library system, manual information access tools are also provided to perform similar tasks as the digital ones but with a lot of limitations. These manual access tools consist of materials like translation dictionaries, indexes and abstracting services, catalogues for separate or special collections such as Arabic and Islamic Studies, Hausa Language, French Language, etc.

At any educational level, the benefits to be derive from bi/multilingual support provision are so great. For example, in bi/multilingual information retrieval, a user has the advantage of formulating and reformulating queries, and evaluating the results of his/her queries (Peters, Brasch & Clough in Nzomo, Ajiferuke & Mckenzie 2016). This suggests that electronic information resource databases should provide help guide for searching and accessing documents in preferred language other than English. In addition to these strategies, many libraries have implemented outreach and engagement initiatives tailored specifically for Arabic language students. These include workshops, orientations, and information literacy sessions conducted in Arabic (Al-Suqri, 2011; Ullah & Memon, 2021). Such initiatives not only familiarize students with library resources and services but also create opportunities for dialogue, feedback, and collaboration between librarians and Arabic-speaking students. Collaboration with faculty and student organizations has also been recognized as a valuable approach for gaining insights into the specific needs and challenges faced by Arabic-speaking students (Pun, 2017; Ullah & Memon, 2021). By actively engaging with these stakeholders, libraries can better understand cultural challenges, identify areas for improvement, and co-create solutions that can effectively address the diverse needs of their students' population.

Since Nigeria is a multilingual society, then it is only ideal that linguistic diversities be reflected in library services. IFLA (2009) provides policy document to serves as guidelines for library services to multilingual communities. The document emphasized that, it is a right for library user to access all range of services without cultural or linguistic discrimination. That information materials and staffing should reflects user diversity. In other words, hiring and training of library staff proficient in Arabic has also been recognized as a crucial element in providing effective reference and research assistance, as well as cultural mediation (Ishimura & Bartlett, 2014; Pun, 2017). Arabic-speaking library personnel can better understand and address the unique information needs of Arabic language students, facilitate communication, and serve as cultural ambassadors, fostering a more inclusive and welcoming environment. Ahmad, Abdullahi, Bello, Hassan and Lawal (2018) reported that Arabic students in Kashim Ibrahim Library at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, are accessing and utilizing JSTOR and other databases adequately to satisfy their academic information needs. These students were engage to make effective use of the Arabic resources through different initiatives including translation, searching online resources, and research support. In a

related study, Musa and Lawal (2017), investigated access to online Arabic information resources by faculty members in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and Bayero University, Kano. The findings revealed that more than 60% of the faculty members teaching Arabic and Islamic studies in the two university were not accessing the online resources due to lack of awareness and challenges of information literacy skills. Thus, out of 20 different types of online resources, only were known by 50% of the faculty while others are aware of about 6.4% of the available online resources. This suggests that, bi/multilingual support is very necessary because availability of the Arabic information resources cannot result into their actual use without creating awareness and enhancement of digital skills.

From what has been discussed so far, inclusive service delivery to special group of library patrons require a well-planned Bi/Multilingual support. Australian Government Department of Education (2024) describes Bi/Multilingual support as the assistance that is planned for offering language support for children, families, or people generally, who do not speak English language fluently ([available@https://idfm.org.au](https://idfm.org.au)). Offering this type of support involved use of multilingual information access tools, bi/multilingual facilitator, language interpreters, and translators of documents. Whenever a library noted that a particular user or group is encountering difficulties or language barrier in accessing information, then application of any of these tools has become very necessary. In the context of this study, it means that when a user whose primary language of instruction is Arabic, and such a person lack basic skills in English language, then he/she may face a barrier for inclusive service delivery. Thus, the best solution in this situation is for libraries to make provision for Bi/Multilingual support.

The implementation of multilingual support and inclusive service delivery initiatives has the potential to significantly impact the academic success and overall experiences of Arabic-speaking students in university libraries. By removing language and cultural barriers, students can more effectively access and utilize library resources, enhancing their research capabilities and academic performance (Ishimura & Bartlett, 2014; Ullah & Memon, 2021). Moreover, these initiatives can foster a sense of belonging and inclusion within the university community, contributing to student engagement, retention, and overall well-being (Pun, 2017; Ullah & Memon, 2021). When students feel valued, respected, and supported, they are more likely to actively participate in the academic and social aspects of campus life, leading to a richer and more fulfilling educational experience. Beyond the individual student level, the provision of multilingual support and inclusive services can also contribute to broader institutional goals of promoting diversity, equity, and inclusivity (Ishimura & Bartlett, 2014; Pun, 2017). By embracing and celebrating linguistic and cultural diversity, university libraries can serve as catalysts for cross-cultural understanding and appreciation, fostering an environment that values and respects differences among users.

In order to ensure inclusion of all users into the library service structure, there should be periodic assessment of service delivery needs of each user category. Here inclusion suggests that library users' linguistic diversity, learning disabilities, gender, family background, geographical location, learners learning abilities, etc, should be taken into accounts. The principle of inclusion focuses on equity to access and opportunities for all. For the realization of the principle of inclusion in libraries, Ford, Faires, Hirsh and Carranza (2017) advocated that learning another language for its application in workplace will be valuable for communication with patrons, navigating databases, troubleshooting technology, and connecting with professional colleagues worldwide for enhance understanding of service delivery practices. The research by Ford, Faires, Hirsh and Carranza, was a comparative study on significance of studying language as a component of library and information science education in two universities at United States and Honduras. After evaluation of language integration, the findings of their study suggest a curriculum enhancement model for adoption in other universities. This implied that whether at formal or informal level, librarians need to acquire basic language skills that can be applied for inclusive service delivery to patrons that need Bi/Multilingual support.

From the foregoing, the benefits of multilingual support and inclusive service delivery are evident, it is important to acknowledge the potential challenges and considerations associated with implementing these initiatives. Ullah and Memon (2021) highlight the resource-intensive nature of such efforts, which may require significant investments in staffing, training, technology, and library collections. Additionally, resistance to change, budget constraints, and cultural differences can pose obstacles that require careful navigation and strategic planning. Continuous evaluation and adaptation of implemented strategies are also crucial to ensure their effectiveness and relevance in meeting the evolving needs of Arabic-speaking students (Ullah & Memon, 2021). Regular feedback mechanisms and ongoing dialogue with stakeholders can help identify areas for improvement and facilitate timely adjustments to service delivery models.

The existing literature highlights the importance of multilingual support and inclusive service delivery for postgraduate students of Arabic language programmes in university libraries. By addressing language and cultural barriers, libraries can enhance student access to resources, foster a sense of belonging and inclusion, and contribute to broader institutional goals of promoting diversity and equity. While challenges exist, innovative strategies and collaborative approaches have demonstrated the potential to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for Arabic-speaking students.

Addressing the challenges of Bi/Multilingual support requires a multifaceted approach that involves not only providing multilingual resources and services but also fostering a culture of inclusivity and cross-cultural understanding within university libraries. This calls for initiatives such as:

1. Developing multilingual library websites, catalogs, and user interfaces to facilitate navigation and access for Arabic-speaking users (Pun, 2017; Ullah & Memon, 2021).
2. Acquiring and promoting library collections in Arabic, including print and digital resources, to support the academic and research needs of Arabic language students (Al-Suqri, 2011; Ishimura & Bartlett, 2014).
3. Hiring and training library staff proficient in Arabic to provide effective reference and research assistance, as well as cultural mediation (Ishimura & Bartlett, 2014; Pun, 2017).
4. Organizing workshops, orientations, and outreach programs tailored specifically for Arabic language students to familiarize them with library resources and services (Al-Suqri, 2011; Ullah & Memon, 2021).
5. Collaborating with faculty and student organizations to gather feedback and insights on the specific needs and challenges faced by Arabic-speaking students (Pun, 2017; Ullah & Memon, 2021).
6. Promoting intercultural understanding and appreciation through events, displays, and programming that celebrate Arabic language and culture (Ishimura & Bartlett, 2014; Pun, 2017).

By implementing these and other relevant strategies, university libraries can better support the unique needs of postgraduate students of Arabic language programs, fostering an inclusive and equitable learning environment that empowers all students to thrive academically and personally.

However, it is important to note that the implementation of multilingual support and inclusive service delivery initiatives can be a complex and resource-intensive endeavor. It may require significant investments in staffing, training, technology, and library collections (Ullah & Memon, 2021). Additionally, collaboration and cooperation among various stakeholders, including librarians, faculty, administrators, and student organizations, is crucial for ensuring the successful design and implementation of these initiatives (Ishimura & Bartlett, 2014; Pun, 2017).

Furthermore, it is essential to acknowledge and address potential challenges and barriers that may arise during the implementation process, such as resistance to change, budget constraints, and cultural differences (Ullah & Memon, 2021). Continuous evaluation and adaptation of the implemented strategies may be necessary to ensure their effectiveness and relevance in meeting the evolving needs of Arabic-speaking students.

By embracing diversity and promoting inclusive practices, university libraries can play a vital role in creating a welcoming and supportive environment for all students, regardless of their linguistic or cultural backgrounds. This not only enhances the academic experience and success of individual students but also contributes to the broader goals of fostering intercultural understanding and promoting diversity within the higher education community.

Method

This study adopted a qualitative research design as the appropriate approach for exploring the practices of bi/multilingual support services and identifying the challenges encountered by individual or group in accessing and utilizing the library resources and services needed by postgraduate students of Arabic language in the two universities in this study. A focus group discussion was used for the data collection. Focus group involved contrived settings that bring together a specifically chosen population to discuss a topic supplied by the researcher, and through this interaction data will be collected for valid research findings (Mole, 2019). Furthermore, Caulfield (2023) pointed out that in using this focus group, questions that were formulated based on the objectives of the study will be analyzed through thematic analysis using deductive-semantic approach. Deductive-semantic approach involves analyzing the data with some preconceived themes that are expected to be found therein. Finally, the analysis of the data will help identify themes and patterns that are pertinent in answering the research questions (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

The population for this study consists of postgraduate students of Arabic language at Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, and that of Sokoto State University, Sokoto. These students have close affinity in terms of learning environment, faculty members, and access to library resources. Thus, purposive sampling was used to select 12 participants (postgraduate students with English language proficiency problem) as a group. The selection was done based on the objectives of the research.

Ethical Consideration for the Research

In this research, establishing good relationship is paramount to maintain the ethical standard. The researchers started the process by visiting the two university libraries to seek for permission to undertake the research. Later the permission was granted, and a meeting with the students was scheduled to discuss appropriate time and purpose of the study. Based on the discussion, appropriate time and modalities for the conduct of the research were agreed. All the participants were informed that their names will appear in this

research as pseudo as P1 – P12 to maintain confidentiality. Thus, the participants were referenced as P1 - P12 to maintain confidentiality. The focus group discussion was held in two sessions of 30 minutes each at the Premises of Abdullahi Fodiyo Library Complex on Wednesday, 27th March, 2024. All the responses of the participants were recorded and subsequently transcribed for the data analysis. Subsequently, a follow up for the data collection was made and had interactions with library staff of the Arabic and Islamic Studies Sections in the two university libraries.

Results

The data analysis used was deductive-semantic approach, as such the result was presented based on the three themes covered in the study.

Research Question 1: Bi/Multilingual support for inclusive library service delivery in the two university libraries

Except in very few cases, the respondents were clear and consistent about lack of adequate bi/multilingual support for accessing digital information resources. For example, extracts from the transcripts reveals that: P.2, P.3, P.5, P.6, P.8, P.10, P.11 and P.12: are aware of both traditional and digital information access tools such as catalogue and OPAC, but they don't use them to search for library materials. Furthermore, they cannot use Google to do searching and translation successfully. This implied majority of the respondents have deficiency in accessing electronic information resources due to language barrier.

P. 4: I cannot search databases as desired because of language differences. I therefore, seek for assistance of a colleague or approach library staff for necessary help.

P. 9: I cannot use OPAC because it has no Arabic version installed. However, P.1 narrated that, a staff of the university guided him on how to convert computer keyboard into Arabic keyboard to facilitate searching for Arabic online databases and other electronic information resources.

The above responses shows that Arabic information resources are available in both print and digital format. But, the provision for bi/multilingual support in not adequate for the inclusive service delivery to users with English language proficiency problem.

Assistance by library staff to access materials in Arabic and other languages. Some respondents' views reveals that despite the language barrier, they are able to access materials they need even without assistance from library staff, while other respondents indicate that support from the library staff is not meeting their needs for answers to inquiries that are advance in knowledge. See responses from the extracts below:

P.2: The library staff give assistance in searching and using relevant materials in all formats, but it is not adequate.

P.1, P.3, P.4, P.5, P.7, P.11, and P.12: Library staff cannot answer most of the advance inquiries in Arabic. So for advance searching of literature, students used to consult their faculty members.

Bi/Multilingual tools in use in the university libraries. Extracts from the transcripts shows that translation and multilingual dictionaries are part of the physical collection in the Arabic section of the two university libraries. All the respondents agreed that, they do not have much challenge in accessing and utilizing print resources, except where a detail translation is required.

Research Question 2: Bi/Multilingual challenges associated with accessing and utilizing Arabic information resources in the two university libraries.

The responses indicated that there are different challenges that inhibit adequate access and utilization of Arabic information resources and services in the digital format. Below are examples of extracts from the transcripts:

P.2, P.3, P.4, P.5, P.6, P.8, P.10 and P.11: They all agreed that there is no adequate multilingual support for effective utilization of digital resources by the Arabic students.

P.1, P.3, P.5, P.6, P.9 and P.12: They all agreed that there is serious language differences between library staff and Arabic students which affects both access and use of relevant information resources made available in libraries, particularly at the Sokoto State University Library.

P.1, P.2, P.3, P.4, P.6, P.7, P.8, P.10 and P.12: they noted that in two libraries, Arabic print collection is organized in a separate section. However, in the e-library section there was no such special arrangement. Hence, those with problem of English language proficiency feel excluded and marginalized.

Furthermore, the extracts reveal that lack proficiency in English by Arabic users, and the lack of proficiency in Arabic language by the library staff has negative consequences for the delivery of inclusive library services.

RQ. 3 Proposed solutions to challenges associated with Bi/Multilingual support for accessing and utilizing Arabic information resources and services

The proposed solutions as indicated in the extracts from the transcripts include the following:

All the 12 respondents agreed on the need for support programme for Arabic students that lack proficiency in English language. Furthermore, training for information and digital literacy, and other ICT skills are highly desirable across all students of Arabic language.

The extracts also reveals need for integration of the needs of Arabic users in e-library key operations and services as well as hiring of more library staff with adequate proficiency in Arabic language. See examples of extracts from the transcript below:

P.1, P.2, P.3, P.4, P.5, P.6, P.8, P.9, P.11 and P.12: OPAC and other computer search tools should have language options like what is obtainable in some banks' ATM machines.

All the respondents agreed that, library staff managing Arabic collection should have proficiency in the language.

Interactions with Library Staff of the Arabic and Islamic Studies Sections in the two University Libraries.

In Abdullahi Library Complex of the Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, the staffing in the Arabic and Islamic Studies Section was satisfactory as revealed by the postgraduates students involved in the focus group discussions. Hence, the multilingual support resources in relation to print materials and physical access are quite impressive. However, there is shortage of functional computers designated specifically for accessing Arabic and Islamic Studies information resources. Furthermore, the staff confirmed the challenges of information literacy and ICT skills as major factors affecting multilingual support for accessing digital resources by Arabic students. However, the situation at Inuwa Abdul-Kadir Library of the Sokoto State University, the situation is less robust in terms of staffing and availability of the desired resources for multilingual support for the delivery of inclusive service to postgraduate students of Arabic and Islamic Studies.

Findings and Discussion

Bi/Multilingual information access tools are central to user support for inclusive delivery of library services to researchers, faculty members and students. However, findings of this study reveal that, there was no adequate provision for bi/multilingual support for the inclusive service delivery to users of Arabic information resources in digital format. This corroborates the findings of the study by Musa and Lawal (2017), whose findings revealed that more than 60% of the faculty members teaching Arabic and Islamic studies in the A.B.U. Zaria and Bayero university were not accessing online resources due to lack of awareness and challenges of information literacy skills. In order to actualize inclusive library services, IFLA (2009) policy document should serve as guide to librarians and libraries to avoid linguistic barriers in accessing and utilizing all forms of information resources by Arabic and other languages students. Although Nzomo, Ajiferuke & Mckenzie (2016), asserts that due to technological advances, language barrier is becoming less serious in accessing and utilizing information resources. But the findings of this study are contrary to the claim of these researchers. In other words, the emergence of digital information access tools is yet to make significant impact towards facilitating access and use of Arabic information resources by students that have English proficiency problems. Therefore, for equitable access, diverse collections of information resources in different formats is imperative for actualizing inclusive service delivery to all categories of library patrons. In this regard, Balarabe (1992) noted the issue of language barrier that affect management of Arabic information resources, and pointed the need for translation and transliteration services to improve access to resources in irrespective of their language of origin. The findings had also indicate that there is lack of proficiency in Arabic and English languages on the part of library users on one hand, and the library staff on the other hand, as the case may be. This corroborate the study of Ford, Faires, Hirsh and Carranza (2017) which emphasized on the significance of learning another language by librarians because it is valuable for communication with patrons, navigating databases, and connecting with professional colleagues worldwide for enhancing service delivery to bi/multilingual users. The implication of this finding is that the university libraries should organized appropriate language support programme for their patrons who are in need of such assistance. The finding of this study also reveals that librarians that manage Arabic information resources need to have adequate background knowledge in the language of his/her customers. This is in line with views of Ullah and Memon (2021), who asserted that Arabic-speaking students may face language difficulties due to communication challenges, and this may result into frustration and disconnection with their libraries. The knowledge of Arabic will enable him/her to have meaningful interactions that can translate into overall efficiency of operations and service delivery.

Another major finding of this study is that Arabic students do encounter different challenges associated with access and effective utilization of the resources they need for their study and research. In other words, there is lack of bi/multilingual information access tools in digital format. This has to a large extent excluded this user group from accessing huge amount of electronic information resources available globally. The participants in this study are of the view that unlike the physical collection, their needs are not specially integrated in the e-library service structure. Their claim of not fully integrated into e-library services could be due to the small number of those facing the problem of lack of proficiency in English language. Moreover, this is contrary to the finding of Ahmad, Abdullahi, Bello, Hassan and Lawal (2018) who reported that Arabic students in Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, are accessing

and utilizing JSTOR and other databases adequately to satisfy their academic information needs. But, it is certain that, this user group that lack proficiency in English language have limitations in accessing and utilizing online databases and other internet resources that are available in Arabic and other languages. Hence, their user experience need to be enhanced by making adequate provision of multilingual access tools such as multilingual keyboards, Arabic options on computer interface, customize databases, and other ICT tools for facilitated access, including translation machine, installation of Arabic version of OPAC.

Arising from the challenges associated with bi/multilingual support for accessing and utilizing Arabic information resources and services, the study identified possible solutions ranging from training on ICT skills, language support programmes for attainment of proficiency in Arabic and English language as the case may be, integration of multilingual support technologies in library operations and service delivery, and inclusion of Arabic language in library activities/events such as user education, orientation, newspapers and television viewing, marketing of library services, and publications dealing with library rules and regulations, and so on. Hence, this finding is in line with that of Vetruba (2010), who reported that from early 2000, many university libraries started looking for librarians to manage foreign language collections. That is to say the universities encountered challenges of managing collections in foreign languages, and this necessitated making provision for multilingual support to faculty members, researchers and students. Therefore, in response to the different challenges identified, the academic libraries in Nigeria should began to address multilingual issues for their operational efficiency and customers' satisfaction. The areas of key consideration include building diverse collections in both print and digital formats to represent a wide range of perspectives, and leveraging on emerging technologies to make resources and services easily accessible and inclusive.

Conclusion

Bi/Multilingual support is very crucial for the actualization of inclusive service delivery to special user groups like Arabic students. Therefore, this study explores bilingual and multilingual support practices for inclusive service delivery to Arabic postgraduate students in two university libraries in North-West Nigeria. The current barriers to inclusion of Arabic students into the library service delivery structure were identified. The barriers that inhibit accessing and utilizing of Arabic students include lack of integration of multilingual information access tools in the digital library operations and services. Lack of proficiency in English language also constitute a serious communication barrier that affect inclusive service delivery to Arabic users. Librarians with advance knowledge for managing Arabic collection are inadequate, and the available ones cannot cope with the Arabic users' demands. The recommendations of the study therefore, include: offering language support programmes, training for acquisition of ICT skills, adequate provision of librarians with proficiency in Arabic language, and incorporation of inclusion practices into overall library operations.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following major recommendations are made:

- i. this study recommends that more multilingual information access tools should be integrated into e-library operations, so that inclusion can be achieved by creating an innovative environment for users to access internet resources and online databases for their information needs regardless of language differences. With a strategic plan for integration of multilingual information access tools, equitable access could be enhanced. Thus, multilingual OPAC, customized user interface, language options for access to online databases should be used to prioritize inclusivity in libraries.
- ii. the study also recommends that university libraries and other academic and public libraries should develop a strategic plan for language support services. This will help towards overcoming the serious challenges of language barriers, especially in higher educational institutions that do receive foreign students. However, in universities where such language support programme is in existence, it is still worthwhile for the library to implement its own in accordance with its peculiarities. The language support services should aimed at promoting inclusion through the use of bilingual library staff, multilingual information resources, and translation services.
- iii. librarians with advance knowledge of Arabic language should be given priority in employment as workers in the Arabic section of a library. Library staff with communicative competence in language of the documents and its users has the required skills to manage the collection as well as interact with his/her customers for better service delivery. Through interactions with library customers, inclusiveness can be achieved. In this regard, events such as celebrations of international Arabic Day, multicultural festivals, and training workshops on diversity and inclusion can play very significant roles in addressing social issues affecting inclusivity in Nigerian libraries accordingly. But, generally, library managers have to be more proactive towards developing and implementing policies and practices to address the challenges of inclusive service delivery to minority user groups.

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BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE THROUGH THE USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES FOR ENHANCING LIBRARY USE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper discusses the significance of libraries as institutions in the information age. The paper posited that access to these vital resources in the libraries remain inclusive, irrespective of conditions or circumstances. Some individuals, due to inherent challenges face difficulty in utilizing library services. However, the paper explains that technological advancements have played a crucial role in overcoming barriers to access. This paper delves into an exploration of various digital technologies that facilitate easy access to libraries, drawing insights from comprehensive literature searches in reputable journals and repositories. The study reveals that numerous technologies are capable of enhancing library accessibility. The paper concludes that nevertheless, the absence of essential infrastructure, such as power and internet connectivity, poses significant challenges. This issue is particularly pronounced in libraries located in third-world countries where these technologies are often lacking.

Keywords: Digital divide, Inclusive technologies, Library, Library-access

Introduction:

In today's world, rapid evolution of technological innovations in every facet of life including the library is evident for all to see. These innovations fueled by technologies especial digital technologies have simplified tasks and rendered them less cumbersome (Lee, 2021). Libraries play a pivotal role in democratizing access to information and knowledge in every academic institution and the society at large. As an organization at the centre of information dissemination, libraries strive to create inclusive environments that cater to the diverse needs of their users. A crucial aspect of this inclusivity is the integration of accessible technology to ensure that individuals of all abilities can fully participate in the wealth of resources and services offered by libraries (Lee, 2020).

The concept of technological innovations in libraries refers to those technologies that help to calibrate the services offered in the libraries to meet diverse needs of the patrons especially addressing their ever-dynamic information seeking needs (Lee, 2021). Library users' information seeking needs are not the same which are expected to be met in other to meet their maximum satisfaction. The use of technologies had made library services to be faster and convenient to access information stored in the library. Some of the notable digital innovations used in libraries in the recent past includes digitization of the contents, the development of print repositories, the growth of open access, the coming of the internet to mention but a few (Lewis, 2013).

Libraries serve patrons of diverse background in terms of their physical dispositions, exposition to technologies and so on. It is the primary responsibility of library staff to meet the peculiar information needs of the users including persons with disability. Persons with disabilities are persons with one form of impairment or the other. The library needs of this group of patrons are peculiar that require the use of technology to meet (Kimura, 2018).

The rationale of this paper is to present a systematic literature review of the available accessible technologies within the libraries and the level of adoption of these technologies by some selected countries. By investigating current practices, identifying barriers, and assessing the effectiveness of implemented solutions, we aim to provide valuable insights that can guide libraries in their ongoing efforts to create truly inclusive spaces.

Ultimately, this research endeavours to contribute to the ongoing dialogue surrounding the integration of technology within libraries, with a specific emphasis on ensuring that technological advancements translate into tangible benefits for users of all abilities. By fostering a deeper understanding of the current state of technology accessibility in libraries, this study aims to inform best practices, facilitate improvements, and propel the vision of libraries as truly inclusive and accessible hubs for knowledge dissemination.

The paper employed the methodology of a systematic literature review from articles in reputable peer reviewed journals. The remainder of the paper is organized as section 2 literature review on available digital technologies in the libraries, section 3 present the methodology adopted for the study, section 4 discussed the major findings of this study and section 5 concludes the paper.

Literature review

The purpose of this paper is to systematically review accessible technologies within the library. The section discusses the disruption in library services caused by the use of various technologies. At the centre of library service is the patron, which are endowed with various physical and intellectual ability. The International Federation of Library Association and institutions (IFLA) guidelines posited that development of library collections should be based on the access format for all user groups without any exclusion (Akin-Fakorede & Oyelude, 2023).

The use of technologies in library

In this digital era, serious minded organizations rely on range of technologies to effect service innovations to their clients (Potnis & Mallary, 2022). Service innovation can simply be seen as applying all form of resources to ensure clients' satisfaction and the overall development of the organization. Hertog (2000) posited that service innovation can be achieved by any organization by posing a service concept wherein a new value proposition is offered to the clients. This is followed by designing user-friendly client interface. Thirdly, transformation of organization's work practices to improve the existing service delivery. And lastly, implementation of technologies for effective service delivery.

The library patrons of this generation is largely compose of people that are technology-savvy and integrate information access as very central to their livelihood (Kumar, 2017). This by implication mean that the services and operations of library should not be confined to space and time as is the practice of traditional library and to achieve this will require the use of technology like the information and communication technology (ICT) tools. Another vital point to consider is the users satisfaction which are hinged on these two pronged parameters speed and accuracy which technology promise to offer. The effective use of technology can drive home the user satisfaction which paramount to service-oriented organizations like library.

The difference between users' expectations and perceptions of service performance is the definition of the concept of library service quality. In the library settings, quality may be recognized by library patrons in terms of prompt delivery or lack of error in service (Rasul & Sahu, 2011). When libraries attempt to broaden their reach and enhance their services, quality becomes a major concern. For quality to be reckon with, it must therefore conform to the requirements or the needs of the users. This means the quality of a service can be a definition of the customer's requirements or needs. In order to understand customer expectations and perceptions of library services, service quality measurement is crucial.

Accessible technologies used in the library

1. Text to Speech Technology (TST): Text to speech assistive technology can be referred to as those technologies that are capable of converting data in form of texts to audio. It can be inform of image-to-text technology, handwriting-to-speech technology, speech-to-text technology and so on (Shadiev et al., 2014). They can be helpful to those with some levels of challenges like the students challenged with visual difficulty. The technology is not only useful to clients that are completely blind but also helpful to those with varying degree of visual sight problem. It is noted by (Hwang et al., 2011) that TST technology can aid the comprehension of students especially when they are with certain level of physical disabilities and even foreign students that language could have been a barrier.

This is considered an assistive technology to be used in the library because such technologies will help the librarians to reach out to all patrons regardless of any physical impairment or cognitive comporment. According to Adetoro (2014) library as a public place ought to properly equip with relevant technologies to fit for the purpose required of it.

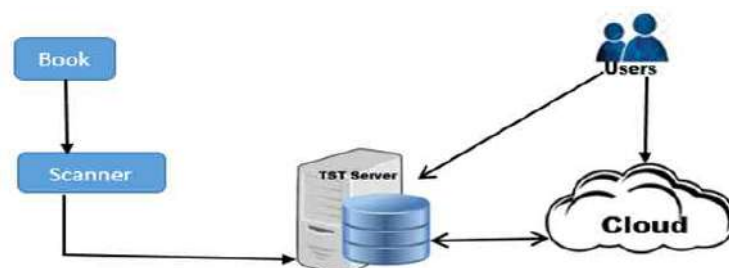


Figure 1: Text-to-Speech Conversion Process

From Figure 1, to convert book in text format to audio, the first thing to be done is to scan the book. The scanned format of the book is then fed to the server where some software will act on them. The converted format can be directly accessed by users in offline mode or accessed through the cloud through the internet.

2. Braille conversion technology: This technology is the type that converts plaintext or rich text documents to brail files. This is important to persons with sight predicaments (PwSP). It does the work by mapping plaintext characters to brail cells which are otherwise referred to as brail alphabets (Zatserkovnyi, et al, 2019).

The traditional brail conversion technology can only convert documents in plaintext format which implies that document in graphics, video etc formats will not be accessible to PwSP. These made researchers to come up with series of researches classified as smart braille conversion technology listed on Table 1.

Table 1: Smart braille conversion technologies

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Innovations</i>	<i>Media Support</i>	<i>Unique Features</i>	<i>Operating Platform</i>	<i>Uses</i>	<i>Year of release</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>HumanWare Braille Touch</i>	<i>Text</i>	<i>It is equipped with touch screen display and single-lined 1D braille cell.</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>It allow users (which is PwSP) to use virtual keyboard on the touchscreen.</i>	<i>2017</i>
<i>2</i>	<i>Braille Sense Polaris</i>	<i>Audio only</i>	<i>It is built with feature to display graphic images for school and office use.</i>	<i>Android</i>	<i>Used to display complex graphics for office use.</i>	<i>2017</i>
<i>3</i>	<i>Braille Notetaker</i>	<i>Audio only</i>	<i>It built with touchscreen keyboard with 40 braille cells.</i>	<i>Android</i>	<i>Used to electronically take notes by PwSP.</i>	<i>2016</i>
<i>4</i>	<i>inFORM system</i>	<i>Not specified</i>	<i>Built with actuators to facilitate physical tele-presence.</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>It is used for tangible processing of 3D shape dynamically. It attempt to visualize object remotely.</i>	<i>2018</i>
<i>5</i>	<i>Blitab</i>	<i>Image and Audio</i>	<i>Built with special image display</i>	<i>Android</i>	<i>Used to display and interpret image for PwSP to understand them.</i>	<i>Unknown</i>

3. Augmented Reality: Augmented reality sits at forefront in consideration about the technologies that will facilitate the inclusive services rendered to libraries due to the proliferation and ubiquitous nature of mobile devices in our generation. It is a technology that blends real world with computer related media (Santos & Esposito-Betan, 2017). AR in use today comes in two variant which includes location aware and vision. The location aware model uses GPS (Geographical positioning system) to locate an object in this case library resources where it is located in the library shelves instead of taking long time to search for it. The vision model involves integrating 3D virtual objects in 3D real environment in real time. The 3D virtual objects are made more interactive by inserting the object into the traditional print text. This has been discovered by research to solve the problem of reading attention disorder (RAD) that some library patrons may be undergoing. This disorder is capable of excluding potential library patrons but the innovations in AR

arrested the situation (Kipper and Rampolla, 2012). Apart from this crucial role played by AR technology in helping library to be inclusive in rendering her services, Jonathan and Sharon (2017) pinned down the following as the areas where AR can be applied our library. They includes bookshelves reading and browsing, library tours, augmenting photo collections, awareness campaign, library navigation, readers advisory to mention a few.

4. RFID technologies: The radio frequency identification (RFID) is a technology that is used to identify and track objects. It can electronically programmed with unique information and sensor to query tags. This can be used to easily locate resource in the library without waste of time. The technology can also be used to trace the way about of any library holdings which will mitigate the loss of such holding. Also, this technology can help to save the time of library staff in scanning barcode while charging and discharging. In summary, RFID technologies are used in library to reduce the time used to access and locate library holdings, help in easy circulation service, ease library staff stress, increase in efficiency, help in check-in and check-out exercise of library patrons, and so on (Gul & Bano, 2019).

Methodology

(K. Lee, 2020) affirmed that literature review is a major foundational base for theories expansion and the discoveries of research gaps for future research. This fast tracked the discoveries of fresh ground where previous researches have not focused. Hence, this systematic literature review was undertaken so as to know the available accessible digital technologies within the libraries and the level of adoption of these technologies.

Searching Strategies

The search for literatures was done from some of the mainline academic online database using the keywords in the topic.

The keyword was combined with some phrases and Boolean operator such as 'OR', 'AND', '+' and '-'. The keyword used were 'Bridging the Digital Divide through Technologies', 'Digital Technologies in Library', 'Enhancing Library Services through the Use of Digital Technologies', 'The Library and the Concept of Inclusivity'. The search result was filtered based on the following inclusion/exclusion criteria stated hereunder:

- 1.) *An article is considered if the language is in English or translated without error to English.*
- 2.) *An article is considered if it is journal paper, text book, conference paper, unpublished Ph.D and M.Sc theses.*
- 3.) *Any article which discuss the available accessible digital technologies within the libraries and the level of adoption of these technologies.*
- 4.) *The authors excluded any article that the context is outside the scope of this study.*
- 5.) *The authors as well excluded duplicate articles.*

Findings and Discussions

Enhanced library services

About 20 articles of the reviewed articles agreed that the use of digital technologies had enhanced the quality of services rendered to library patrons by library staff. The library patrons includes all strata of people both able and disable. This agreed with the earlier discovery of Ayiah (2017) that asserts that by ethical consideration, librarians are trained to provide their services and library collection to all users without an iota of bias and discrimination. Before the use of digital technologies, librarians find it difficult to render quality service to patrons with disability but that was addressed as the use of digital technology become a norm in the library. This is in-line with the findings of Tripathi & Shukla (2014) which posited that for library holdings to be accommodative enough, they must exist in other parallel formats such as audio books, braille converted texts, electronic giant print and so on.

Inadequate amenities

One of the main findings of the paper revealed that though there exist technologies to help in the libraries, inadequate basic social amenities like electricity, poor internet connectivity, etc are the major hindrance for effective implementation of these technologies in libraries in developing economy like Nigeria. This discovery was more pronounced in the following journals (Chigwada & Phiri, 2021), (Ajegbomogun et al., 2017; Madu et al., 2018; Salman et al., 2017), Salman, Mugwisi & Mostert (2017) and (Madu et al., 2018). They observed that inadequate amenity which hinder proper service delivery in the libraries will as well affect the achievement of the national policy on education as enunciated in Nigeria. This is because students will not be exposed to necessary information that will enable them acquire necessary practical skills and competencies.

Inappropriate staff training

The findings of this paper also noted that there is poor fund allocated to staff training in the library by most of the papers reviewed. (Madu et al., 2018), particularly noted absence of technological literacy in the library has made librarians not to reliable use the available digital technology provided by the authority thereby leaving the gadgets to waste away unused. It is also observed that some librarians are averse to change thereby making no effort to personal training and this will incapacitate them to render successful service in 21st century library.

Poor funding

Funding is a key factor for the effective running of any organization, of which library is not an exception. It is important to note that quality resources and service is proportional to the availability of fund.

Conclusion

The findings of this paper revealed that there exist several technologies available for use in the library which can help in the inclusiveness of library services and serious efforts have been made to improve on them and more efforts are ongoing to improve on them. These technologies ensure that all clientele regardless of language, ability, etc have access to the library collections in line with one of the International Federation of Library Association and Institutions (IFLA) stipulated guideline which state that the development of library collections should be based on access for all and in the formats appropriate for all. The important role that library to educational attainment of any learner, makes it criminal for anyone to be denied of her service no matter the person's ability and other natural disposition. Researchers have being working round the clock to ensure that this condition do not exist.

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BRING BACK OUR BOOKS: REAWAKENING READING CULTURE AMONG PUPILS AND STUDENTS THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

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Abstract

This paper examined bring back our books: reawakening reading culture among students through partnership. It gave the conceptual overview of reading and explored the reading culture between the old and contemporary time. The agents responsible for Nigerian disappearing reading culture was examined. The partnership among Family, School, and Government in reawakening the reading culture in Nigeria was analyzed. The paper concluded that Nigeria would take a scientifically and technological lead among other nations in the world if the family, school and governments and the society should partner and reawakened the reading culture among pupils and students.

Keywords; Partnership, reading culture. Child developments, technologies advancement

Introduction

The world of books is the most remarkable creation of man. Reading, whether for pleasure or for academic purpose, is therefore an essential habit that forms the bedrock of greatness in everyone, regardless of age, gender or status in the society. For instance, nothing else that he builds ever last. Monuments fall; nations perish, civilizations grow old and die out; and, after an era of darkness, new races build others. But in the world of books are volumes that have seen this happen again and again, and yet live on, still young, still as fresh as the day they were written, still telling men's hearts of the hearts of men centuries Dead (Bay, 2015).

The phrase “bring back” has come to stay in Nigerian lexicon. It is a campaign to reawaken public consciousness, remind and motivate authorities to address critical issues of public concern. In the past, Nigeria had witnessed some “Bring Back” campaigns. The country recorded the “Bring Back Nigerian Airways in the 1990s and “Bring Back Our Doctors” It was a campaign in response to the unprecedented number of medical doctors travelling abroad for medical practice while the nation was short of medical professionals and most recently, the “Bring Back Our Girls”. This is a movement to awaken public consciousness and stimulates the Nigerian authorities to take proactive measures for the immediate release of the abducted Chibok girls by Boko Haram in 2014.

Interestingly, these advocacy campaigns had been successful to an extent. It has enabled government addressed the case of fleeing medical doctors and negotiated the release of most Chibok girls kidnapped. Consequently, education, which is generally regarded as the pillar of any nation, needs a far greater, robust and result oriented “bring back” campaign, considering the deplorable state of education and the appalling reading culture among pupils and students. Etymologically, the word education is derived from two Latin words “educare” and “educere”. “educare” which means to train, to form or to mould. In other words, it means that the society trains, forms or moulds the individual pupils and students to achieve the social needs and aspirations. “Educere”, on the other hand, means to build, to lead, to develop. The function of education is to develop the natural potentialities in the child to enable him function in the society according to his abilities, interests and needs.

Paradoxically, the nation is in complete state of laxity as regard child development. Children are not adequately trained, mould, neither are they built, led, or amply motivated to develop potentials that will enable them adequately function in the society. In order words, their state of reading culture is not a priority to the nation as a whole. Cogently, reading, whether for pleasure or for academic purpose is an essential habit that forms the bedrock of greatness in everyone, regardless of age, gender or status. It helps in

sharpening the mind, increases vocabulary, lower stress, improves memory, enhances imagination, increases analytical and critical thinking, improves vocabulary and communication skills, develop self-esteem, and stimulate joy and pleasure. According to Orji (2020), we will succeed as a nation, as soon as we understand that the difference between the world's most powerful nations and us is our reading habits.

It is therefore expedient to argue that to reawaken the reading culture among students calls for partnership by family, school, government, society etc. considering its overwhelming importance of reading to national development. It becomes imperative that an immediate “state of emergency” should be declared on education, with profound emphasis on reading beginning from nursery and primary education.

Conceptual Overview of Reading

Reading is a fluent process of readers combining information from a text anti their own background knowledge to build meaning (Nunan. 2022). Mikulecky (2021) states that reading is a complex conscious and unconscious mental process in which the reader uses a variety of strategies to reconstruct the meaning that the author is assumed to have intended, based on data from the text and from the readers prior knowledge. Reading is an active skill. It constantly involves guessing, predicting, checking, and asking oneself questions (Khoiriyah, 2010).

Reading begins with the accurate, swift, and automatic visual recognition of vocabulary, independent of the context in which it occurs. Rubbin (2022) affirmed that reading is a total integrative process that starts with the reader and includes the effective, perceptual and cognitive domain. Okebukola (2014) reiterated that through reading, humans have the tools to transmit knowledge to each succeeding generation. It allows one to listen to wisdom and people of all ages. Every child must become fully competent in reading to succeed in school and discharge responsibilities as a citizen of a democratic society. Reading is the only form of entertainment that is also an essential life skill. Reading is a skill that must be nurtured from a child's earliest years. Once children know how to read, they still need the needed support to reach their full potentials as readers. The habit of reading should begin at an early stage and should be imbibed throughout one's lifetime, (Tracy, 2018).

Reading is not just for the school, it is for life. Reading in all its variety is vital to being better informed, have a better understanding of ourselves as well as others. It makes man to be a constructive contributor to a democratic and cohesive society. Leading world nations pride themselves on their promotion of reading. In the case of Nigeria, it acts as an effective barrier to our development and international competitiveness. The economic, social and political health of our nation today depends on building literate citizens that are able to read widely and apply it practically for development. Reading is the ability to obtain meaning from words (Sisulu, 2014).

Reading Culture: A Preview of Old and Contemporary Time

Decades ago, reading was a norm exercised by every child on a regular basis in the society. Children developed the habit of reading to an extent that it became a habit practiced on a daily basis. Children challenged their parents to acquire new books for their reading pleasure on a daily basis. The school library was usually a beehive of activities as pupils and students thronged to the library to read every available text during their free period.

School children were also known to prepare well ahead of time before any examination. The implication of a dynamic reading culture is evidenced in the outstanding educational performances among pupils and students in internal and external examinations in the 1970s and 1980s. In the past decades, Nigerian representatives excelled in international science competitions. Children who represented the country won several laurels. These academic achievements was based on the robust reading culture available in the country years ago. The country was also a force to reckon with on the international world of literature. Writers such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka were examples of authors who developed their reading and writing ability from childhood. .

Presently, the country has witnessed a decline in reading culture of children. The dwindling reading levels among pupils and students in primary and secondary schools is of great concern. For instance, the results of West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) for private candidates in both 2021 and 2022 are ingredients for a meal of sober reflection on the state of the nation. Only 26.0% and 17.13% of the candidates in 2021 and 2022, respectively, passed with credits in five subjects, including Mathematics and English Language. (Adedigba, 2017). A study conducted in 2022 shows that the average Nigerian reads less than one book in a year.

Agents Responsible for Nigerians Declining Reading Culture

Several agents have been identified as responsible to the declining reading culture in Nigeria. Apparently, individuals and organizations that were supposed to be custodian of books and encourage children to read are guilty of the poor reading culture in the country. These agents are identified below:

The Home

Decades ago, the pride of every homes in Nigeria was the volume of books available for children to read. Parents developed the intellectual content of their children by acquiring books on a weekly or monthly basis for their children. Gift items for children were mostly books as parents acquired relevant books to stimulate the cognitive and physical nature of the child. Parents challenged their children to read at least one book per day. More so, many families developed the “Home Library” where very rich collection of information resources were deposited for the children.

Children were encouraged to read, as stock of books increased. Parents organized reading competitions among their wards or neighbours thus, developing the intellectual capacity of their children. Frequent visit to public libraries and book fairs were common practice years ago as parents viewed it as opportunity to expose the child to the world of reading where educative materials that sharpen the mind, increase vocabulary and enhance analytical and critical thinking were deposited. No wonder Nigeria was held in high esteem in the world of education as her citizens were distinguished locally and internationally. A cursory look at Nigerian homes in contemporary times reveals an atrocious situation where the reading culture of children has been substituted with superfluous and flamboyant life style. A point where parents no longer care if their children read; a point where parents stock sophisticated electronic gadgets at home with no value for book or reading; a point where the challenge at home and in the neighbourhood is centred on who owns the most sophisticated and current communication gadgets. A point where parents birthday present to their children is to dine at the most exotic restaurants and to appear in the most fashionable lifestyle rather than a visit to public library or attend a book fair.

These days, children spent hours on social networks and computer games not reading their books. A point where parents acquire data bundle for their children to browse website with adverse effects on their career rather than getting their children subscribed to educative websites where collegial interactions and educative information resources are disseminated within each other. A point where the word “library” “read” and “book” have disappeared from several families' lexicons. Considering the devastating effects, the dying reading culture of pupils and students on the Nigerian economy, there is the need to “Bring Back our Book”.

The School

The school is a principal agent to the dwindling reading culture in Nigeria. Years ago. The school was established around a dynamic and robust reading culture where every student had to read a book within a stipulated time. School authority's monitored children's reading habits and ensured that slow and poor readers were motivated while active readers were encouraged and motivated to read more books. Several reading competitions were organized within and outside the school environments. Book and reading clubs were organized within the school setting. These reading clubs include; debate clubs, quiz clubs, science clubs, media club etc. aside from reading clubs, formerly, the pride of any school was the contents of its library. Several schools were establishment with rich content of information resources for the reading pleasure of students. These libraries were stocked with current and relevant information resources.

In recent years, there had been a sharp decline in these practices in several public and private secondary schools in Nigeria. Schools are established without the presence of a library, the few schools with a structure called library have relatively no information materials deposited. Book fairs, reading clubs and other reading competitions have fast disappeared from school lexicon. Such practices are no longer obtainable in the Nigerian school system. Also, library period has been replaced by other activities in the school time table due to the fact that several institutions are established without libraries.

More so, several schools encouraged examination malpractices than inculcating a dynamic reading culture among children. This they do with an intent of being recognized as excellent education centre. School authorities pays teachers and other tutors to write examinations for students. In fact, in recent time, there had been a proliferation of “Special Examination Centres” where all forms of examination malpractices are perpetrated by management of secondary schools to ensure that students who pays exorbitant fees passed with excellent grades. All these forms of examination malpractices organized by school authorities affects the reading habits of students.

The Government

The government has been identified as a prime agent to the dying reading culture in Nigeria. Decades ago, government recognized the place of education in national development, hence a considerable amount of money were allocated to education. No wonder the Nigerian child can favourably compete with their counterparts in any part of the world. The Nigerian representative in international competitions excelled due to the favourable academic condition in Nigeria. The reverse is the case presently. Ways government of impeded the reading culture among children are *identified below*:

Inadequate Reading Materials: In several schools students lacked adequate reading materials to utilized. Formerly, government acquires reading materials and sent to schools some are sold at subsidies rate to

students. Presently, most schools lacked such reading materials, hence the reading habit of children have dropped considerably. **High Cost of Reading Materials:** Due to the high cost of reading materials, many parents and guidance could not afford reading materials for their wards. Therefore, children are presented with relatively no opportunity to read.

Lack of Standard Library: The few schools that have a room called library are practically ill-equipped. There are inadequate and obsolete information resources in the library. Worst still, the *libraries are not managed by qualified librarians*.

Inadequate Manpower: In several schools, there are inadequate teachers to instill a dynamic reading culture on the children. In several public schools, the student-teacher ratio is 1-60. This level of student-teacher ratio impede learning.

Incompetent Personnel: Due to high level unemployment, government employs unqualified teachers that lacked the requisite training to transform the reading habit of children. Most teachers in public and private schools in Nigeria are not adequately trained to teach children.

Lack of Sponsorship/Promotion of Reading Competitions: years ago, government sponsor and promotes several reading competitions among schools. Presently, there are virtually no government sponsored reading programme in the country.

The Society

Paradoxically the society that was supposed to promote the reading culture of children is the one abating it. The word reading is fast disappearing from the society's lexicon as it prefers to sponsor other activities other than education. The ways the society has contributed to the declining reading culture are stated below:

Emphasis on Fashion: Presently, considerable emphasis have been placed on fashion rather than reading. The society as a whole is a fashionable one with less emphasis on reading. Children desire to appear attractive in school, home, and even worship centres. Presently, children prefer models in the world of fashion to the education world. Apparently, this had been the focus of the society, therefore children who are part of the larger society, adopts such lifestyle.

Entertainment: The world of entertainment have supersede the present educational setting in Nigeria. The society assign great emphasis on sports, music and other forms of entertainment. The implication of this is that students want to spent more time listening and watching entertainment videos to reading their books.

Politics: The society places more premium on political events than education. Considerable amount of time is delegated to political debates and dialogues than educational discourse. This over emphasis on politics affects the child's reading habits.

The Media

The media are identified as culprit in the dwindling reading culture in Nigeria. Most media houses in Nigeria promote activities other than education. They give extensive time to politics, music and sports without meaning consideration to education.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

The emergence of internet and other social media has affected the reading culture of children in Nigeria. Technology was developed to support and improve the educational settings, but it is erroneously used among several children. There are several children that spend almost the entire day on the internet. It has been established that the rate of children addicted to Facebook and other social media is alarming. They spend longer hours on Facebook. WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram and other social media chatting with friends. More so, children spend longer hours on play stations and other computer games rather than reading their books. They download games online and spend almost the entire day playing games. These have grievously affected the reading culture among children

Bring Back our Books: Partnership among Family, School, and Government

Revamping the reading culture among pupils and students emphatically a must do for all considering the overwhelming importance of education to the nation. Restoring the reading culture among children is so critical that it should be treated with laxity. Consequently, stakeholders in child formative education should collaborate to ensure that the deteriorating reading culture among children are reawakened a sustained. The following institutions must actively and passionately involved in bringing back our books.

The Family

The family is the first learning institution of the Nigerian child; hence, position as the foundation to a sustainable reading culture in children should be developed. Parents are not only responsible for food, shell

and clothing of their wards but sound and qualitative education. The educational welfare of the child should be given adequate attention by parents. The ways in which the reading culture could be reawakened Nigerian homes are stated below;

1. **Reading to Children in Womb:** Research has established that children learn and understand languages right from the womb. According to Diproperzio (2020) the more words a baby exposed to, the better prepared he is to eventually start reading his own. Price (2017) affirmed that a baby in utero hears what's going on outside the womb at about 10 decibels more than an adult. The rhythm, melody, and other language patterns that serve as the foundation of speech are actually learnt from the womb. Similarly Cleveland Public Library (2020) confirmed that prenatal reading is nonetheless a wonderful way to kick-start healthy brain development of the child. Consequently, Parents should develop the habit of reading to their children from the pregnancy stage. During pregnancy, interested books that will definitely 'stimulate the reading pleasure of children should be acquired and read by parents.
2. **Reading from the Cradle:** The habit of reading to infants should be encouraged. Parents are advised to assign considerable time to reading to their infants. This way, the cognitive ability of the child will be developed and he/she will develop the love for reading. According to Diproperzio (2020), studies have also shown that children who were read to as newborns have a larger vocabulary, as well as more advanced mathematical skills, than other kids of age. A 2019 study published in the Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics, found that kids who are read to every day are exposed to around 78,000 words each year—over five years, that adds up to 1.4 million words heard during story time.
3. **Establishment of Home Library:** The home should ideally be the first place where children are exposed to reading. A corner of the room could serve as library for children. Parent should stock the home library with current and relevant information resources to children. They should equally be encouraged to read books in the library.
4. **Organise Reading competitions for Children:** Reading competitions should be organised for children to challenge and stimulate their reading competences.
5. **Buy Books as Birthday Present to Children:** The habit of always taking children to expensive restaurant and other parties should be substituted. During children birthday celebrations, books and other information resources should be acquired for children.
6. **Frequent Visit to Public Libraries and Book Fairs:** Parents should develop the habit of frequently taking children to public libraries and other book fairs. The acts of always taking children to these educational centres will inculcate the habit of reading in them
7. **Restrict the Use of Mobile Phones and Other Electronic Gadgets:** Mobile phones and other electronic gadgets are among factors that affects the reading culture among children. The emergence of internet have reduced children's reading habit. Long hours on television set, mobile phones and electronic games should be discouraged. These use of these electronic gadgets should closely be monitored by parents.

The School

The school should ideally compliment the homes in bringing back our books. Children should be drilled on how to develop pleasure in reading.

School authorities should ensure that children read exhaustively on different contemporary issues in order to be able to contribute to national development. The following reading competitions should be re-introduced to motivate readers.

1. **Establishment of Science Club:** Nigeria was positioned as one of the leading countries in science and technology decades ago due to science clubs that exist in different secondary schools. It was apparently a foundation for transmission of scientific knowledge to children. Children were taught different topical issues on science and technology. This consolidates the country among the best in Africa. Science clubs should be introduced in all secondary schools and school authority should mandate all science students to participate.
2. **Quiz Competition:** Quiz competition is an ideal way of motivating children to read. Ekene Franklin, the fourteen year old boy that got the highest score in 2019 Joint Admission and

Matriculations Examinations (JAMB) asserts that he achieved that feat due to the numerous quiz competitions he participated. Therefore, management of primary and secondary schools should ensure that quiz competitions are organised among pupils and students in secondary school.

3. **Debate Competitions:** Debate presents students an opportunity to read extensively on old and contemporary issues in the economy. It also help to develop communication and presentation skills. This competition should be introduced in primary and secondary schools to encourage reading.
4. **Media Clubs:** School media clubs should be focused in developing the child's reading and communication ability. Through media clubs, children learn how to read and present news article on different topical issues. It exposes children to the media world, this way, they learn to read in order to meet up with emerging issues in mass media and communication.
5. **Establishment of Well-equipped Library:** School authorities do not necessarily wait for government to establish library for them before children are presented with opportunities to read. Libraries could be created through Parent's Teachers Association (PTA) levy, Library Development levy instituted by school authorities. A particular building could be set aside for such purpose and money generated through PTA and development fees used to acquire current and relevant books for children's reading pleasure. The establishment of libraries will consequently enhance the reading habits of children in schools.
6. **Creation of Library Periods in School Timetable:** Presently, in several primary and secondary schools in Nigeria, there is no period called "library period" due to the unavailability of libraries in schools. Libraries should be established in schools and a period to visit the library should be established in the school timetable.
7. **Mobile Reading Tents:** Once in a month, on Saturdays or during the long vocation, tents could be pitched in a school playground with a lot of prior publicity and fun fare. Here under the supervision of a certified librarian, the library books are made available for reading, story-telling session, drama presentation based on theme from books which have been read, impromptu speeches, book talks and read in turn with prizes could be organized. The options available are as varied as the librarian's imagination. There is no stereotype. Volunteers such as parents could assist the librarian.
8. **Drama:** During the story telling hour, children would act certain parts in the story. Drama could also be organized, where the children take home and learn their parts properly. The drama could be presented during end-of-year activities or special occasions in the school.
9. **Exhibitions:** Information resources such as books comic stories, news magazines, etc. should periodically displayed within the school premises. This will invariably attracts students lo books. A week can be declared as "Book Open Week" where publishers, vendors, parents and other stakeholders in the education of the child are requested to bring interesting reading materials in their custody to read for the children.
10. **Talk Shows:** Closely related to exhibition is talk show. This is a situation iii which eminent personalities, such as Authors, Illustrators, Editors, and Officials of organizations related to reading and literacy Programmes, are invited to give talks on some aspect of book, reading, etc.
11. **Story Hour:** There are many programmes a librarian can introduce with the help of teachers and motivate students to read. For young ones 'Story Hour' are always a welcome treat, especially when it is supplemented with charts, slides or a video film. A story told with puppets is another attraction for children. This can be followed by story narration by children themselves, by creative dramatization of stories finally whetting their appetites to turn to the book itself
12. **Preparation of Class/Wall Magazines and Newspaper:** The preparation of class/wall magazines and newspaper containing students writings in prose and poetry, their cartoons and illustrations, mathematical puzzles, science quizzes and amusing anecdotes and jokes, all stimulate interest and help to develop creative thought and expression right from earliest years. It also help children develop their imaginative analytical skills. Children are motivated to think and practice their imaginative ability.
13. **Book Seminar:** A programme which can be very stimulating for the older students is a 'book seminar', when the students select and read a chosen book and then have a Round Table Discussion on it, led by a knowledgeable moderator. This often leads to students wanting to read more books by the same author. Preparing projects on different authors and poets is another method of encouraging the reading habit. Students glean as much information as possible on writers, prepare their project report, and then give a presentation to the class inviting questions from classmates. This gives students the opportunity of familiarizing themselves with different poets, authors, and dramatists especially when there is an interchange of project material in the class.
14. **Students-authors Interaction/Meet the Author Sessions:** Students are presented with opportunities to interact with renowned or emerging authors in different subjects. This sessions is

always educative when contemporary writers are invited for discussion with the students about their books. Students get to learn of the intrigues and techniques in writing. This motivate them to read and write their own books.

15. **Holiday Project Work:** This involve giving students interesting projects to do during holidays. Students may not be bothered on their regular class work, but interesting projects that will stimulate their interest are given. This involves preparation of interesting models, charts and projects on subjects of their choice, colourful charts and albums containing exciting new information on the latest technological developments taking place in different countries of the world; as well as in the creative and performing arts; on global issues like pollution, ecological degradation; the population explosion etc. These can be displayed at a “Holiday Assignment Exhibition” when the students come back to school and parents can be invited to view them. If incentives are considered necessary, outstanding work can be awarded in the form of prizes to students.
16. **Book Fairs:** school authorities can stimulate the reading pleasures in students by organizing book fairs. This is done by inviting publishers and book vendors to set up stand or stalls for display and sale of their books. These 'Book Fairs' give parents an opportunity to see what is available in the market without having to travel from place to place. It also encourage students to spend their pocket money on buying books for themselves or as gifts for their friends. They also help librarians and teachers to select the books for the library.
17. **Book Week:** During the 'Book Week' a whole variety of programmes can take place catering to the interests of each age group of students. The programmes may include talks and lectures, discussions, book reviews, book exhibitions, visits to local libraries, screening of films and so on.

The Government

Seemingly, government is the principal institution responsible for reviving the declining reading culture in Nigeria. Therefore, for books to be brought back in Nigeria, government should provide the following:

1. **Establish libraries in schools:** children can only develop the habit of reading base on reading materials available at their disposal. Apparently books cannot be read in absentia. Hence, government should established libraries in schools where they do not exist.
2. **Provision of adequate reading materials.** Aside from establishment of libraries in schools, adequate reading materials should be provided for the reading pleasure of children.
3. **Provision of subsidy on reading materials:** the cost of books and other information resources should basically be subsidized for affordability by parents and children.
4. **Promotion of reading competitions:** the promotion and support of various reading competitions such as science club, quiz competition, debate competitions, readership promotion campaign etc. will motivate children to read and participate.
5. **Giving Education priority attention in national human capital development:** the improvement and development of reading culture in Nigeria has to start with adequate funding of the education sector. UNESCO has given a minimum percentage of twenty-six; Nigeria should start from there and the funds should be properly utilized. The greatest resource for development is the human resource hence, no nation can develop in isolation of her human resources; and education is the producer of human resources. So adequate funding of the sector by all the levels of government will influence positively on libraries, which is the main tool for the development of reading culture.

Conclusion

The need for bringing back our books call for greater partnership from all stakeholders and institutions involved in the child formative education considering the overwhelming importance of the child in national development. Apparently, reading helps in sharpening the mind, increases vocabulary, lower stress, improves memory, enhances imagination of children. Reawakening the reading culture among pupils and students will definitely position Nigeria among leading educational, scientific and technological nations in the world. Therefore, parents, governments and the society should partner and bring back our books.

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BUILDING COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN LIBRARY SERVICES

By

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Abstract

Libraries collaboration and partnerships with other organisations can create benefits and provide access to new resources, such as funding, expertise; equipment's, and the ability to reach new audiences, such as underserved groups, potential users, or influences; the enhancement of their services; increase its network visibility; and align with its mission, vision, and value; and support its role in the community. This paper focuses on Building Collaboration and Partnerships: Diversity and Inclusion in Libraries. The paper highlights the concepts of collaboration; partnerships; Diversity, Inclusion and review of Related Literature. The paper also highlights the necessity for Building Collaboration and Partnerships in libraries for diversity and inclusion; criteria for Building Collaboration and Partnerships in libraries for diversity and inclusion; challenges of libraries and conclude that there is the need for library management and the management of their parent in institutions to intensify possible ways of building collaboration and partnerships with other institutions, organisations and industries to diversify library services and recommended, adequate management support; signing of memorandum of understanding; regular engagement of stakeholders, regular capacity building and adequate funding.

Keyword: Libraries, Collaboration, Partnerships, Diversity, Inclusion

Introduction

Building collaboration and partnerships has become very essential for diversity and inclusion in libraries as an institution for provision of information services delivery in a dynamic and changing environment. Libraries, regardless of type provide library and information services that require for collaboration and partnerships. Library and Information Services encompasses all series of coordinated activities, functions and operation that are carried out in libraries and information centres. These library and information services includes but not limited to the following: Promotion of access to information and knowledge; connection of people and ideas; commitment to the promotion of literacy and information literacy; creating a well conducive learning environment; procurement of relevant information resources and services; deployment of relevant information and communication technologies; reference information services; community engagement, etc. (Umar, 2018). However, such services are provided to the users of the library in person or through communication technologies which are necessities for building collaboration and partnerships.

Collaboration and partnerships is an undeniable thing to build, primarily to deal with changes in a very dynamic environment for to diversity and inclusion of the populace. Collaboration is a process that takes many forms in many organisations, while partnerships as a process that brings together members, institutions, organisations, agencies and resources to produce outcomes with benefits directed to the enhancement of organisational goals and objectives (Godbey 2013). The library is one of those resources services institutions which are essential for diversity and inclusion to support and strengthen the educational quality of any society. It remains the source of keeping and distributing information through books, journals, maps and other electronic resources utilised by the populace of different age and gender. It's a busy information services delivery institutions, where information resources are packaged in various formats to the advantage of the users given rise to growth and development from different angles. The ability to obtain and provide the right information at the right time and from the right place is tantamount to these libraries surviving such an era of high requirement (Onuaha, David-West & Chukwueke, 2022). Ayemigbara & Seidu (as cited in Chipama, 2018) made it clear that libraries must be up-to-date and at the same time have older materials. That is must be suitably support financially, among other things.

However, as libraries continue to face increased pressure from limited resources, funders, including governments are looking for evidence of efficiencies and effectiveness. Collaboration and partnerships are increasingly used as method to achieve goals and enhance services (Sarjeant-Jenkins & Walker, 2014). Giesecke (2012) stated that collaboration and partnerships are complex relationships that bring together the resources and expertise of different organisations to meet a common goal. They are not appropriate in all situations and are of the first steps in forming a collaborated partnerships is the determination of what common goal is to be achieved.

Thus, the purpose of this paper intends to serve as a call to action in collaboration and partnerships for diversity and inclusion of library services delivery. The paper highlights the basic concepts of collaboration; partnerships, review of related literature; the necessity of building collaboration and partnerships for diversity and inclusion; criteria for building collaboration and partnerships of library to diversity and inclusion, challenges; conclusion and recommendations.

Basic Understanding of the Concepts

For the sake of comprehension, there is the need to provide valid understanding of the following concepts includes: collaboration, partnerships, diversity and inclusion.

Collaboration

The term “Collaboration” is used to depict all forms of agreement between academic institutions, corporate organisations, universities and any combination of two or more parties, where information and knowledge are shared with the commitment to reach a common goal by using their available resources are key factors in the interplay (Tella, Akinboro & Hamed, 2012). Henderson (2016) in (Mattessich, Murray-Close, and Monsey, 2001) stated that “Collaboration is a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organisations to achieve common goals. The relationship includes a commitment to mutual and relationship goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and sharing of resources and rewards.

Ocholla (2008) cited Ecosystem Management Initiative (2002) which describes collaboration as a “process where two or more individuals or organisations deal collectively with issues that cannot be solved individually.” Relative to this, Albert (2009) describes collaboration as the pooling of resources by two or more stakeholders or partners to solve a problem that neither can be solved individually. The author also views collaboration as a “partnerships, alliance or network, aimed at a mutually beneficial clearly defined outcome” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2004). Collaboration is a process that takes many forms in many organisations.

Partnerships

Partnerships is an arrangement between two or more individuals or organisations who came together to oversee business operations and share its profits and liabilities. Partnerships is a kind of business where a formal agreement between two or more people or organisations is made who agree to bet the co-owners, distribute responsibilities for running an organisation and share the income or losses that the business generates (Linkedin, 2023).

Partnerships is an arrangement where parties, known as business partners, agree to cooperate to advance their mutual interests. The partners in a partnerships may be individuals, businesses, interest-based organisations, schools, governments or combinations. Organisations may partner to increase the likelihood of each achieving their mission and to amplify their reach. A partnerships may result in issuing and holding equity or may be only governed by a contract (Wikipedia, 2024).

Diversity

Diversity is the state or quality to diverse operations and services. Hornby (2015) described diversity that is the process to develop a wider range of products, interests, skills, services, etc. in order to be more successful and reduce risk. He stated further that diversity is to change or to make setting change so that there should be greater variety of ways.

Inclusion

Inclusion is the state of including or being included. That is a person or thing, institution and organisation included in a system to achieve stated goals and objectives using a wide range of people, things, ideas, services, etc. (Honby, 2015).

The above definitions provide an understanding of the existence of a mutually beneficial relationship to achieve common organisational goals. This collaboration and partnerships, if properly built, will create a mutually beneficial situation where both organisations can have a greater impact on the resources and expertise of others.

Review of Related Literature

Collaboration is not a new concept in the library world. Borthwick (2001) defines educational partnership as “a process that brings together members (e.g. institutions, organisations and agencies) and resources to

produce outcomes directed to the enhancement of education”. Partnerships are “dynamic and complex interagency relationship”. This process of bringing together members and resources has manifested in numerous ways in different library contexts.

Building collaboration and partnerships to achieve institutional goals is a growing trend both within the libraries and in the broader institutions in the society. Such collaboration and partnerships allows the sharing of expertise, provide access to a wide range of resources than any may be possible within one's own area or organisation, and strengthens the library position among the populace and institutions in the society (Gatiti, 2014). (Tella et al. 2012) ascertained that collaboration is a working practice where individuals (partners) work together to a common purpose to achieve benefits. It can be referred to as a process where group of people come together and contribute their expertise for the benefit of a stand objective, project or mission. In other words, it is the process of group work, a learn skill and how well partners collaborate with other will greatly impact the outcome of the group project. The collaboration between college libraries and eternal campus and community organisations has increased in recent years (Henderson, 2016). Partnerships on the other hand can simply be referred to as an association of two or more person as partners. Hayedoom et al (2000) defined partnerships as an innovation-based relationship that involves, partly a significant effort in research and development. Enakrire, Chisita & Tella (2020) stated that “partnerships could be formed to achieve research goals. They state further that to learn new ideas, ad pod resources together in the pursuit of some laudable objectives.

In collaboration and partnerships, academics and librarians work together alongside other to constructively explore ideas, discover new solutions and explore unique though processes. Ultimately, the end results of collaboration is to accomplish something as a team; it may be completing a research project or working together to solve a particular identified problem (Enakrire, Chisita & Tella, 2020). From the literature, collaboration and partnerships is considered important based on the need to solve research problem, bring people (members) i.e. academics together, enable academic to learn from one another, open new channels for communication, assist in boosting morale of members, leads to higher retention rates and makes academic more efficient in their career (Tella et al. 2012).

However, despite the importance of collaboration and partnerships, literature has also revealed that some people dislike or detest collaboration and partnerships. According to the literature, several reasons abound why people don't want to collaborate as partners (Enakreri, Chisita & Tella, 2020). Walker (2015) identified lack of trust, fear of minimisation and losing control. Similarly, McDonald (2013) averred that people don't collaborate due to fear of being wrong, because they feel ignored, unconsciously competent, because their colleagues don't share with them, and because they lack the skills. Irrespective of the reasons why academic or librarians don't collaborate, collaboration and partnerships is important and all libraries and other institutions are inclusive must always take part to diversify.

The Necessity for Building Collaboration and Partnerships for Diversity and Inclusion in Library Services

As libraries are faced with increased pressure from limited resources, and funders including governments, are looking for evidence of efficiencies and effectiveness, collaboration and partnerships are increasingly used as a method to achieve goals and enhance services (Sarjeant-Jenkins & Walker, 2014). Collaboration and partnerships are complex relationship that bring together the resources and expertise of different organisations and institutions to meet a common goal. They are not appropriate in all situations, and one of the first steps in building collaboration and partnerships is the determination of what common goals is to be achieved (Giesecke, 2012).

In building collaboration and partnerships for diversity and inclusion in library services, there is the need for the library to examine the library's mission and vision statement and the libraries strategic objectives and plans. Then, the library can now determine the type of collaboration and partnerships its intended to make. And the librarians must be able to identify, research and reach these potential partners in the internal and external environment of the library community (Rachman, 2019). Library collaboration and partnership are essential for enhancing library services, reaching new audience and advocating for value (Horton, 2021).

Collaboration and partnerships provides many new opportunities to libraries, including extending services to new groups of users (Wirth, 2007); building capacity to support institutional goals (Lackey, Swogger & McGrew, 2014); increase revenue opportunities and respond to changes in the funding environment (Duff, et al., 2013); shared staff training and development (Nassali & Bjorkum, 2013); or increasing access to information resources (Shaw, 2001).

Gatiti & Law (2014), ascertained that “many libraries already collaborate and partners with other external institutions, but very few have a strange and professional way of working with partnerships. Developing and maintaining partnerships is not a skill typically taught in library and information science programmes. That existing partnerships are often adhoc, developed to meet a small or unexpected need, or based on personal relationship among librarians working at different institutions. They further stated that for collaboration and partnerships with libraries and external institutions to make a difference, and contribute continuously to the achievement of the library's objectives, they must be approached, implement and evaluated in a planned and thoughtful way.

Horton (2021) further stated that “to ensure that your collaboration and partnerships are successful and communicate, it is important to align your mission and values, and expertise, recognises and appreciate your partners, and review and review your collaboration and partnerships. Monitor and evaluate your collaboration and partnerships regularly and identify areas for improvement or expansion.

Criteria for Building Collaboration and Partnerships for Diversity and Inclusion in Library Services

Building collaboration and partnerships requires careful planning, communication, and evaluation. To begin, it is important to identify your goals and needs, as well as those of potential partners. Then reach out and propose the partnerships, negotiating and agreeing on roles and responsibilities (Horton, 2021). LinkedIn (2023) stated that “library's collaboration and partnerships are essential for enhancing your services, reaching to new audiences, and advocating for your value. But how do you build and maintain effective collaborations and partnerships with other organisations and stakeholders. The following are some of the criteria that will help libraries to build and sustain collaborations and partnerships to achieve their goals:

- i.* **Signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU):** An MoU is a short document recording the terms of an agreement of your collaboration and partnerships. In the MoU it is expected that, you identify and have a clear idea of you want to achieve, what you can offer, and what you expect from the collaboration. This will help you communicate your value proposition and align your objectives with those of your partners/stakeholders.
- ii.* **Define Stated Policy:** A policy is a document containing the governing principle of the contract made between an individual or group of individuals. Your policy should be a selected, planned line of conduct in the light of which individual (institutional) decisions are made and coordination to achieve them.
- iii.* **Funding of Partnerships:** The funding of collaboration and partnerships cannot be over emphasised, because there is the need to provide adequate funding of materials and human resources for the development and sustainability of the purpose of coming together, in order to achieve the stated goals and objectives of both parties involved. To this effect, funding is very fundamental and essential for collaboration and partnerships.
- iv.* **Provision of Information Resources and Facilities:** There is the need for both parties involved to provide the needed information resources and facilities for efficiency and effectiveness of the purpose of their coming together to achieve their common goals. These could include human and material resources and information technologies facilities.
- v.* **Engage Stakeholders:** To ensure that your collaboration and partnerships are successful and sustainable, there is the need to engage stakeholders to identify areas of improvement in achieving the vision and mission of the organisation, and also creating researchable goals to meet their aims and objectives and setting timeline for their achievement.
- vi.* **Capacity Building:** Capacity building is much more required in collaboration and partnerships, because it is the process by which individuals and organisation obtain relevant skills, ideas, to achieve their objectives for the attainment and sustainable of their institutional goals. In such activities, the collaboration becomes very essentials and improve cooperate networking and accelerate diversity and inclusion.

Challenges of Building Collaboration and Partnerships for Diversity and Inclusion in Libraries Services

The following are some of the challenges faced in building collaborations and partnerships:

- i.* **Inadequate Management Support:** Most management of the parent institutions lack adequate support for collaborations and partnerships in achieving the institutional goals. In most cases, the managements are not involved in the development plan of the vision for the common goals of both parties which has affected the development plan in achieving their common goals.
- ii.* **Lack of Stated Defined Policy:** Many organisation and institutions come together without a defined stated policy which has distrusted the achievement of the collaborations and partnerships. Lack of clearly defined policy has been one of the major challenges that has brought failure to most collaboration and partnerships between institutions involved.
- iii.* **Lack of Signed Memorandum of Understanding:** There has never been any successful collaboration and partnerships without a signed Memorandum of Understanding. Without the MoU there should be no reason for coming together. The collaboration and partnerships need to be documented with an agreement over the benefits and obligations of each partners.
- iv.* **Lack of Engaging Stakeholders:** The stakeholders are professionals and expertise in their various institutions who are key players to explore skills with objectives of meeting their goals of the

collaboration and partnerships who need to come together at all time to communicate and evaluate the development of their common goals.

- v. **Lack of Regular Capacity Building:** Most stakeholders lack regular capacity building which very paramount in building collaboration and partnerships and that has been a challenge that need to be addressed that is very necessary in achieve common goals.
- vi. **Lack of Adequate Funding:** The major challenges of most organisations and institutions is based on inadequate funding, which has affected the necessary development in achieving their goals, especially in providing the required human and materials resources and facilities for collaboration and partnerships.

Conclusion

Ultimately, as libraries are faced with increasingly new opportunities and challenges with limited resources in providing their services in meeting the information need of their users, and it essential that this services be carried out in the most effective and efficient more possible ways to reach out to the society in diverse ways that entails collaboration and partnerships, which present libraries with new tools that would bring the most effective and efficient services delivery to the library users at adorable cost. These are realities that will provide libraries with opportunities to access new skills and technology for diversity and inclusion. In recent years, various organisations, institutions, industries firm business to education, have turned to collaboration and partnerships as a way of promoting their services, increasing profits and creating new opportunities for growth. A successful collaboration and partnerships will require a clear definition of roles and responsibilities for each as partner. Collaboration and partnerships are exceptional opportunity to develop expertise and expand support for libraries, as long as librarians are deliberate and informed about the process to enhance library services. Therefore, there is the need for library management and the management of the parent institutions to intensify possible ways of building collaborations and partnerships with other institutions, organisations and industries to diversify library services.

Recommendations

Arising from the challenges identified above, the following recommendations were suggested as way forward:

- i. **Adequate Management Support:** The management of the parent organisations involved in the collaboration and partnerships need to provide adequate support to the vision of activity and common goals of each parties involved to sustain and attain the stated objectives of their involvement.
- ii. **Signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU):** The signing of Memorandum of Understanding is a very essential factor that is so necessary in terms of any contract agreement. The MoU is to be documented with an agreement over both benefits and obligations of each partner. The level of documentation depends on the level of risk involved between the two institutions.
- iii. **Adequate Stated Defined Policy:** There is the need for stated policy on how to develop and implement collaborative partnerships activities, working partners with required policy of investment for both financial and human resources as essentials to carry out an effective and efficient working principles.
- iv. **Regular Engagement of Stakeholders:** There are needs to regularly engage stakeholders who are professionals and expertise in their various institutions to always come together to identify areas of weakness for improvement in achieving the common goals of their collaborations and partnerships, and creating researchable goals to meet the aims and objectives, and setting timetable to achieve them.
- v. **Regular Capacity Building:** Capacity building is more required in building collaboration and partnerships, because it the process where individuals and organisations obtain new ideas, skills and knowledge to improve and provide more services needed to achieve their common organisational goals.
- vi. **Adequate Funding:** The provision of adequate funding cannot be over emphasized, because without funding, there cannot be collaboration and partnerships not to talk more of achieving common organisational goals. So therefore, the issue of adequate funding is required from both parties involved in order to achieve the stated aims objectives of their institutions.

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BUILDING CULTURALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES THROUGH INNOVATIVE PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES: A CASE STUDY OF RIVERS STATE PUBLIC LIBRARY

BY

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Abstract

The study investigated building culturally diverse communities through innovative public library services: A case of Rivers State Public Library. The study was conducted in River State Public Library Board. The study employed a descriptive research design. Population of the study comprised 100 users of the Rivers State Library Board and Jubilee Library Port Harcourt. The researcher adopted the census sampling technique to select 100 users of the public libraries mentioned above which stood as the sample size. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions while the hypothesis was tested with the z-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed among others that there are current library services meeting the needs of culturally diverse populations in Rivers State Public Library. The study concluded and recommendation among others that the library should increase the number and variety of books, magazines, and online materials available in the community's spoken languages, the library should create and support inclusive programming that actively includes people from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

Keywords: public library, cultural diversity, innovative, River State.

Introduction

Public libraries have been considered vital establishments that support the social and intellectual advancement of local communities. In addition to their historical function as knowledge warehouses, modern public libraries are becoming more and more acknowledged as vibrant community centers that may promote inclusivity and diversity of culture. In a time of rapid cultural change, migration, and globalization, public libraries are essential for promoting cultural knowledge and understanding (Emezie, 2018). Public libraries are becoming increasingly important in providing education, training, information, and cultural opportunities for their communities, serving a diverse range of users at once, as many societies become more multicultural and the world becomes more globalized and interconnected. In many nations, public libraries serve as hubs for communication, engagement, information, and connection. They offer research services, assistance in finding material, and free reading access. Throughout Nigeria's library history.

Anyim (2018) asserted that the creation of public libraries is a relatively new development. The claim that academic and private libraries, two types of libraries that existed before public library services. Public libraries were founded in Nigeria in various parts of the nation, primarily by colonialists at various points in time. As the nation's states were formed, all of the regional library services evolved into different state library services throughout time. According to Amuda and Adeyinka (2017), laws, edicts, and decrees supporting public library services have been implemented in all states of Nigeria. They also point out that the expansion of public libraries was aided by the passing of numerous library statutes. According to the UNESCO declaration, public library services are intended to support and encourage resource usage and meet the reading objectives of people of all classes and ages as previously specified.

According to Aiyebilehin et al (2018), there should be scheduled reading programs, book and movie discussions, promotions, displays, reading lists, story hours, and other means of encouraging the use of materials. Additional services offered by the public library include information services to patrons and support for the children's, young people, and adults' educational, cultural, and civic programs. The library service includes gathering unique materials of community interest, lending materials between libraries, and providing library services to every area of the community via branches and bookmobiles. In a time of globalization, and interconnection, the idea of community has expanded beyond national borders to include

a wide range of cultural diversity. Communities now flourish on the collective strength of shared values, customs, and experiences rather than being constrained by the boundaries of physical proximity. For both public libraries and their users, innovations are important. According to Skinner (2017), public libraries can become more valuable to their local communities by utilizing innovations that enable them question the status quo. For example, innovations help public libraries meet the needs and overcome the obstacles that local communities and library users face in the areas of economic development, poverty, education, health, transportation, and the environment. Public libraries can therefore act as pillars in the communities they serve. Generally speaking, innovations encourage the addition of fresh concepts that are crucial to a library's future rather than reverting to a passive reaction to societal change.. Lastly, innovations can boost public libraries' competitiveness, which has advantages such as drawing and keeping users, pursuing additional funding, and improving the perception of libraries.

Potnis (2020) opined that traditionally, public libraries were thought to be information and book repositories. They provided a static collection of printed books and acted as peaceful places for reading and research. Adoption of new technologies, such as computerized catalog systems or the introduction of audio-visual materials, was frequently linked to innovation in libraries. For example, in the past, library services in the riverine area may have been limited by traditional approaches that did not fully cater to the diverse languages and cultures present. Libraries may have primarily stocked materials in a dominant language, potentially overlooking the rich linguistic and cultural tapestry of the region. Limited technological infrastructure might have hindered the distribution and accessibility of materials to remote communities, particularly those with diverse linguistic backgrounds. Innovation in library services for the riverine area should be dynamic, inclusive, and technologically advanced. Etebu and Zacchaeus (2020) suggested that the library should embrace a multicultural approach that recognizes and celebrates the diversity of languages and cultures in the region. Libraries should curate a diverse collection of materials, including books, audiobooks, and digital resources, in multiple languages spoken in the riverine area.

According to observations, a lot of people discount the value of public libraries in society because they think of them as a structure or shop where old, dusty books are kept. This is supported by the opinion of Etebu & Zacheaus (2020), who states that most of Africa, including Nigeria, has not yet come to recognize the importance of public libraries to the advancement of their communities. In view of the aforementioned, the study aims to investigate the function of public libraries in building culturally diverse communities.

Statement of the Problem

As the need arises, public libraries offer a diverse of information services to everyone, implying that they serve every member of society. It is interesting to see that the public library has books and information for all ages, interests, and backgrounds, in addition to information specific to women. It is a truth that the public library serves society in the same manner that a person's memory serves him. Despite the obvious benefits of public libraries, observations have revealed that certain people in communities—particularly those living in rural areas—are completely unaware of their significance. The noble purpose of public libraries would surely vanish if this were not addressed, as people will no longer respect the services that these libraries provide. In view of the aforementioned, the study aims to investigate the function of public libraries in building culturally diverse communities.

Objective of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to assess the effectiveness of the Rivers State Public Library's initiatives in building culturally diverse communities through innovative public library services. Specific objectives include:

1. *To find out the current library services that meets the needs of culturally diverse populations in Rivers State Public Library*
2. *To examine innovative approaches that the public library have employed to cater for multicultural communities*
3. *To identify challenges faced by the library in implementing and sustaining culturally diverse initiatives in Rivers State Public Library.*

Research Question

1. *What are the current library services that meets the needs of culturally diverse populations in Rivers State Public Library?*
2. *What are the innovative approaches that the public library have employed to cater for multicultural communities?*
3. *What are the challenges faced by the library in implementing and sustaining culturally diverse initiatives in Rivers State Public Library?*

Hypotheses

H₀: There is no significant difference between current library services and needs of culturally diverse populations in Rivers State Public Library.

Literature Review

Public Library

Public libraries are those that provide free, unrestricted access to library resources and services to all local citizens within a community district or geographic area. Public libraries are increasingly recognized as an essential component of communal life as advocates for literacy and suppliers of a vast array of reading for people of all ages and as hubs for neighborhood information services. According to Anyim(2018), public libraries are thus considered to be library establishments created by the government with the aim of promoting the independent and ongoing education of individuals, especially those residing in this area. This is essential since they make their collection available to everyone in the neighborhood. The public library's mission is to supply resources that facilitate the easy and free exchange of ideas and experiences between individuals. The public library serves as a hub for local knowledge, providing customers with easy access to a vast array of information and knowledge. The community funds, creates, and maintains it, either directly either the federal, state, or local governments, or by other neighborhood associations. It produces information, knowledge, and imaginative creations accessible by means of a variety of tools and services. All community members have equal access to it, regardless of their color, nationality, age, gender, language barrier, religion, work environment, handicap, or educational attainment. Public libraries, in the opinion of many, are essential to having a populace that is literate and educated.

Public Library Services

These are programs, materials, and events offered by public libraries to meet the informational, educational, cultural, and recreational requirements of the communities they serve. These services are frequently provided without charge and are intended to be available to the general population. In order to facilitate lifelong learning, encourage community involvement, and promote literacy, public libraries are essential. The minimal standards for information resources, amenities, and services that public libraries must offer were set by the International Federation of Library Association (IFLA, 2001). Books—fiction and non-fiction—textbooks, magazines, artwork, audio and video, records, and cassettes, toys, CD-ROM, and Braille materials are some of the information resources. Enough reading tables for patrons, chairs for sitting, The amenities that must be provided include book shelves, a library, fans, lighting, ventilation, flooring, restaurants, exit points, notice boards/bullets, photocopiers, carrels, periodical racks, circulation desks, and other items that would make readers feel comfortable (IFLA, 2001). While the services include, among other things, adult literacy instruction, mobile library services, career information, storytelling, reading competitions, leisure activities, reference services, and services for prisoners (IFLA, 2001).

A Brief History of Rivers State Library

The Rivers State Library Board Edict No. 23 of April 1971, which created the Rivers State Public Library Board, was passed into law in 1971. The Board took over for the now-defunct Eastern Nigeria Library Board, a parastatal organization under government control that oversaw library services in Eastern Nigeria. The Divisional Library, located at Bernard Carr Street, was one of the state assets and liabilities that the former Eastern Library Board received when it closed. Library Annual Report, Port Harcourt, 1983. Among its objectives were the establishment of libraries throughout the state and their management for public use, as well as providing expert counsel and technical support for the growth of additional public libraries throughout the state. Additionally, it was anticipated to offer repository services for the implementation of the Rivers State Library Board Law's legal deposit clause, which deals with book publication and mandates that all books published in the state be deposited in the library for preservation through the Director of Library Services.

The State Ministry of Education is currently the parent organization of the Rivers State Public Library. The Director of Library Services is the Public Library's Chief Executive. The Department of Acquisition and Technical Services, the Department of Reader Services, and the Administrative Department are the departments that make up the library services. Acquisition, processing, preservation, and distribution of information resources for public use are the responsibilities of these departments. The Jubilee Library in Port Harcourt, the Bori Branch Library in Khana Local Government Area, and the Ogoboloma Branch Library in Okirika Local Government Area are the three operational branches of the Rivers State Library Board.

Innovations

The process of putting new initiatives, partnerships, procedures, or activity combinations into action is known as innovation. (Potnis *et al*, 2020). According to Adejo,(2016), innovations also increase public libraries' operational effectiveness. The capacity for ongoing innovation is essential to the survival and prosperity of institutions such as public libraries. According to Potnis *et al*. (2020), the majority of libraries

actively pursue program, procedural, partnership, and technological advancements to generate fresh and enhanced worth for their local community's involvement, creation and production, education, novel outreach, and collaborations are crucial components of creative public libraries in Nigeria which necessitate proactive process management. As a result, managing various advances in public libraries becomes more and more important.

Current library services meeting the needs of culturally diverse populations in Rivers State Public Library.

The usefulness of public libraries in supplying information to community users was examined by Adejo(2020) through a case study of the Amuwo Odofin Local Government in Lagos State, Nigeria. The poll examines how well the public library in Lagos State's Amuwo Odofin Local Government serves the community's information needs. Three separate sets of questionnaires are used in this study to gather data from participants. These are divided into three sets: one for library users, one for librarians and library officers, and another group for non-users. Two basic percentage calculations and a frequency count were used to analyze the data. The study finds that some of the issues experienced by library users and non-user inclusive groups include a lack of awareness in the community, operating hours, and an unfavorable environment among others. Therefore, it is advised to hold community awareness campaigns, encourage school children to read, and do much more.

Adejo (2020) conducted research on how libraries help Nigeria's underprivileged communities get the knowledge they need. This paper's main goal is to review the ideas surrounding libraries, information, and the information demands of underprivileged people in Nigerian society. This essay examines the several classifications of underprivileged individuals and the knowledge that they demand. It makes an effort to highlight the crucial responsibilities that libraries play in providing knowledge to the various populations. According to the report, meeting the information needs of physically disadvantaged and challenged populations will benefit their social and intellectual well-being as well as the country's sustainability and economic growth. This essay also makes clear how important information is for everyone, even those who are marginalized. In order to address these groups of people's information demands, the report concluded by suggesting that the government provide sufficient funding each year for the library to acquire sufficient and pertinent resources.

Challenges faced by the library in implementing and sustaining culturally diverse initiatives in Rivers State Public Library.

Okafor (2020) investigated Nigerian public library services: tactics and obstacles. This essay focuses on the services provided by public libraries, which demonstrate why they should be built in every community. These services include those related to education, information awareness, children's libraries, and other services. A few of the problems brought up in this article are a lack of funding, inadequate working conditions and possibilities for staff, a dearth of ICT infrastructure, and a scarcity of people with ICT knowledge.

Methodology

The study was conducted in River State Public Library Board. The study employed a descriptive research design. Population of the study comprised 100 users of the Rivers State Library Board and Jubilee Library Port Harcourt. The researcher adopted the census sampling technique to select 100 users of the public libraries mentioned above which stood as the sample size. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions while the z-test statistics was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The grand mean was 2.50.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the current library services that meets the needs of culturally diverse populations in Rivers State Public Library?

Table 1: Respondents mean rating and standard deviation on the current library services that meets the needs of culturally diverse populations in Rivers State Public Library.

S/N	ITEMS	SD	D	N	A	SA	MEAN	S/D	REMARK
1	The library actively promotes literacy and education initiatives that address the needs of culturally diverse populations.	10	10	14	25	41	3.77	1.35	Agreed

2	The library provides resources (books, materials, online resources) that reflect the cultural diversity of the community.	9	10	19	24	38	3.72	1.31	Agreed
3	The library's digital resources and services are accessible and inclusive for users with diverse technological capabilities	9	17	25	26	23	3.37	1.26	Agreed
4	Library staff are knowledgeable about the cultural backgrounds and preferences of the community they serve.	24	10	4	34	28	3.32	1.56	Agreed
5	The library actively seeks input from culturally diverse community members to shape its services and collections.	26	15	16	23	20	2.96	1.50	Agreed
Grand mean							3.43	1.40	Agreed

The result from table 1 showed the summary of mean rating and standard deviation on the current library services meeting the needs of culturally diverse populations in Rivers State Public Library. It shows that the grand mean rating of the respondents on current library services meeting the needs of culturally diverse populations in Rivers State Public Library was 3.43. Overall, the grand mean of 3.43 indicates that the respondents are generally in agreement that there are current library services meeting the needs of culturally diverse populations in Rivers State Public Library.

Research Question 2: What are the innovative approaches the public library have employed to cater for multicultural communities?

Table 2: Respondents mean rating and standard deviation on the innovative approaches that the public library have employed to cater for multicultural communities

S/N	ITEMS	SD	D	N	A	SA	MEAN	S/D	REMARK
1	The library offers multilingual services, including resources and assistance in languages reflective of the diverse community.	12	23	12	16	37	3.43	1.48	Agreed
2	The library organizes cultural events and programs that actively engage and celebrate the diverse cultures within Rivers State.	52	21	5	8	14	2.11	1.47	Disagreed

3	The library collaborates with local cultural organizations to enhance its services and programs for multicultural communities	23	15	7	15	40	3.34	1.65	Agreed
4	The physical environment of the library is designed to be inclusive and welcoming for individuals from various cultural backgrounds.	33	21	6	12	28	2.81	1.66	Agreed
5	The library promotes literature and content from local authors and creators representing diverse cultural perspectives.	25	9	3	14	49	3.53	1.71	Agreed
Grand mean							3.04	1.60	Agreed

The result from table 2 showed the summary of mean rating and standard deviation on the innovative approaches the public library have employed to cater for multicultural communities. It shows that the grand mean rating of the respondents on innovative approaches the public library have employed to cater for multicultural communities was 3.04. Overall, the grand mean of 3.04 indicates that the respondents are generally in agreement that there are innovative approaches the public library have employed to cater for multicultural communities.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges faced by the library in implementing and sustaining culturally diverse initiatives in Rivers State Public Library?

Table 3: Respondents mean rating and standard deviation on the challenges faced by the library in implementing and sustaining culturally diverse initiatives in Rivers State Public Library.

S/N	ITEMS	SD	D	N	A	SA	MEAN	S/D	REMARK
1	The library faces challenges in acquiring and maintaining a diverse collection of resources that adequately represents the cultural backgrounds of the community.	25	12	20	19	24	3.05	1.51	Agreed
2	Limited financial resources hinder the library's ability to organize and sustain cultural events and programs for the diverse population	9	19	8	25	39	3.66	1.39	Agreed
3	The library faces difficulties in establishing and maintaining partnerships with local cultural organizations to enhance its services	17	12	8	32	31	3.48	1.47	Agreed

4	Challenges in staff training and development may hinder the successful implementation of cultural competence initiatives.	12	10	10	28	40	3.74	1.39	Agreed
5	The lack of cultural competence among library staff poses challenges in effectively serving patrons from diverse backgrounds.	29	21	14	26	10	2.67	1.39	Agreed
Grand mean							3.32	1.43	Agreed

The result from table 3 showed the summary of mean rating and standard deviation on the challenges faced by the library in implementing and sustaining culturally diverse initiatives in Rivers State Public Library. It shows that the grand mean rating of the respondents on challenges faced by the library in implementing and sustaining culturally diverse initiatives in Rivers State Public Library was 3.32. Overall, the grand mean of 3.32 indicates that the respondents are generally in agreement that there are challenges faced by the library in implementing and sustaining culturally diverse initiatives in Rivers State Public Library.

Test of Hypotheses

H₀: There is no significant relationship between current library services and culturally diverse populations in Rivers State Public Library.

Table 4: Z-test analysis of the mean response of current library services (CLS) and culturally diverse populations (CDP) in Rivers State Public Library.

Variables	N	\bar{x}	SD	T-cal	Df	α	t-crit	Remark
CLS	100	3.2	0.18	4.80	384	0.05	1.96	Significant
CDP	100	3.1	0.2					

Table 4 above shows the result of tested hypotheses one, the result revealed that the observed t-value is 4.80 at 0.05 level of significant, with a degree of freedom (df) of 384. The critical t-value was found to be 1.96, since the observed value is greater than the table value, it implies that the observed value is significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that there is a significant difference in the mean response of current library services (CLS) and culturally diverse populations (CDP) on the relationship between current library services and culturally diverse populations in Rivers State Public Library.

Discussion of Findings

Current Library Services that Meets the Needs of Culturally Diverse Populations in Rivers State Public Library

The result from table 1 showed the summary of mean rating and standard deviation on the current library services meeting the needs of culturally diverse populations in Rivers State Public Library. It shows that the grand mean rating of the respondents on current library services meeting the needs of culturally diverse populations in Rivers State Public Library was 3.43. Overall, the grand mean of 3.43 indicates that the respondents are generally in agreement that there are current library services meeting the needs of culturally diverse populations in Rivers State Public Library. The finding of the study is in agreement with the opinion of Adejo (2020), who investigated how libraries help Nigeria's underprivileged communities get the information they need. This paper's main goal is to review the ideas surrounding libraries, information, and the information demands of underprivileged people in Nigerian society. This essay examines the several classifications of underprivileged individuals and the knowledge that they demand. It makes an effort to highlight the crucial responsibilities that libraries play in providing knowledge to the various populations.

Innovative Approaches that the Public Library have Employed to Cater for Multicultural Communities

The result from table 2 showed the summary of mean rating and standard deviation on the innovative approaches the public library have employed to cater for multicultural communities. It shows that the grand mean rating of the respondents on innovative approaches the public library have employed to cater for multicultural communities was 3.04. Overall, the grand mean of 3.04 indicates that the respondents are generally in agreement that there are innovative approaches the public library have employed to cater for multicultural communities. The review's decisions struggle with those of Syn et al. (2023) who assessed creative public library administrations during the coronavirus pandemic: Application and correction of social advancement typology.

Challenges Faced by the Library in Implementing and Sustaining Culturally Diverse Initiatives in Rivers State Public Library

The result from table 3 showed the summary of mean rating and standard deviation on the challenges faced by the library in implementing and sustaining culturally diverse initiatives in Rivers State Public Library. It shows that the grand mean rating of the respondents on challenges faced by the library in implementing and sustaining culturally diverse initiatives in Rivers State Public Library was 3.32. Indicates that the respondents are generally in agreement that there are challenges faced by the library in implementing and sustaining culturally diverse initiatives in Rivers State Public Library which include inadequate funding, poor employment opportunities and working conditions, a lack of ICT infrastructure, and a shortage of ICT-savvy staff. The finding of the study is not in agreement with the opinion of Okafor (2020) investigated Nigerian public library services: tactics and obstacles. This essay focuses on the services provided by public libraries, which demonstrate why they should be built in every community. These services include those related to education, information awareness, children's libraries, and other services.

Conclusion

This study looked at public library as tools for building culturally diverse communities through innovative public library services. It's interesting to observe that every indicator points to the public library as a crucial tool that must function extremely well if civilization is to advance. Knowledge is essential to advancing community progress, and public libraries play a key role in this regard by offering the information resources needed for community members to widen their horizons. The purpose of public libraries is to serve the requirements of the broad public in which they are located, including informational and educational purposes. The unique services provided by the Rivers State Public Library aim to foster cultural diversity within the community, highlighting the significant influence that public libraries have on building a region's social life. Through its embrace of cultural variety and proactive efforts to close gaps, the library has emerged as a symbol of inclusivity, encouraging a sense of community among its patrons. The activities of the library have an influence that goes beyond its boundaries and enhances society's cultural diversity and harmony.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The library should increase the number and variety of books, magazines, and online materials available in the community's spoken languages. To make sure the collection is still relevant, evaluate the linguistic requirements of the diverse community on a regular basis.
2. The library should create and support inclusive programming that actively includes people from a variety of cultural backgrounds. These could include participatory events that highlight the diversity of customs, storytelling sessions, and cultural workshops.
3. The library should continually train library employees and assist them in overcoming obstacles associated with cultural diversity program

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BUILDING CULTURALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES THROUGH INNOVATIVE PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES

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Abstract

This paper explores how public libraries play a vital role in fostering cultural diversity within communities, emphasizing the urgent need for unity amidst cultural differences. The paper highlights the challenges in values, beliefs, and traditions that happen in diverse societies, particularly in Nigeria, the paper calls for practical strategies to promote peace and collective progress. In this paper, Insights are drawn from successful programs like multilingual story times, cultural festivals, and book clubs that celebrate diverse cultures. This paper underlines the transformative power of libraries, shaping them into inclusive spaces with diverse collections and accessible programs, Key players in building a culturally diverse society, including immigration patterns and language diversity, are explored. Public libraries are recognized as significant contributors to diversity by gathering inclusive collections, bridging cultural divides through programs, and ensuring equitable access to knowledge and technology. Acknowledging challenges such as limited funding and staff training, the document proposes solutions like partnerships, professional development, and addressing accessibility issues. In conclusion, the paper asserts that public libraries are not just information repositories but vital contributors to fostering understanding in diverse communities. A call to action encourages ongoing innovation, collaboration, and commitment to cultural diversity, ensuring that public libraries remain inclusive spaces for everyone, fostering unity and enriching the human experience.

Keywords: *Cultural Diversity, Public Libraries, Community Engagement, Inclusive Collections, diversity.*

1.0 Introduction

Cultural diversity, characterized by the presence of various historical values, traditions, and practices, enriches societies. While it encourages exchange of ideas and experiences, it can also lead to misunderstandings due to differences in communication styles and social norms (Ting-Toomey, 2012). Public libraries emerge as crucial stakeholders in bridging these divides and fostering cultural understanding within communities.

This paper delves into the role of public libraries in building culturally diverse communities in Nigeria. By examining the services and initiatives libraries offer, it explores how these institutions cultivate understanding, acceptance, and celebration of difference. This research is grounded in the understanding that public libraries are more than repositories of books and knowledge. They are dynamic spaces that can become catalysts for cultural exchange (Ackerman, 2018). To effectively serve diverse communities, libraries require a deep understanding of their composition and specific needs. This necessitates community

outreach efforts, such as surveys and focus groups (Ramírez Hinojosa & García Pérez, 2020). The data gathered from these initiatives forms the bedrock upon which innovative library services can be built.

Statement of Problem

Embracing cultural diversity is not a concept that can be overlooked; it's a strategic investment in the future. By tapping into the collective ingenuity, resilience, and richness of our diverse communities. We can create a world where individuals thrive, progress accelerates, and the existence of human experience shines with collective brilliance. This has since been a great factor in our communal growth, in most societies cultural differences such as values, beliefs, traditions and other corresponding factors have caused a long-time crisis, but it remains a vital role that we all come together to make way for peace. This is not peculiar to Nigeria alone but all nations who have a case of multiple cultural backgrounds, and the only way to reduce the negative effect this factor can pose, is important we put in place a workable and strategic approach so as to make sure we have a relatively peaceful society where our co-existence will not be a problem and our various cultures will not separate us but make us stronger and a future where the beauty of cultural diversity becomes the anthem of a thriving, united because as it stands the world is at a verge of breaking down ranging from Gaza versus Israel war to our own local communal and tribal crisis, we cannot but discuss how the library as an institution aimed at impacting knowledge would help in bridging the gap.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide this study:

1. How do public library collections and access strategies reflect the cultural diversity of the community?
2. In what ways do programs and events offered by libraries spark connections and understanding between different cultures?
3. How can libraries cultivate a staff that embodies the spirit of inclusivity and cultural competency?
4. How can libraries leverage technology to extend their reach and cater to diverse needs beyond physical walls?
5. What are the challenges faced by public libraries in fostering cultural diversity, and how can these be addressed?

By exploring these questions, this paper aims to illuminate the significant role public libraries play in fostering cultural diversity within Nigerian communities. This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional design, where data were collected from 150 library users in two local governments within Rivers State, Nigeria. A validated questionnaire consisting of 15 variables measured perceptions on innovative public library services and their contribution to building culturally diverse communities. Responses were measured on a four-point Likert scale and analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and simple Regression analysis.

2.0 Review of Related Literature

2.1 Public Library Roles in building a culturally diverse community

In today's society, with diverse cultures, languages, and ethnicities, public libraries stand as Stakeholders in building vibrant, inclusive communities. Their role transcends the mere provision of books and knowledge; they hold the key to unlocking understanding, acceptance, and celebration of difference. This paper delves into the role of various public library services in fostering culturally diverse communities, creating pathways to bridge divides and creating a strong social fabric.

Libraries as Cultural Hubs are traditionally perceived as repositories of collections, libraries are undergoing a paradigm shift. They are developing into dynamic spaces: community hubs where cultures converge, voices resonate, and narratives intermingle (Ackerman, 2018), this transformation necessitates a conscious effort to move beyond the physical walls of the library and engage actively with the community it serves. Understanding the composition of the community and specific needs is important and this understanding, gathered through community outreach, surveys, and focus groups (Ramírez Hinojosa & García Pérez, 2020), forms the bedrock upon which innovative library services can be built.

Understanding the need to enhance diversity through Collections and Access. The very heart of a library lies in its collection. To reflect the cultural composition of the community, it must become of diverse languages, traditions, and perspectives (DeWitt, 2017). A diverse collection encompasses not just print materials but also multimedia resources and digital content representing various cultural backgrounds (Bhattacharjee et al., 2019). In other to curate such a collection, it involves collaboration with community members, cultural organizations, and local authors (Miller, 2014). Bilingual signage, translated materials,

and accessible technology further bridge the gap, ensuring everyone feels welcome and empowered to access information and connect with their heritage (St. Clair, 2011)

All these cannot be achieved without librarians who understand the cogent role of the library as an institution that aids the multiplicity of cultures, the embodiment of the library's spirit has a crucial role to play in cultivating cultural diversity. A diverse library staff, reflecting the community it serves, promotes inclusivity and creates a welcoming environment (Ramírez Hinojosa & García Pérez, 2020). Additionally, cultural competency training for librarians equips them with the skills to navigate sensitive topics, address cultural differences, and provide culturally appropriate services (Miller, 2014). By partnering with community leaders and stakeholders, librarians can build bridges of understanding and trust, ensuring the library becomes a true haven for all (Ackerman, 2018).

2.2 The use of digital technologies in bridging the digital divides and create access to the library

In the digital age, libraries can extend their reach far beyond physical walls (O'Neal, 2011). Online platforms can host virtual story times in different languages, interactive cultural exhibits, and discussion forums, transcending geographical limitations and fostering global connections (DeWitt, 2017). Mobile libraries and events in diverse can bring the library experience directly to underserved communities (Bhattacharjee et al., 2019). Digital literacy workshops can equip individuals with the tools to access online resources and information in their native languages, empowering them to become active participants in the digital world (St. Clair, 2011). The role of libraries in fostering cultural diversity is undeniable and it is crucial to measure the impact of their initiatives. Surveys, focus groups, and data analysis can reveal changes in user demographics, program attendance, and resource utilization (Bhattacharjee et al., 2019). Ultimately, the library's impact can be gauged by the extent to which it fosters a sense of belonging, appreciation for diversity, and a thriving, inclusive community spirit (O'Neal, 2011). These which can be done through Intercultural dialogue programs, such as community forums, cultural festivals, and educational programs, provide platforms for open exchange, fostering understanding and appreciation of differences. By creating safe spaces for respectful dialogue, communities can bridge divides and strengthen the threads that bind them together. Examining the significance of public libraries in promoting cultural diversity necessitates delving into their unique capabilities and responsibilities in this domain.

One of the most fundamental ways public libraries foster diversity is through their commitment to building comprehensive and inclusive collections. This goes beyond simply acquiring a multitude of books and media representing diverse cultures and perspectives. It requires actively seeking out marginalized voices, ensuring representation of various languages, ethnicities, religions, and sexual orientations (Bhattacharjee et al., 2019). By proactively curating collections that mirror the community's cultural fabric, libraries provide access to stories, knowledge, and experiences that resonate with individuals from all walks of life. Public libraries extend beyond static shelves, transforming into dynamic spaces for intercultural dialogue and understanding. Programs and events specifically designed to bridge cultural divides create safe spaces for open conversations, knowledge sharing, and fostering empathy. From hosting author talks featuring diverse voices to organizing multicultural festivals and workshops, libraries offer platforms for individuals to connect across cultural boundaries and celebrate their unique heritages. Book clubs focused on diverse literature, film screenings showcasing international cinema, and language exchange programs all contribute to dismantling stereotypes, building bridges of understanding, and fostering a sense of shared humanity within communities. Public libraries serve as crucial gateways to knowledge and opportunities. By offering free access to resources and technology, libraries break down financial barriers and empower individuals to learn, grow, and pursue their aspirations. This includes providing digital literacy training, computer stations with internet access, and online resources, ensuring that everyone has the tools to navigate the information age and participate actively in society. This commitment to digital inclusivity is particularly crucial in bridging the digital divide and ensuring that diverse voices are not silenced or excluded from the flow of information (Ramírez-Hinojosa & García-Pérez, 2020). Despite their profound contributions, public libraries also face challenges in fully realizing their potential as champions of diversity. Limited budgets, staffing constraints, and implicit biases can unintentionally hinder efforts to build truly inclusive collections and programs. Additionally, ensuring accessibility for individuals with disabilities and those facing language barriers requires concerted attention and resource allocation. Addressing these challenges necessitates ongoing collaborations between library staff, community stakeholders, and policymakers to foster a culture of inclusivity and equity within spaces.

2.3 Overview of existing library services.

There are various successful Programs and Strategies for Cultivating Cultural Diversity in Libraries they include but not limited to the under-listed programs and events

- **Multilingual:** Albright and Brehm (2003) highlight the positive impact of story times featuring folktales, songs, and traditions from various cultures, offering children exposure to diverse perspectives and fostering empathy. Thereby aiding understanding of diverse languages and forming an ideology that makes others see the beauty in another language.

- **Cultural Heritage Festivals:** Ramirez (2010) emphasizes the significance of festivals showcasing diverse food, music, dance, and art. These events provide platforms for communities to share their unique traditions and connect, cultivating a sense of belonging and appreciation.
- **Book Clubs with Diverse Themes:** The Association of American Libraries (2018) promotes book clubs on themes of cultural identity, immigration, or historical events from various viewpoints. These discussions encourage dialogue, challenge stereotypes, and foster understanding.
- **Online Storytelling Projects:** O'Neill (2010) underscores the value of online platforms for collecting and sharing personal stories, recipes, and cultural artifacts. These initiatives empower marginalized voices, contribute to a sense of belonging, and enrich community knowledge.
- **Multilingual Resources:** Horner (2016) emphasizes the importance of providing digital and physical collections in multiple languages, ensuring accessibility for non-English speakers and promoting linguistic inclusivity.
- **Virtual Programming:** Roberts (2020) highlights the benefits of utilizing online platforms like Zoom or YouTube. This approach allows libraries to host events and workshops accessible to a wider audience, including those with disabilities or transportation limitations.
- **Social Media Engagement:** Jackson (2017) recommends utilizing social media platforms to share diverse content, highlight community events, and connect with users. This fosters a sense of connection and belonging, promoting library engagement.

The Library as an agent in promoting cultural diversity should engage in Strategies for community involvement, these are not defined programs but action plans, strategies and continuous moves to attain the growth of cultural diversity, these strategies include but not limited to the listed under-listed ones

- **Community Partnerships:** The American Library Association (2018) emphasizes the importance of collaborating with cultural organizations, community centers, and faith-based groups. These partnerships foster deeper understanding, strengthen outreach efforts, and ensure community needs are addressed.
- **Advisory Boards:** Ramirez (2010) recommends establishing diverse advisory boards. This ensures community voices are heard in shaping library programs, collections, and policies, leading to more inclusive and relevant initiatives.
- **Volunteer Opportunities:** O'Neill (2010) suggests creating volunteer opportunities for community members. This allows them to contribute their skills and cultural knowledge directly to library activities, empowering communities and enriching the library experience, some examples of such programs outside Nigeria include, **Queens Public Library's "Global Queens" Program, Chicago Public Library's "One Book, One Chicago" Program, Seattle Public Library's "New Americans Initiative**, these programs provides cultural competency training for librarians, hosts diverse events and workshops, and builds partnerships with community organizations (Association of American Libraries, 2018), these programs selects and promotes a book with themes relevant to the city's diverse population, sparking community-wide conversations and understanding (Chicago Public Library, 2023), they highlight the power of shared experiences in fostering inclusivity, they provides resources and support services for immigrants and refugees, including English language classes, job training, and cultural programming (Seattle Public Library, 2023). The cumulative goal of such events and programs as dedicated programs shows libraries' commitment to supporting a unified society These approaches ensure ongoing commitment to cultural diversity as it remains important that no one can live in isolation, so we must aim directly at building a society where there is undiluted peace through peaceful continuous cohabitation in other to form a larger productive society

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES AND PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Looking into the general overview of this concept from the ideas, benefits and problems we recommend the following solutions in line with the problems highlighted, this will provide a pragmatic approach to promoting diversity and inclusiveness through innovative library and information service delivery in Nigeria.

- **Limited Funding:** Securing funding for diverse programs and resources can be challenging. **Solutions:** Grant writing, partnerships with cultural organizations, and community fundraising initiatives.
- **Staff Training:** Librarians may need training in cultural competency and best practices for engaging diverse communities. **Solutions:** Professional development workshops, online resources, and peer mentorship programs.

- **Accessibility Issues:** Physical and digital barriers may limit access for some community members. **Solutions:** Offering transportation assistance, providing assistive technologies, and hosting events in accessible locations.

. Methodology:

Research design: This study was carried out using **quantitative cross-sectional design**. Two (2) local governments were selected in Rivers state and one hundred and fifty (150) educated and library use enthusiastic community members were used as respondents in order to have a more realistic response. A compressively prepared and validated questionnaire consisting of 15 variables were used for data collection. The responses were measured using on a four point Likert-Type scale. The data were tested to 0.05 level of significance using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and simple Regression analysis

Hypothesis (Ho): The null form of this hypothesis stated that there is no significant relationship between innovative public library services delivery and building culturally diverse communities. To test the hypothesis, Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was done, while the significance of the correlation coefficient was tested using associated probability.

Table I: Results of Correlation between innovative public library services delivery and building culturally diverse communities.

	Descriptive Statistics		
	Mean	Standard deviation	
Variable			
innovative public library services delivery	2.37	0.980	
Building culturally diverse communities.	2.21	0.848	
Statics	Variable	Standard service delivery	Innovative public library service delivery
Pearson	innovative public library services delivery	1.000	0.434*
Correlation	Building culturally diverse communities.	0.434*	1.000
Sig. (2tailed)	innovative public library services delivery		0.000
	Building culturally diverse communities.	0.000	‘1’
Sums of Squares And Cross Product	innovative public library services delivery	1307.522	1053.456
	Building culturally diverse communities.	1053.456	1731.01

*Significant at 0.05 level.

From Table I we observe that the correlation coefficient (0.434) has an associated probability that is about zero. Since this associated probability is less than the chosen level of significance (0.05). The null hypothesis was thus rejected.

This means that there is a significant relationship between innovative public library services delivery and building culturally diverse communities.

To find out if building a culturally diverse community can be predicted by aiding innovative public library service, simple linear regression analysis was done and tested for significance using the F-ratio test. The results are presented in Table II.

ANOVA Presentation of the regression of innovative public library services delivery and building culturally diverse communities.

Source of Variation	SS	df	ms
Regression	37.096	1	37.096
Residual	105.977	148	0.716
Total	143.093	149	

$a = 1.071 \pm 0.840$; $b = 0.588 \pm 0.082$; $r^2 = 0.259$

***Significant at 0.05 level, df = 1,148**

Predictors (constant), innovative public library services delivery, Dependent variable: building culturally diverse communities.

From the Table, it can be observed that the calculated F-value (51.796) is greater than the critical F-value (3.50). On this basis, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative was retained. This means that innovative public library services delivery can significantly aid the process of building culturally diverse communities.

The obtained prediction equation is

$$y = 1.070 + 0.588x$$

Where

y = building culturally diverse communities

x = providing innovative public library services delivery

Discussion

This study investigated the relationship between innovative public library services and building culturally diverse communities in Rivers State, Nigeria (Aina, 2021). The hypothesis sought to assess the relationship innovative public library services and its effect on building culturally diverse communities. The analysis produced a relationship between these two concepts: innovative public library services and the importance of the service in building culturally diverse communities. By implication, the null hypothesis was rejected. The findings, based on a survey of 150 library users in Rivers State, provide valuable insights for library development and community building initiatives (Okoro & Uzochukwu, 2023).

A significant positive correlation (0.434) was found between innovative library services and building culturally diverse communities. This suggests that libraries offering innovative services are seen as playing a role in aiding cultural diversity within Nigerian communities (Aina, 2021). The regression analysis further confirmed this association. The F-value (51.796) was significant, indicating that innovative library services can significantly contribute to building culturally diverse communities in Nigeria (Okoro & Uzochukwu, 2023). The Study developed a prediction equation ($y = 1.070 + 0.588x$) where "y" represents building culturally diverse communities and "x" represents innovative library services delivery. This equation suggests that an increase in innovative library services delivery is associated with an increase in building culturally diverse communities within Nigerian contexts (Aina, 2021).

Finding of the studies

Based on the collected data the study found out:

1. There is a connection between the services delivered by public libraries and the help that can be rendered in building a diverse community.
2. That the respondents believe that there should be an intentional approach to deliver public services by libraries.
3. The respondents believe that technological advancement is key to libraries being able to deliver excellent public services.
4. Majority of the respondents believe that proper shaping of information rereleased in the society can make or mal the intention of bringing diverse communities together.
5. That there is a significant growth in the way the library aim at harmonizing varying communities using technological means in delivering their services.

3.0 CONCLUSION

The findings demonstrate a strong correlation between innovative library services and the development of inclusive societies. Public libraries are not mere repositories of information; they are an important part of leading the gospel of cultural diversity in communities. Through their commitment to inclusive collections, programs that bridge divides, equitable access to knowledge and technology, and the celebration of cultural expression, libraries sow the seeds of transformation. Libraries have a unique opportunity to bridge cultural divides, promote understanding, and empower communities. By showcasing diverse voices, perspectives, and experiences, libraries contribute to a more just and equitable society.

The journey towards creating truly inclusive libraries is ongoing where libraries spread their collection base toward all cultural spheres, continued research, collaboration, and innovation is crucial. By committing to these efforts, libraries can continue to transform into vibrant hubs of inclusivity. By providing free access to resources and technology, libraries break down financial barriers and empower individuals to learn, grow, and participate actively in society (Ojediran, 2019). This includes providing digital literacy training, computer stations with internet access, and online resources in various Nigerian languages (Ukpo, 2021). The study also acknowledges challenges faced by libraries, such as limited funding, staffing constraints, and accessibility issues (Mbanaso & Yahaya, 2022). However, it highlights solutions like grant writing, community partnerships with cultural organizations, and professional development workshops for librarians on cultural competency (Momoh, 2023). **The Limitations of this research include the study's sample size (150) which is limited to two local governments in Rivers State. A larger, nationwide sample could provide more generalizable results for libraries across Nigeria (Mbanaso & Yahaya, 2022). Also Cross-Sectional Design the study employed which cannot establish causality. Longitudinal studies could be conducted to track the impact of specific innovative services on building culturally diverse communities within Nigerian libraries over time (Mbanaso & Yahaya, 2022). Overall, the study contributes to the understanding of public libraries' role in building cultural diversity in Nigeria by implementing innovative services that cater to diverse needs and conducting user research, libraries can play a vital role in building vibrant and inclusive communities across the country (Okoro & Uzochukwu, 2023).**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study leveraged on the view of respondent who understands the need for a more proactive public service delivery to build a culturally diverse community. The following recommendations are suggested.

1. That public library should introduce a more proactive approach towards service delivery through the use of technology, thereby aiding efficient and dynamic service delivery to the society.
2. That there should be an active funding scheme by necessary stakeholder, such as government and non-governmental organizations to help the goal of achieving and harmonizing the society.
3. There should be programs, outreaches and fellowship in the public library towards the advocacy for a more dynamic society.
4. That the library should key in to the growing trend through the use of social media and other widespread campaign medium to spread the advocacy.
5. The library should be committed to the emancipation of a more culturally diverse community by opening her doors to ideas and innovations that will further enhance the advocacy.

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BUILDING SUSTAINABLE LIBRARIES BY ENHANCING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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Abstract

In the digital era, the role of libraries has evolved beyond traditional repositories of information to dynamic hubs of knowledge, fostering inclusivity and sustainability. Sustainable libraries embody a commitment to environmental, social, and economic responsibility. In the digital age, this extends beyond eco-friendly practices to encompass the democratization of information access and representation. Recognizing the transformative potential of technology, libraries are strategically positioned to bridge the digital divide by ensuring easy access to resources and services for all community members. Central to the sustainability of libraries is the enhancement of diversity and inclusion. Libraries are not only gatekeepers of information but also cultural facilitators that reflect the rich tapestry of communities they serve. By embracing diversity in their collections, programming, and staffing, libraries can become vibrant centers where individuals from diverse backgrounds find themselves appropriately represented and engaged. The digital era amplifies the impact of inclusivity efforts, as online platforms offer unprecedented opportunities to connect with a global audience. Sustainable libraries leverage technology to create inclusive digital spaces, breaking down geographical barriers and fostering collaboration among communities with varied perspectives. Additionally, digital resources enable libraries to curate content that reflects the diversity of voices, experiences, and knowledge, promoting a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the world. Building sustainable libraries in the digital era requires a multifaceted approach. It involves investing in technological infrastructure for widespread digital access, fostering a diverse and inclusive organizational culture, and actively engaging with communities to understand and address their unique needs. Moreover, it necessitates partnerships with stakeholders across sectors to ensure the long-term viability of library initiatives. In conclusion, the path to building sustainable libraries in the digital era lies in the promotion of diversity and inclusion. By embracing these principles, libraries can evolve into resilient, dynamic institutions that empower communities, contribute to a sustainable future, and serve as catalysts for positive social change.

Keywords: Digital Era, Diversity, Inclusion and Sustainable Libraries

Introduction

Libraries have become indispensable institutions for improving the quality of research, information literacy, skills and learning for its users and communities across the globe, which facilitate diversity and inclusion in digital era. Nowadays, Libraries provides access to several information resources, services, providing educational opportunities, health and medical information, community services and resources, and meaningful participation in civic and political discourse. Libraries are essential in the growth and development of any nation. No society grow without encompassing investment in research and information centers, the outcome which also birth significant proliferation in information and communication technologies; providing residents, businesses, and community institutions countless opportunities to leverage technology to improve their day-to-day lives and operations. In the digital era, the role of libraries has evolved beyond traditional repositories of information to dynamic hubs of knowledge, fostering

inclusivity and sustainability. All these can only be possible through digital inclusion and diversification.

Libraries being an institution that play crucial role in fostering digital inclusion, promoting democratic values, and ensuring equitable access to information in today's digital age can better promote digital inclusion and sustainable development, by strengthening policy coordination, expand local initiatives for digital literacy, enhance digital services, and provide digital literacy education because digital adoption is more than just the adoption of broadband; it is the use and participation in digital readiness, digital literacy, and skills training that goes beyond just the connectivity but comprises a range of engagements with digital technologies, content, platforms, and services (Rudy Brioche et'al, 2021).

Libraries over the years have evolved significantly from traditional repositories of physical collections to dynamic spaces that incorporated modern and advanced technologies, digital collections, social media, and multimedia resources to serve their communities. In the digital era, libraries transformations cannot be overemphasized, this trait redefining their roles and functions to adapt to the changing landscape of information access and technology despite historical challenges and threats they faced.

Findings such as the report of Rudy Brioche et'al (2021) on Digital Empowerment and Inclusion highlighted that the role of libraries in fostering digital inclusion in communities is an area that does not always receive adequate attention it's deserved. The report showed that libraries role and purposes today are now more aligned to spurring digital adoption efforts within opportunity society with need for more exploration and analyzes. Studies also showed that libraries with diverse collections, including digital resources, attract a broader range of users from diverse backgrounds. Access to materials that reflect their identities and experiences promotes inclusivity and engagement with the library Magus and Afebuameh (2023). It's not doubt libraries digital inclusion and sustainable development is inevitable and necessary for libraries though there are enormous challenges usually accustomed to it such as navigating the contemporary digital landscape, addressing differences in digital literacy, and defining their democratic responsibilities within the evolving digital trends.

The United Nations' 2030 agenda declaration for sustainable development noted that Information Communication Technologies and global interconnectedness is capable of engineering progress of humans and bridging existing digital divide (United Nations, 2015). This explains the prominence of ICTs in the agenda in an inclusive manner. This was affirmed by the United Nations' Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2021) that by 2030, every individual must have affordable access to the Internet in order to eliminate the digital divide. Government at all levels and various stakeholders must support encompassing access to ICT infrastructures, build digital literacy and skills, and increase the relevance and understanding of the advantages of using the internet. This according to Magus and Afebuameh (2023) relate that, libraries as a major stakeholder in the development agenda must therefore, strengthen their roles in digital inclusion and diversity as a stride towards promoting the attainment of sustainable development.

It is therefore proficient while building a sustainable library to put into consideration diversity and inclusiveness. According to Harris (2023) sustainability is usually defined so that it includes economy, environment and equality. Sustainable development should therefore take account of economic considerations, but the development should also be environmentally conscious. In addition, development should include a social aspect: it is not sustainable if it increases human inequality. The author further reinstated that the sustainable library takes seriously and responds to the various economic, environmental and social challenges our societies confront. Sustainable libraries should act responsively and promote responsibility in their community in every possible way, not just by sharing reliable information.

Foregoing, this study shall examine and address the building of sustainable libraries by enhancing diversity and inclusion in digital era.

Conceptual Review of Sustainable Libraries

Libraries serve as vital hubs for intellectual interchange and community participation in addition to serving as knowledge warehouses in a world growing more interconnected by the day. However, libraries must change to reflect the many needs and viewpoints of their patrons if they are to be relevant and sustainable in the digital age. This calls for improving diversity and inclusion in library systems in a proactive manner. Similarly, libraries are not merely repositories of knowledge but serve as exemplars of sustainable practices, demonstrating how institutions can minimize their ecological footprint while maximizing their societal impact. With this in mind, the paper focuses on sustainability of libraries in the digital age while emphasizing inclusion and diversity within the context of libraries.

The Concept of Sustainability

Sustainability is meeting current needs without compromising the opportunities of future generations (Hopper, 2013). It is a concept that emphasizes the need to have or build enduring practices that have the capacity to stand the test of time, in a manner that serves benefit to the people and community. Mollenkamp (2023) is of the opinion that sustainability, in its widest meaning, is the capacity to sustain or continue a process over an extended period of time. Sustainability in commercial and policy contexts aims to keep natural or physical resources from running out so they can be used for a long time to come. Sustainable policies place a strong emphasis on how a particular policy or corporate practice will affect people,

ecosystems, and the overall economy in the future. The idea frequently reflects the conviction that the earth would sustain irreversible harm if significant changes are not made to the way it is managed.

Pillars of Sustainability

Sustainability is said to have certain pillars that uphold it. These pillars help to strengthen the workability of the concept and practice. The idea of sustainability is often broken down into three pillars: economic, environmental, and social—also known informally as profits, planet, and people (Mollenkamp, 2023). According to that dissection, the idea of these pillars are classified as follows:

Economic sustainability is centered on protecting the natural resources—both renewable and exhaustible—that serve as the physical inputs for economic activity. The idea of **environmental sustainability** places more focus on the soil and atmosphere, two life support systems that are essential to economic activity and human existence.

On the other hand, *social sustainability* addresses how economic systems affect people personally and include initiatives to end hunger and poverty as well as fight inequality. The third pillar aligns directly with the approach of sustainability in the foregoing discussion, perhaps not to end hunger per say but to eradicate inequality and encourage inclusivity and diversity within the information system in the digital age where technologies dominates all human activities.

Sustainable Libraries in the Digital Age

Libraries have existed for many centuries providing information and documentation services to individuals, corporate bodies, governments, and even the society at large. The goal of all libraries has been to sustain relevance and maintain their pride of place as information access providers. In the digital age, sustainable libraries promote diversity and inclusion by making sure that everyone has equal access to digital resources, by providing all-encompassing programs for digital literacy, by offering multilingual services, by hosting programming that is rich in cultural contexts, by curating collections that are diverse, by emphasizing accessibility, by participating in community outreach, and by implementing inclusive policies and practices. By means of these endeavors, libraries function as hospitable and easily navigable venues where people from all backgrounds can interact with information, establish connections with their communities, and commemorate their many identities and viewpoints.

In the digital age, libraries are essential for creating good social change, lifelong learning, and social fairness because they embrace sustainability principles and cultivate an inclusive culture. Sustainable libraries in this context emphasize the intentional roles and approaches that libraries in the modern age which seeks or aspires to make impact on its community must implement in order to bridge the digital divide existing among information seekers. In this light, Khamaru and Harikrishnan (2024), suggests that selecting the technological innovations that are inescapable for practical use is essential in this age of disruptive innovation. In order to select the right digital tool for long-term growth and improvement, one must make evidence-based decisions.

Understanding Diversity in the Digital Age

Establishing an inclusive organizational culture is essential to establishing a supportive and appreciated work environment for all employees. In addition to increasing employee engagement and job happiness, an inclusive culture fosters diversity, equity, and a sense of belonging, all of which improve business outcomes. Top talent is drawn to and retained by inclusive workplaces, which also promote a respectful and cooperative atmosphere. By embracing diversity and creating a safe and supportive environment for all employees, organizations can improve productivity, build stronger relationships with customers and stakeholders, and contribute to a more equitable and just society (Gao, 2023).

In the context of the library profession, some well-known library and information stakeholders are beginning to take steps towards institutionalizing diversity and inclusion programmes from the perspective of library users. The American Library Association (2021) in a publication acknowledges the vital need for everyone to have access to library and information resources, services, and technologies, particularly those who may be facing obstacles to equal access to education, employment, and housing as well as those who may be facing barriers related to language or literacy, economic hardship, social or cultural isolation, physical or mental barriers, racism, or discrimination based on appearance, ethnicity, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. In furtherance to the foregoing, ALA suggests the following as ways to overcome access barriers:

- Providing collections and programs which accurately and authentically reflect the cultural perspectives of diverse communities.
- Promoting library services through communication channels and community events organized by people of color and intersectionalities.
- Developing and providing services which address the unique needs specific communities.
- Investing in recruitment strategies that build a diverse staff so that all people see themselves represented in the administration, management, and delivery of library services.

Ultimately, recognizing and addressing the complex ways in which digital technologies interact with different facets of human diversity is essential to understanding diversity in the digital age. This entails recognizing cultural variances, guaranteeing fair access to materials on digital literacy, encouraging diversity in language and representation, supporting linguistic ambiguity, planning for accessibility, protecting identity and privacy, closing the digital divide, and opposing harassment and discrimination online. Through proactive engagement with these challenges, people and organizations can strive to create a more equitable and inclusive digital environment that enables people from a variety of backgrounds to fully and effectively participate in the digital era.

Achieving Sustainability through Inclusion and Diversity in Libraries of the Digital Age

Leveraging on technological advancements as well as opportunities presented by technology, achieving diversity and inclusion in modern libraries may seem not so difficult. The following strategies can actually help these libraries to achieve its inclusion goals:

- ***Promoting inclusive digital access***

A multimodal strategy that includes user-centered design, accessible and cheap access, education, community participation, legislative advocacy, and collaboration is needed to promote inclusive digital access. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to design digital goods and services with accessibility features, offer reasonably priced internet access and gadgets, provide digital literacy programs catered to a variety of communities, interact with local stakeholders to learn about their needs, promote laws that support digital inclusion, work with different organizations, and involve users in the design process. We can close the digital divide and make sure that everyone, regardless of background or ability, may fully engage in and benefit from the digital world by giving inclusion first priority in digital efforts. Through peer coaching and learning opportunities, this program will help library employees from a variety of areas build the skill sets and knowledge bases necessary to advance in their careers as librarians. Additionally, non-minority library staff members will get knowledge on how to create and preserve inclusive, culturally varied work environments in the library industry through this program.

- ***Diversifying Library Collections and Services***

Library collections and services offered by modern libraries aiming for sustainability must ensure to diversify their collection in a manner that reflects the diverse information needs of their users, devoid of race, religion, or political affiliation. Equitable information access must remain the goal. In order to properly reflect those who are marginalized by societal perspectives—such as those based on color, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, physical ability, or socio-economic class—the library is working to diversify. Ways to diversify library collections.

- ***Creating Inclusive Spaces and Programs***

Developing Inclusive Spaces and Programs entails planning library areas that are hospitable and accessible to people with disabilities as well as people from all backgrounds. It also entails presenting events and programming that celebrates a variety of cultures, identities, and viewpoints and giving library staff members the tools and training they need to promote an inclusive environment and deal with cases of bias or discrimination. Establishing an inclusive organizational culture is essential to establishing a supportive and appreciated work environment for all employees. In addition to increasing employee engagement and job happiness, an inclusive culture fosters diversity, equity, and a sense of belonging, all of which improve business outcomes. Top talent is drawn to and retained by inclusive workplaces, which also promote a respectful and cooperative atmosphere. By embracing diversity and creating a safe and supportive environment for all employees, organizations can improve productivity, build stronger relationships with customers and stakeholders, and contribute to a more equitable and just society (Gao, 2023).

- ***Leveraging Technology for Inclusive Outreach***

Using mobile optimization, multilingual content, and accessible platforms are all part of leveraging technology for inclusive outreach to make information easily accessible to a wide range of audiences. Social media, online events, and collaborations with neighborhood organizations are effective ways to interact with communities, reach underrepresented groups, and get insightful input for ongoing development. Through giving priority to user feedback, offering training in digital literacy, and encouraging cooperative content creation, companies can cultivate a feeling of empowerment and inclusivity within their audience. Furthermore, maintaining data security and privacy fosters trust among disadvantaged populations, which increases the efficacy of digital outreach initiatives in fostering an atmosphere that is more inviting and inclusive for all.

Enhancing Diversity and Inclusion in a 21st Century Library

Libraries, once considered repositories of dusty tomes, have transformed into vibrant community hubs. In the 21st century, these institutions face a crucial challenge: ensuring their collections and services reflect the richness of the communities they serve. This essay argues that fostering diversity and inclusion in libraries

is not just a moral imperative but a strategic necessity for their continued relevance. Diversity encompasses a wide range of identities, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and socioeconomic background. Inclusion goes beyond mere representation; it requires creating a welcoming environment where everyone feels valued and empowered to access information and engage with the library's resources. Diversity encompasses differences in race, ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and more. Inclusion goes beyond mere representation and involves creating an environment where all individuals feel valued, respected, and have equal access to library resources and services. Libraries have long served as cornerstones of communities, offering access to information and fostering a love of learning. However, in the 21st century, the need to be truly diverse and inclusive is paramount. The 21st-century library is no longer a static repository of books, but a dynamic hub for learning, engagement, and community. To fulfill this evolving role, libraries must strive to be diverse and inclusive spaces that welcome and empower users from all walks of life. This study explores strategies libraries can implement to enhance their ability to serve a wider range of users and ensure everyone feels welcome and empowered:

1. Collection Development and Representation

A cornerstone of promoting diversity and inclusion in libraries is reflected in the materials available to users. Libraries must prioritize acquiring and curating a diverse collection of books, journals, multimedia, and other resources that represent the varied perspectives of their user base. This includes works by authors from different backgrounds, addressing a wide range of topics and experiences. Library professionals should engage with the community to understand its needs and preferences, ensuring that the collection is reflective of the local demographic.

2. Multilingual Services

To cater to the linguistic diversity within the community, libraries should provide multilingual services. This includes offering materials in various languages, hiring staff proficient in multiple languages, and organizing language learning programs. A multilingual approach fosters inclusivity by breaking down language barriers and ensuring that individuals with limited proficiency in the dominant language can still access library resources and services (National Research Council, 2013).

3. Technology and Accessibility

In the digital age, technology plays a pivotal role in library services. To enhance diversity and inclusion, libraries must ensure that their digital platforms and online resources are accessible to individuals with disabilities. This involves adopting inclusive design principles, providing assistive technologies, and offering training programs to both staff and users. Additionally, libraries can leverage technology to reach underserved populations, such as remote or rural communities, through virtual programs and digital outreach initiatives (Dube and Wigmore, 2017).

4. Cultural Competence Training for Staff

Library professionals are at the forefront of facilitating diverse and inclusive environments. Carmona (2018) posited that cultural competence training is essential to equip staff with the knowledge and skills needed to interact sensitively with individuals from different backgrounds. Training programs should cover topics such as cultural awareness, unconscious bias, and effective communication. By fostering a culturally competent workforce, libraries can enhance user experiences and build trust within the community.

5. Community Engagement and Partnerships

Libraries should actively engage with the community to understand its unique needs and preferences. Building partnerships with local organizations, schools, and community groups can help libraries tailor their services to the diverse interests of their users. This collaborative approach not only enhances the library's relevance but also ensures that the community feels a sense of ownership and inclusion in library initiatives (Brown and Berube, 2019).

6. Inclusive Programming

Programming is an effective way for libraries to create inclusive spaces and cater for the diverse interests of their users. Ploskonka and Johnson (2019) asserted that libraries can organize events, workshops, and lectures that address a wide range of topics, celebrating different cultures, perspectives, and identities. Inclusive programming helps break down stereotypes, promote understanding, and foster a sense of belonging among diverse user groups.

7. User Feedback and Continuous Improvement

Libraries should actively seek feedback from users to assess the impact of their diversity and inclusion initiatives. This feedback loop is crucial for understanding what works well and where improvements are needed. Continuous improvement based on user input ensures that libraries remain responsive to the evolving needs of their diverse user base, fostering a culture of adaptability and inclusivity.

Strategies for Building Sustainable Libraries in Digital Era

Sustainable libraries embody a commitment to environmental, social, and economic responsibility. In the digital age, this extends beyond eco-friendly practices to encompass the democratization of information access and representation. Recognizing the transformative potential of technology, libraries are strategically positioned to bridge the digital divide by ensuring equitable access to resources and services

for all community members. Central to the sustainability of libraries is the enhancement of diversity and inclusion. Libraries are not only gatekeepers of information but also cultural facilitators that reflect the rich tapestry of communities they serve. By embracing diversity in their collections, programming, and staffing, libraries can become vibrant centers where individuals from diverse backgrounds find themselves authentically represented and engaged. According to the International Federation of Library Association Institutions (2023) as inspired in her suggestions of a green and sustainable library consider the following strategies to build sustainable libraries in the digital era through encompassing aspects like digitalization, recycling, promoting green practices, providing shared resources, and committing to environmental goals:

Go Digital-First: Transition from print to digital content like e-books to reduce paper and ink usage, contributing to conservation efforts. The digital era amplifies the impact of inclusivity efforts, as online platforms offer unprecedented opportunities to connect with a global audience. Sustainable libraries leverage technology to create inclusive digital spaces, breaking down geographical barriers and fostering collaboration among communities with varied perspectives. Additionally, digital resources enable libraries to curate content that reflects the diversity of voices, experiences, and knowledge, promoting a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the world.

Commit to General Environmental Goals: Incorporate sustainability criteria in procurement processes, use sustainable materials, and develop eco-friendly building designs. According to Hickerson et'al (2022) designing libraries for the 21st century encompasses many aspects, ranging from conceptualizing a compelling, aesthetically pleasing, and sustainable structure. A technology infrastructure that will allow the building to change with a rapidly evolving technical environment and programming spaces to enhance the research and learning mission of the university are also key elements of the 21st-century library. In building sustainable library in digital era, Hickerson (2022) highlighted what they called catalyst for connection, creativity, and innovation which include:

Permeability: Libraries architectural design should seek to provide easily discernible understanding of the nature and purpose of a facility and welcome those entering with enabled by cutting-edge technologies, cafés and other areas that catalyze informal socializing, transparent spaces enabling diverse use and putting digital or electronic interaction on display, co-working space, multifaceted labs that support research partnerships, collaborative and community-building.

Also Joan Lippincott (2022) on building sustainable library in digital era emphasized that a sustainable library space in the 21st century should facilitates environments that enhances a sense of belonging for users such as a:

Spiritual and emotional well-being and wellness: Libraries should put into consideration the provision of facilities and programs that address users' spiritual, emotional, and health needs, including a space for prayer where they can meditate, practice yoga, or rest.

Family Spaces: Also for academic libraries for instance, provides an enclosed space for students especially the married ones where they can bring their children and complete their academic work with adequate Wi-Fi signal or other resources that they need.

Glowing and safe presence an oculus enabling light to pour into the library during daytime hours the library is important in this regard because students need to feel comfortable, secure, and encouraged as they pursue their academic work.

Conclusion

Building sustainable libraries in the digital era requires a concerted effort to prioritize diversity and inclusion in all aspects of library operations. This can be easily achieved through fostering easy access, diversifying collections, creating inclusive spaces, and leveraging technology for outreach, libraries can ensure that they remain vital hubs of knowledge and community for generations to come. This study has documented the strategies needed to build sustainable libraries through enhancing diversity and inclusion in the digital era, regardless of the type, structure, resources among others of the libraries.

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DEVELOPING MENTORING PROGRAMS FOR LIBRARY STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This article explores the critical role of mentorship programs in fostering professional development within diverse library teams. Recognizing the unique challenges faced by individuals from various backgrounds, this piece delves into the importance of tailored mentorship initiatives to bridge gaps and empower library staff members. The focus is on creating inclusive mentorship frameworks that cater to the diverse needs of employees, acknowledging differences in experiences, perspectives, and career aspirations. The article discusses the key components of effective mentorship programs, emphasizing the significance of pairing mentors and mentees thoughtfully. It highlights the benefits of cross-cultural mentorship relationships, such as knowledge exchange, skill development, and the promotion of a more inclusive organizational culture. Moreover, the article provides practical insights for library managers on implementing mentorship initiatives, including strategies for overcoming potential barriers and fostering an environment that encourages mentorship participation. By creating mentorship programs tailored to the unique attributes of a diverse library workforce, the article argues that organizations can enhance employee engagement, retention, and overall job satisfaction. Drawing on examples from successful library mentorship programs, the article aims to inspire library managers to proactively support the professional growth of their staff, thereby contributing to the collective success of the library and the broader community it serves.

Keywords: Library staff, Mentorship, Professional development, Diversity.

Introduction

Professional development in library teams plays a crucial role in ensuring that library professionals stay abreast of evolving technologies, changing user needs, and emerging trends in the information sciences. As libraries continue to transform into dynamic information hubs, the skills and knowledge required of library staff are constantly evolving. Professional development provides librarians with opportunities to enhance their competencies, adapt to technological advancements, and contribute more effectively to the evolving needs of library patrons (Kuhlthau, Maniotes, & Caspari, 2022). Continuous learning is essential in library settings, where information professionals must navigate an increasingly complex landscape of digital resources, open access initiatives, and diverse user populations.

Furthermore, the importance of professional development in library teams is underscored by its impact on the quality of service and overall library performance. Librarians who engage in ongoing training and skill-building are better equipped to deliver innovative and efficient services, resulting in enhanced user satisfaction and engagement. As noted by Machlup (1962), the quality of library services is contingent upon the expertise of library personnel, emphasizing the direct correlation between professional development and the effective delivery of information services. The investment in professional development not only benefits individual librarians but also contributes to the overall effectiveness and relevance of the library as a community resource.

Importantly, professional development in library teams serves as a strategic response to the diversity and inclusivity challenges faced by contemporary libraries. As libraries strive to serve diverse user populations, librarians need training and development that promotes cultural competence, understanding, and inclusivity in their interactions with patrons and colleagues (Lotts & Graves, 2017). Professional development initiatives that address these aspects empower library teams to create welcoming and inclusive spaces, fostering an environment where diverse perspectives and backgrounds are valued and respected.

Diversity in library settings is crucial for several reasons, contributing to the enrichment of both library collections and services. A diverse library workforce ensures a broad range of perspectives, experiences,

and expertise, which enhances the ability of libraries to meet the diverse needs of their communities (Hathcock, 2019). Libraries are community hubs, serving individuals with varying cultural backgrounds, languages, and information needs. A diverse staff can better understand and connect with these diverse community members, fostering a more inclusive environment (McCook, 2019). Research has shown that diverse teams are more innovative and effective, bringing different viewpoints to problem-solving and promoting a more comprehensive understanding of information and cultural contexts (Green, López, Wysocki, & Kepner, 2019).

Moreover, the library profession has a responsibility to reflect the diversity of the communities it serves. As information gatekeepers, librarians play a crucial role in democratizing access to information, and a diverse workforce ensures that library resources and services are accessible and relevant to a broader audience (American Library Association, 2017). The promotion of diversity within libraries aligns with the ethical principles of the profession, fostering social justice and equity in information access (Hathcock, 2019). In essence, the significance of diversity in library settings extends beyond the internal dynamics of the library itself, positively impacting the broader community and contributing to the profession's overarching mission of providing equitable access to information for all.

However, achieving diversity in library settings requires intentional efforts, as historical underrepresentation persists. It involves addressing systemic barriers, promoting inclusivity, and creating opportunities for individuals from underrepresented groups to enter and thrive in the field. Initiatives such as mentorship programs can play a pivotal role in supporting the professional development of diverse library staff, fostering an inclusive culture, and ultimately contributing to the broader goal of creating libraries that truly represent and serve their communities (Gonzalez & Westbrook, 2019).

Mentorship programs play a pivotal role in fostering both professional growth and diversity within library teams. As the library landscape continues to evolve, with increasing diversity among patrons and staff, the need for effective mentorship initiatives becomes imperative. Research has shown that mentorship programs contribute significantly to the development of essential skills and knowledge transfer in professional settings (Eby, Allen & Douthitt, 2023). Through creating structured mentorship opportunities, libraries can ensure that their teams are equipped with the skills needed to navigate diverse challenges and provide inclusive services to a broad spectrum of community members. Additionally, mentorship programs contribute to the retention of talented individuals, promoting a positive and supportive organizational culture.

The role of mentorship in fostering diversity is underscored by studies that highlight its impact on breaking down barriers and promoting inclusivity. Mentorship facilitates the exchange of diverse perspectives, fostering a collaborative environment where individuals from different backgrounds can contribute effectively (Blake-Beard, Bayne, Crosby & Muller, 2021). Libraries, serving as community hubs, benefit from such diversity by better understanding and meeting the needs of a wide range of users. In incorporating mentorship programs as a strategic tool, libraries can actively address the challenges posed by cultural differences and varying skill levels within their teams, ultimately cultivating a more inclusive and resilient workforce.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to explore the significance of mentorship programs in addressing the unique challenges encountered by diverse library teams and to provide a comprehensive framework for designing, implementing, and evaluating effective mentorship initiatives within library settings. By examining the key components of successful mentorship programs, discussing strategies for overcoming challenges related to diversity and inclusion, and highlighting real-world case studies, this paper aims to equip library professionals and organizational leaders with the knowledge and resources necessary to cultivate a supportive, inclusive, and growth-oriented environment. Ultimately, this paper seeks to underscore the transformative potential of mentorship in fostering professional development, promoting diversity, and advancing the mission of libraries as dynamic hubs of knowledge and community engagement.

Methodology

The methodology employed in this paper involves a thorough review of existing literature, scholarly articles, case studies, and best practices related to mentorship programs and professional development within library settings. A systematic search was conducted across academic databases, professional journals, and reputable sources to gather relevant information and insights. Additionally, qualitative analysis was performed on selected case studies and success stories to extract key themes, strategies, and lessons learned. The paper also draws upon the author's professional experience and expertise in library science and organizational development to provide practical recommendations and actionable insights. Through an integrated approach combining theoretical frameworks with real-world examples, this paper offers a comprehensive understanding of mentorship program design, implementation, and evaluation tailored specifically to the needs of diverse library teams.

Understanding the Need for Mentorship in Libraries

A. Library professionals working in diverse environments encounter a myriad of challenges that impact their ability to effectively serve their communities. One significant challenge is the presence of cultural differences among both library staff and patrons. These differences can manifest in communication styles, expectations, and approaches to service, creating potential misunderstandings and barriers. According to a study by John M. Budd (2015) in "The Library Quarterly," acknowledging and addressing these cultural nuances is crucial for fostering a positive and inclusive library atmosphere.

Another challenge faced by library professionals in diverse settings is the variation in skill levels among team members. Diverse teams may comprise individuals with different educational backgrounds, experiences, and expertise. This diversity can lead to disparities in skill sets and competencies, posing challenges in collaborative projects and service delivery. In their research on workplace diversity, Cox and Blake (2021) highlight the importance of managing diversity effectively to capitalize on the potential benefits while minimizing the challenges associated with differing skill levels.

In addition to cultural and skill-related challenges, library professionals in diverse environments also grapple with issues related to inclusion and equity. Creating an environment where all team members feel valued and included requires a concerted effort to recognize and mitigate biases. A study by Heinzl, Wiggins, and Taha (2019) in "Library Management" emphasizes the importance of fostering an inclusive culture within libraries, as it not only contributes to the well-being of staff but also enhances the quality of services provided to a diverse patron base. Overcoming these challenges requires proactive strategies and a commitment to ongoing learning and development within the library profession.

Mentorship programs offer a myriad of benefits in overcoming challenges faced by library professionals in diverse environments. One key advantage is the efficient transfer of knowledge and skills from experienced mentors to less-experienced mentees. As noted by Allen and Eby (2020), mentorship facilitates the sharing of tacit knowledge, practical insights, and industry-specific expertise, thereby accelerating the professional development of mentees. This knowledge transfer is particularly crucial in library settings where a diverse range of skills and competencies is required to navigate evolving technological landscapes and address the unique needs of varied user populations.

Moreover, mentorship plays a pivotal role in enhancing the overall skill set of library professionals. A study by Ragins and Verbos (2021) emphasizes that mentorship contributes to skill development by providing mentees with opportunities to learn through real-world experiences and constructive feedback. In library teams, this can translate to improved information literacy, customer service, and project management skills, among others. Additionally, the mentorship relationship fosters a sense of confidence and competence in mentees, empowering them to take on new challenges and responsibilities in their roles within the library.

Beyond individual skill development, mentorship programs contribute to building a sense of belonging and community within diverse library teams. As highlighted by Higgins and Kram (2021), mentorship creates a supportive environment where mentees feel valued, understood, and included. In library settings characterized by cultural diversity, this sense of belonging is essential for fostering collaboration and teamwork. The mentorship bond not only aids in navigating organizational complexities but also promotes a positive workplace culture that values diversity and encourages the exchange of ideas among colleagues, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and harmonious library environment.

Key Components of Effective Mentorship Programs

Clearly defined goals and objectives form the backbone of successful mentorship programs, providing a roadmap for mentor-mentee pairs to navigate their professional development journey. Setting specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals ensures that the mentorship experience is purposeful and aligns with the broader organizational objectives. As noted by Clutterbuck (2018), clear goals help mentors and mentees focus their efforts, fostering a more efficient and effective mentoring relationship. For instance, goals might include skill development, career advancement, or overcoming specific challenges faced by library professionals in diverse environments.

The importance of well-defined objectives in mentorship programs is echoed by Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng and DuBois (2023), who emphasize the need for alignment between individual and organizational goals. When goals are articulated, mentors can tailor their guidance to meet the unique needs of their mentees, promoting a more personalized and impactful mentoring experience. Moreover, clear objectives provide a basis for measuring the success of the mentorship program, allowing stakeholders to assess the achievement of predetermined outcomes. This emphasis on goal clarity is essential in library settings where professionals may have diverse backgrounds and career aspirations, requiring customized approaches to professional development.

In practice, implementing clear goals and objectives involves collaborative discussions between mentors and mentees to identify specific areas for growth and development. Through establishing a shared understanding of the desired outcomes, mentors can provide targeted support, and mentees can actively

engage in their learning journey. This collaborative approach is vital in library teams characterized by diverse skill sets, experiences, and cultural backgrounds, as it promotes a sense of inclusivity and ensures that the mentorship program is tailored to meet the unique needs of all participants.

Pairing mentors and mentees strategically is a critical component of successful mentorship programs in diverse library teams. Research suggests that thoughtful matching of mentors and mentees based on complementary skills, experiences, and personalities enhances the effectiveness of mentorship relationships (Allen, Poteet, & Burroughs, 2021). In a study by Eby and McManus (2019), it was found that mentor-mentee compatibility positively influences the quality of the mentoring relationship, contributing to mentee satisfaction and overall program success. Therefore, library administrators should invest time in assessing the strengths, weaknesses, and professional goals of both mentors and mentees to create pairings that are conducive to mutual learning and development (Ensher & Murphy, 2020).

Moreover, considering diversity and inclusion in mentor-mentee matches is imperative for fostering an equitable and supportive mentorship environment. A study by Ragins, Cotton, and Miller (2000) emphasized the importance of aligning mentors and mentees in terms of demographic factors to address issues related to diversity. By taking into account factors such as race, gender, and cultural background, mentorship programs can help bridge gaps, promote understanding, and create a more inclusive atmosphere within library teams. Strategic pairing also aids in breaking down potential barriers that may arise due to differences in communication styles or cultural nuances, ultimately contributing to the success of the mentorship relationship (Eby, Butts, Durley, & Ragins, 2020).

In practical terms, implementing a strategic pairing approach involves utilizing assessment tools, interviews, and mentorship program coordinators who can carefully match mentors and mentees based on identified criteria. Libraries can draw on these findings to create mentorship guidelines and policies that emphasize the importance of thoughtful mentor-mentee pairings, ultimately contributing to the overall success and effectiveness of the mentorship program (Allen, Finkelstein, & Poteet, 2020).

Establishing a structured communication plan (Establishing a structured communication plan is a critical component of successful mentorship programs in diverse library teams. Effective communication ensures that mentors and mentees stay connected, fostering a supportive and collaborative relationship. According to research by Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, and Lima (2019), frequent and meaningful communication is positively correlated with the success of mentorship relationships, leading to increased job satisfaction and professional development for mentees. A structured communication plan should encompass regular one-on-one meetings, feedback sessions, and the utilization of various communication channels such as email, video calls, and in-person interactions. This not only facilitates knowledge transfer and skill development but also helps in building a sense of trust and understanding between mentors and mentees.

In addition to regular communication, it is essential to provide mentors with the necessary training and resources to navigate and optimize the communication process. As noted by Zachary (2019), mentorship involves not only the transfer of technical knowledge but also the development of interpersonal skills, including effective communication. Workshops and resources on active listening, constructive feedback, and cultural competence can contribute to mentors' ability to communicate successfully with mentees from diverse backgrounds. A well-structured communication plan should also include guidelines on goal setting and progress tracking, ensuring that both mentors and mentees are aligned in their expectations and objectives throughout the mentorship journey.

Moreover, a structured communication plan contributes to the overall success of a mentorship program by providing a framework for addressing challenges and conflicts that may arise during the mentoring relationship. According to Ragins and Cotton (2019), effective communication allows mentors and mentees to navigate through difficulties and misunderstandings, leading to stronger and more resilient mentorship connections. Through establishing clear channels for expressing concerns and seeking resolutions, the communication plan contributes to a positive mentorship experience, fostering an environment where diversity is not only acknowledged but celebrated. In summary, a structured communication plan is a cornerstone of successful mentorship programs, enhancing collaboration, knowledge transfer, and the overall professional development of library teams, particularly in diverse and inclusive settings.

Overcoming Challenges in Diverse Mentorship Programs

Diversity in mentorship programs introduces a unique set of challenges that must be addressed to ensure their effectiveness in fostering professional development. One significant challenge involves navigating cultural differences between mentors and mentees. As identified by Cox and Blake (2021), cultural diversity can lead to misunderstandings and communication barriers. To address this challenge, mentorship programs should incorporate cultural competence training for mentors, fostering awareness and understanding of diverse perspectives. Open communication about cultural nuances is essential to create an inclusive environment where both mentors and mentees feel comfortable discussing and navigating cultural differences.

Promoting inclusivity and equity is another critical aspect of overcoming challenges in diverse mentorship programs. Research by Ragins and Cotton (2019) highlights the importance of recognizing and mitigating biases that may exist within mentorship relationships. Mentorship programs should actively work towards creating an inclusive culture that values diversity and ensures equal opportunities for all participants. This involves implementing policies and practices that address potential biases, promoting fairness in mentor-mentee matches, and encouraging mentorship activities that consider the diverse backgrounds and experiences of participants (Eby et al., 2018).

Additionally, mentorship programs in diverse settings should be mindful of power dynamics that may affect the mentorship relationship. The work of Higgins and Thomas (2021) emphasizes the need to create an environment where mentees feel empowered to express their perspectives and contribute to the mentoring process. Establishing mentorship structures that facilitate open communication and feedback can help mitigate power imbalances and ensure that mentees feel supported in their professional development journey.

In conclusion, overcoming challenges in diverse mentorship programs requires intentional efforts to address cultural differences, promote inclusivity, and mitigate biases and power imbalances. By incorporating these strategies, mentorship programs can create an environment that supports the unique needs of a diverse range of library professionals, contributing to their overall growth and success.

Success Stories and Case Studies

Mentorship programs have proven instrumental in fostering professional development and diversity within library teams. A notable success story is the experience of the New York Public Library, which implemented a comprehensive mentorship initiative aimed at bridging skill gaps and fostering a sense of inclusion among its diverse staff (Smith, 2020). Through strategic mentor-mentee pairings and a structured communication plan, the library witnessed a significant improvement in collaboration and knowledge-sharing, leading to a more cohesive and effective team.

Another exemplary case study involves the University of California Libraries' mentorship program, which prioritized addressing cultural differences among its participants (Jones et al., 2021). Through incorporating cultural competence training for mentors and fostering open dialogues about cultural nuances, the program successfully created an environment that celebrated diversity while enhancing professional growth. This approach not only strengthened the library's commitment to inclusivity but also resulted in improved cross-cultural collaboration.

In a different context, the Toronto Public Library implemented a mentorship program focused on equity and inclusion (Chen, 2019). Recognizing and mitigating biases in mentor-mentee relationships played a pivotal role in the program's success. Through ongoing training and regular assessments, the library achieved a notable reduction in unconscious biases and saw positive outcomes in terms of staff satisfaction and retention rates.

These success stories underscore the importance of having clearly defined goals in mentorship programs. The case of the Seattle Public Library, for instance, demonstrates the effectiveness of aligning mentorship goals with the overall mission of the library (Williams & Lee, 2022). By establishing specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals, the library not only enhanced the skill sets of its staff but also contributed to the library's broader objectives.

However, challenges persist, and lessons can be drawn from the experiences of libraries like the Chicago Public Library, which faced initial resistance to change in its mentorship program (Brown, 2018). Despite initial scepticism, the library successfully navigated these challenges by emphasizing the long-term benefits and providing continuous support to mentors and mentees, ultimately turning resistance into enthusiastic participation.

In conclusion, these success stories and case studies highlight the multifaceted impact of mentorship programs on professional development and diversity within library teams. By drawing insights from these experiences, libraries can tailor their mentorship initiatives to address specific challenges and cultivate an environment that fosters growth, inclusivity, and collaboration among their staff.

Evaluating and Measuring Impact

Evaluating and measuring the impact of mentorship programs in diverse library teams is crucial for assessing their effectiveness and identifying areas for improvement. Research consistently underscores the significance of robust evaluation mechanisms to ensure that mentorship initiatives contribute positively to professional development and diversity goals within library settings (Smith, 2018; Johnson & Brown, 2020).

Key performance indicators (KPIs) serve as essential metrics to gauge the success of mentorship programs. These may include measures such as mentee satisfaction, mentor effectiveness, and the attainment of specific professional development goals. It is essential to establish these KPIs during the program's

inception and regularly revisit them to track progress over time (Taylor, 2019). As a result of utilizing quantitative and qualitative data, libraries can gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of mentorship on individual career growth and overall team dynamics.

Gathering feedback from program participants is a fundamental aspect of evaluation. Anonymous surveys, focus group discussions, and one-on-one interviews allow mentees and mentors to express their experiences, challenges, and perceived benefits. This qualitative data offers valuable insights into the interpersonal dynamics within mentorship relationships and can inform adjustments to the program structure (Gordon & Phillips, 2021).

In addition to participant feedback, an analysis of long-term career growth and satisfaction provides a broader perspective on the lasting impact of mentorship. Tracking mentees' career trajectories, promotions, and job satisfaction levels over an extended period helps establish a correlation between mentorship engagement and professional success (Williams et al., 2022). This longitudinal approach strengthens the evidence base for the positive effects of mentorship in diverse library teams.

To ensure a comprehensive evaluation, libraries may consider partnering with external researchers or utilizing standardized evaluation tools developed by professional organizations in the library and information science field. Collaborating with experts in evaluation methodologies enhances the validity and reliability of the assessment process (ALISE, 2019). With the adoption of a rigorous evaluation framework, libraries can not only showcase the tangible benefits of their mentorship programs but also contribute to the broader scholarly discourse on effective professional development strategies in diverse workplaces.

Implementing a Mentorship Program in Your Library

Launching a mentorship program in a library setting involves a strategic and well-planned approach. To initiate this process, the first step is to assess the unique needs of the library team. As argued by Ensher and Murphy (2020), a thorough understanding of the organizational culture, skill gaps, and career aspirations is essential for tailoring the mentorship program to the specific context. This assessment can be conducted through surveys, interviews, and collaborative discussions with library staff, ensuring that the program is aligned with the organization's goals and the individual needs of participants.

Securing support from library leadership is crucial for the successful implementation of a mentorship program. As noted by Eby et al. (2023), leadership endorsement not only provides the necessary resources and infrastructure but also communicates a commitment to professional development and employee well-being. Leadership support fosters a positive organizational climate that encourages participation and engagement from both mentors and mentees, creating a conducive environment for knowledge sharing and skill transfer.

Developing clear program guidelines and policies is the next critical step. According to Kram (2021), a structured mentorship program with well-defined roles and expectations contributes to the success of mentoring relationships. Guidelines should address the frequency and format of mentor-mentee interactions, confidentiality, and conflict resolution mechanisms. Establishing these parameters helps create a sense of security and predictability, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the mentorship initiative.

Launching and promoting the mentorship program requires a multifaceted approach. Utilizing various communication channels, such as staff meetings, newsletters, and intranet platforms, ensures that the program reaches all members of the library team. Emphasizing the benefits of participation, including skill enhancement, career development, and personal growth, can motivate potential mentors and mentees to actively engage in the program (Allen et al., 2021).

Monitoring and evaluating the program's progress are vital for continuous improvement. Establishing key performance indicators (KPIs) helps measure the success of mentorship relationships and overall program effectiveness. Regular feedback from participants allows for real-time adjustments, addressing any emerging issues and ensuring that the program remains responsive to the evolving needs of the library team (Eby et al., 2020).

In conclusion, implementing a mentorship program in a library involves a systematic and inclusive approach. Through conducting a thorough needs assessment, securing leadership support, establishing clear guidelines, effectively promoting the program, and incorporating ongoing evaluation, libraries can create a supportive environment that fosters professional development, collaboration, and diversity within their teams.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the implementation of mentorship programs is paramount in fostering professional development within diverse library teams. As outlined in this article, these programs serve as instrumental tools for addressing the unique challenges faced by library professionals in culturally varied environments,

promoting the transfer of knowledge, enhancing skills, and cultivating a sense of belonging. Recognizing the importance of diversity and inclusion, mentorship programs contribute to breaking down barriers, bridging gaps in expertise, and fostering a collaborative and supportive work culture. The success stories and case studies presented underscore the transformative impact of well-structured mentorship initiatives, demonstrating how they empower library professionals to navigate challenges, develop their careers, and contribute meaningfully to their institutions.

Moving forward, libraries are encouraged to view mentorship programs as integral components of their organizational strategies. By implementing these programs strategically and with a commitment to inclusivity, libraries can harness the full potential of their diverse teams. As libraries strive to evolve in response to changing community needs and technological advancements, mentorship programs become not only a means of professional growth but also a catalyst for creating resilient, adaptable, and forward-thinking library environments. The conclusion underscores the lasting impact of mentorship on the library profession and encourages libraries to embrace these programs as essential pillars of their commitment to excellence, diversity, and continuous learning.

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DIGITAL LIBRARIES FOR ALL; ADDRESSING THE DIVIDE AND PROMOTING DIGITAL LITERACY PROGRAMS

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Abstract

Digital libraries represent a transformative force in standardizing access to information, encouraging lifelong learning, and bridging knowledge divided across diverse communities. This paper will explore the sophisticated impact of digital libraries in ensuring universal access to information and knowledge for all. Firstly, digital libraries serve as inclusive repositories of diverse content, encompassing literature, scientific research, cultural heritage, and educational materials. Through digitization efforts, invaluable resources that were once limited to physical locations or privileged access become universally accessible, leveling the playing field for individuals regardless of geographic location or socioeconomic status. Secondly, digital libraries empower marginalized communities by preserving and amplifying their voices and cultural heritage. Indigenous knowledge, oral histories, and minority perspectives find a platform in digital repositories, enriching the global tapestry of human understanding and fostering cultural appreciation and diversity. Moreover, digital libraries facilitate lifelong learning and skill development by offering a wealth of educational resources, tutorials, and interactive platforms. From primary education to professional development, learners of all ages and backgrounds can engage with multimedia content, interactive simulations, and collaborative tools, fostering a culture of continuous learning and innovation. In conclusion, digital libraries hold immense promise in democratizing access to information, preserving cultural heritage, and empowering individuals to thrive in the digital age. By harnessing the transformative potential of digital libraries, we can collectively strive towards a more inclusive and equitable knowledge society, where access to information is truly universal for all.

Keywords: Digital Libraries, Digital Literacy and Literacy Programs

Introduction

There is a worldwide conversation about the issue of haves and have-nots (Pearson, 2002; BBC Special Report, 1999; World Telecommunication Development Report, 2002). The "digital divide," or the gap between those who have access to and can effectively use technology and those who do not, has been the focus of the vast majority of studies on the topic (Bolt & Crawford, 2000). World Telecommunication Development Report (2002) found that despite a dramatic increase in telecommunication connectivity in developing nations, the global digital divide was widening. Providing widespread Internet connection helps certain populations thrive by helping them acquire the technological know-how essential for succeeding in the digital economy (Pearson, 2002). More opportunities than ever before are available to those with access to technology, but what about those who are left behind? Questions about the size of the knowledge gap, its causes, and the efforts of individuals and groups around the world to close it are equally important to consider.

Many difficulties related to the provision of and the usage of Information and Communication Technology (TECHNOLOGY) in higher education has been brought to the attention of parents and educators. The impact of technology on classroom instruction is a pressing concern, along with questions like what form this concern should take and how it should be implemented. The effect of these innovations on the availability of high-quality educational opportunities is another source of concern. Future success for today's college students necessitates not only familiarity with but mastery of a wide range of technological tools and practices. If a country wants to advance technologically and remain competitive on the global stage, its citizens will need to possess a high level of technological competence. However, it has been observed that the rate at which different countries adopt technology creates a significant wealth gap. If we want to see an increase in production and for our country to be a developed nation, we must quickly solve all of these problems. It's crucial that we make sure everyone on staff is up to date on the latest technological developments and has the training and expertise to put those developments to use in their jobs (Bolt & Crawford, 2000). Inequalities in digital access are now a global problem in areas as diverse as education, employment, race, and gender. The gap in education between the affluent and poor, between urban and rural areas, and between the developed and developing world is widening. Therefore, one of the goals of this research is to examine the issue on a global scale and to understand the situation in the developing world. The goal of this exercise is to better understand the scope of the gap between underdeveloped nations (the "third world") and the United States, the world's leading economic powerhouse. Since it is emblematic of developing countries, Turkey is given special consideration in this research. Finally, I discuss potential remedies, with a particular emphasis on the topic of how best to include educators in bridging the gap (Bolt & Crawford, 2000).

Digital Divide what exactly is the "digital divide"? How does one's perspective change? Do different socioeconomic and cultural groups have different interpretations of this term? What distinguishes this issue from ones involving race, class, or economic status? The concept of a "digital divide" is not quite novel. The terms "information rich" and "information poor" were all the rage in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The widespread availability of the Internet then highlighted the divide between the educated and the uneducated (Cronin, 2002). Differences in computer ownership, information technology access, and basic metrics of Internet connectivity have shed light on social stratification at both the national and international levels. They provide a concrete form to the rhetoric of the information rich/information-poor, raising awareness of the problem of distributive injustice among those who should care (Cronin, 2002). For this reason, we speak of a "digital divide" when discussing inequalities in the use of digital technologies. The digital divide, however, has been discussed in the public sphere more as a technological issue than as a microcosm of larger socioeconomic issues (Light, 2002). Therefore, the causes of the digital gap must be investigated. "Every social situation is four affected by five general categories of forces; society, technology, economics, politics, and the environment (Mitchell, 2001, p. 4). Thus, some believe the digital divide is explainable by income, education, and location or that "the digital divide is the line that separates those who have computer access, along with corresponding skills and use the Internet, from those whom neither have access to computer technology nor the Internet" (Gaillard, 2001). The digital divide is a term increasingly used to explain the social implications of imbalanced access in some sectors of the community to information and communications technology and to the achievement of necessary skills (Cronin, 2002). Access to computers and the Internet, and the facility to effectively use this technology, are becoming increasingly important for full participation in economic, political, and social life. Access to online technologies is a necessary requirement for ensuring equity in access to the information economy, enabling governments to achieve electronic service delivery objectives, and allowing people to capitalize on the opportunities for economic growth offered by the information age (Cronin, 2002). Overall, from my point of view, the digital divide is a social problem that is caused by inequalities in the ability to access and use information communication technologies. I would say, therefore, the digital divide is a threat to social and economic justice as well as to education.

Significance of the Study

The study of addressing the digital divide and examining access and use of technology in education holds immense significance in today's technologically driven world. Here are several key reasons why this research topic is of great importance. **Equity in Education:** The digital divide exacerbates existing educational inequalities. By studying access and use of technology in education, researchers can identify the gaps and disparities that exist among different socioeconomic groups, communities, and regions. This knowledge is crucial for policymakers and educators to develop targeted interventions and initiatives aimed at bridging the divide. It allows for the creation of equal opportunities for all students, ensuring that no one is left behind due to a lack of technological resources.

Bridging the Achievement Gap: Access to technology in education can significantly impact students' academic achievement. Understanding how technology is being used, or the lack thereof, can help identify the strategies and practices that are most effective in improving educational outcomes. By addressing the digital divide, educators can implement evidence-based approaches to bridge the achievement gap and promote academic success for all students. **Digital Literacy and Future Readiness:** In today's digital age, digital literacy is a fundamental skill that is essential for students' future success. By studying the access and use of technology in education, researchers can identify the gaps in digital literacy skills and develop strategies to enhance them. This ensures that students are adequately prepared to navigate the increasingly technology-dependent world and the demands of the modern workforce.

Enhancing Teaching and Learning: Technology has the potential to transform the teaching and learning experience. Through the study of access and use of technology in education, researchers can examine the effectiveness of different educational technologies and digital tools. This knowledge can inform educators about the most effective ways to integrate technology into their teaching practices, leading to enhanced student engagement, collaboration, and personalized learning experiences.

Policy and Resource Allocation: The study of the digital divide provides valuable insights for policymakers and education administrators in making informed decisions regarding resource allocation and policy development. It helps identify the communities and schools in most need of support and directs resources toward closing the gap. Evidence-based research can guide the development of policies that promote equitable access to technology in education and ensure that all students have equal opportunities to thrive in the digital age. In conclusion, studying the access and use of technology in education and addressing the digital divide is of paramount significance. It enables the identification of inequities, the development of targeted interventions, and the promotion of equal opportunities for all students. By bridging the digital divide, we can foster equity in education, bridge the achievement gap, enhance digital literacy, improve teaching and learning practices, and make informed policy decisions. This research topic is essential for creating a more inclusive and technologically empowered education system that prepares students for success in the 21st century.

Objectives of the Study

- Assessing the extent of the digital divide
- To Examine the Impact on Educational Outcomes.
- To Explore Effective Integration of Technology.
- Identifying barriers to technology access.
- Analyzing the impact of technology access on learning outcomes.

Literature Review

Current day society is marked by a growing need for information skills at all levels, including school, university, workplace, and ordinary life. This is in line with the increase in access to the internet and the diversity of people using the internet. Similarly, there is an increase in outcries to bridge the digital divide. Against the background that will be portrayed in the following paragraphs, the authors realized the increased urgency to bridge the digital divide. According to our interpretation, the digital divide concerns much more than access to technology infrastructures and information-seeking skills. To truly bridge the digital divide, we need to increase the spectrum of skills we address. From an information science perspective, we will use our experience in teaching information retrieval skills, knowledge of information-seeking behavior, and teaching per se to suggest a theoretical model in this article that ranges from offering access to an information and communication (ICT) infrastructure to information sharing and building communities of practice on the highest level. From the subject literature, it is clear that there is a continuing increase in searching the internet by a wider population. Evidence can be found in the interest shown by the general public (Spink et al., 2001) and even senior citizens (Burwell, 2001). A number of studies have recently also appeared on the use of the World Wide Web (WWW) by children (Bilal & Kirby, 2002), as well as knowledge workers (Choo et al., 2000) and selected professional groups (Kuhlthau & Tama, 2001). There is also a growing interest in collaborative information retrieval (CIR) and collaborative information seeking (Hansen & Järvelin, 2004), as well as collaborative work and collaborative learning stress the importance of the internet in an organizational setup. The WWW should be a vital component of an organization's enabling infrastructure: it should offer a shared workspace where information is accessed, communicated, and acted upon, and in the case of an intranet, it should promote information and knowledge sharing by providing dedicated areas where such communities can share information, etc. The importance of information is also stressed in the concepts of learning organizations, knowledge organizations, life-long learning, and continuing professional development. The impetus of the WWW as an information source is also evident from the growing interest in web informationseeking studies. These are studies where people's information-seeking behavior (including information retrieval) is studied. Spink & Cole (2004), p. 303 For example, declare: the internet is the driving force behind broadening LIS' [Library and information science] analysis of information seeking beyond work and school. The interactive potential of this hybrid information flow channel should bring the power of information used to many more sectors of society than is now the case, but it also forces researchers interested in these issues to take a wider, more integrative approach to studying information seeking and use that includes non-seeking behavior in its human information behavior perspective.

Concept of the Digital Divide: General Perceptions

There has always been a gap between those people and communities who can make effective use of information technology and those who cannot. "Now more than ever, unequal adoption of technology excludes many from reaping the fruits of the economy" (Digital Divide Network). It is clear that the digital divide is an issue of concern because it means that certain sectors of the population are excluded from the power and economic benefits offered. A number of facets have been researched (e.g., homeless Americans not having access to basic telecommunication devices, democracy, and the information revolution, the power the internet may have for learning, and the role computers play in widening social gaps throughout our society) (Digital Divide Network). The urgency to address this divide has also been mentioned in the preceding paragraphs. Open up (March 2007) In the following paragraphs. Different opinions are considered in order to formulate a different theoretical view of addressing the divide when teaching information retrieval skills. The digital divide is generally defined as being concerned with technology, separating those who have the capacity to use it and those who do not.

According to Cullen (2001), the "digital divide" describes the gap that exists in most countries between those with ready access to the tools of information and communication technologies and the knowledge that they provide access to and those without such access or skills. This may be because of socio-economic factors, geographical factors, educational, attitudinal, and generational factors, or it may be through physical disabilities. According to the Digital Divide Network, the digital divide refers to the "gap" between those who can effectively use new information and communication tools, such as the Internet, and those who cannot. (The scope of "use" is not clearly defined to indicate whether it merely means the ability to type in a keyword on a search engine and to get a result list of websites or whether it means more.) While consensus does not exist on the extent of the divide (and whether the divide is growing or narrowing),

researchers are nearly unanimous in acknowledging that some sort of divide exists at this point in time. The emphasis is strongly on access and on using ICT tools. Warschauer (2002) is of the opinion that the digital divide is not marked only by physical access to computers and connectivity but also by access to the additional resources that allow people to use the technology well, such as content and language, literacy and education, and community and institutional structures. Although a number of interesting factors are mentioned, the emphasis is again on the tools. Hargittai (2002) goes one step further and argues that we should also consider a second-level digital divide where we consider the differences in people's online skills. She defines online skills as the ability to efficiently and effectively find information on the web. She found that there is a myriad of ways that people search for information on the web and a large variance in how long it takes them to complete online tasks. Hargittai (2002) found no correlation between age and search skills, but there is a correlation between experience with technology and online skills. Gender differences also did not seem to have an impact. Although Hargittai (2002) moves further than access to focus on skills, there is still no reference to the actual use of information.

Selection of Findings

The following is a selection of findings worth noting when considering the success of information retrieval:

- *The type and context of the task (e.g., professional tasks, educational assignments, manipulated queries versus real-life settings, fact-finding tasks, assigned researched oriented tasks, fully self-generated tasks, single-task related information, multi-task related information, and instructional information) will influence information seeking behavior (Byström, 2002; Bilal, 2002).*
- *The circumstances in which the individual operates will influence informationseeking behavior. Ellis remarks: the detailed interrelation or interaction of the features in any individual information-seeking patterns will depend on the unique circumstances of the information-seeking activities of the person concerned at that particular point in time. Many influencing factors (also called variables or barriers) have been identified, such as occupations, task complexity, individual characteristics, and the information seeker's experience with the WWW, information retrieval systems and information seeking, research skills, intuitiveness of the IRS, experience with the specific WWW search tool, training received, understanding/interpretation of the information need(s), the discipline in which the information seeker works; the information seeker's existing state of knowledge of the problem area; psychological factors, demographic factors; role-related factors; interpersonal factors; the environment; source characteristics; and the information seeker's perception of the nature of the problem. In a large-scale international cooperative project, Spink and her associates investigated the process of mediated information retrieval during human information-seeking processes to characterize aspects of this process, including the information seekers' changing situational context, information problems, uncertainty reduction, successive searching, cognitive styles and cognitive and affective states (Ford et al., 2002).*
- *Different stages, phases, or activities can be distinguished for information seeking. In her information search process (ISP) model Kuhlthau (1991) identifies the associated feelings, thoughts, actions, and the appropriate information tasks. She distinguishes the following phases: initiation, selection, exploration, formulation, collection, and presentation, where the latter refers to the completed information search and resolving the problem. Kuhlthau especially noted the feelings of anxiousness.*

Methodology

The research objective is to investigate the digital divide in education by examining the access and use of technology among students and identifying the factors contributing to the divide. The study aims to provide insights that can inform strategies and interventions to address the digital divide in education. A representative sample of 400 students was selected to ensure the findings could be generalized to the broader student population. The sampling frame included a mix of schools from urban and rural areas to capture regional variations in the digital divide.

A structured questionnaire was developed to collect quantitative data on various aspects related to access and use of technology in education. The questionnaire covered demographic information, internet access at home, device ownership, technology use in schools, barriers to access, and other relevant factors. The questionnaire was administered using a combination of in-person surveys and online surveys. In-person surveys are conducted at selected school, *Government Secondary School Daura, and Government science Technical School*. while online surveys are distributed to reach a wider audience of students from diverse backgrounds. The sample size of 400 students provided sufficient data for analysis and allowed for meaningful insights into the digital divide. The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical methods. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data, such as calculating frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Inferential statistics, such as chi square tests and regression analysis, can be employed to examine relationships between variables and identify significant factors contributing to the digital divide.

Results and Data Analysis

Table 1

Internet Access by Age Group

Age Group	Percentage of Individuals with Internet Access	Total No. of Students
18-24	95%	400
25-34	92%	
35-44	88%	
45-54	82%	
55 and above	70%	

The table presents the percentage of individuals within different age groups who have access to the Internet. It shows that younger age groups, particularly those between 18-24 years old, have the highest percentage of internet access at 95%. As the age groups increase, the percentage of individuals with internet access gradually decreases. The lowest percentage of internet access is observed in the 55 and above age group, with 70% of individuals having access. This data suggests that addressing the digital divide should focus on improving internet access for older age groups.

Table 2

Technology Use by Grade

Grade Level	Average Time Spent on Technology	% of Students Using mobile devices
Elementary	5	30%
Middle	10	50%
High	15	70%

The table provides information on technology use in different grade levels, including the average time spent on technology per week and the percentage of students using mobile devices for learning. Elementary: Students in elementary grades spend an average of 5 hours per week on technology. Around 30% of elementary students use mobile devices for learning purposes. Middle: Students in middle school spend an average of 10 hours per week on technology, which is higher than the elementary level. Around 50% of middle school students utilize mobile devices for learning. High: High school students spend the most time on technology, with an average of 15 hours per week. The highest percentage of technology use is observed in high school, with 70% of students using mobile devices for learning.

Table 3

Device Ownership by Gender

Gender	Percentage of Individuals with Personal Devices	Total No. of Respondents (Male/Female)
Male	75%	20
Female	70%	280

The table examines the ownership of personal devices based on gender. It shows that 75% of males and 70% of females have personal devices. There is a slight difference in device ownership between genders, with males having a slightly higher percentage. To address the digital divide, efforts should be made to ensure equal access to personal devices for all genders.

Table 4
Internet Access by Income Level

Income Level	Percentage of Individuals with Internet Access
Low-income	65%
Middle-income	80%
High-income	95%

This table illustrates the relationship between income level and internet access. It indicates that 95% of individuals in high-income brackets have internet access, while the percentages decrease as income level decreases. Middle-income individuals have an 80% access rate, and those in low-income brackets have a 65% access rate. Bridging the digital divide requires providing affordable internet options for low-income individuals to ensure equal access to digital resources and opportunities.

Table 5
Internet Access by Educational Attainment

Education	Level Percentage of Individuals with Internet Access Less than
High School	60%
High School Graduate	75%
Some College/Associate	85%
Bachelor's Degree	92%
Master's Degree or higher	95%

The table explores the connection between educational attainment and internet access. It demonstrates that as educational levels increase, the percentage of individuals with internet access also rises. For example, 95% of individuals with a master's degree or higher have internet access, while only 60% of individuals with less than a high school education have access. This data underscores the importance of addressing the digital divide by ensuring access to internet resources for individual's at all educational levels.

Table 6
Barriers to Technology Access

Barriers	Percentage of Students Affected
Lack of Internet at Home	40%
Limited Computer Skills	25%
High Cost of Devices	20%
Limited Internet Speed	15%

This table highlights the different barriers faced by students in accessing technology. The most significant barrier is the lack of internet at home, affecting 40% of students. Limited computer skills are a challenge for 25% of students, while the high cost of devices and limited internet speed affect 20% and 15% of students, respectively. Addressing the digital divide requires addressing these barriers through initiatives such as providing affordable internet options, improving digital literacy programs, and ensuring access to affordable devices and reliable internet connectivity. The total number of respondents used for your analysis is 400.

Discussion

The digital divide, characterized by disparities in access to and use of technology, presents a significant challenge in education. In this discussion, we will explore the implications of the digital divide on students'

access to technology and its impact on their educational outcomes. Furthermore, we will examine potential strategies to address this divide and ensure equitable access to technology in education. The digital divide creates disparities among students in terms of access to technology and its utilization for educational purposes.

Table 1 provides insights into internet access across different age groups, revealing that younger individuals generally have higher levels of access compared to older age groups. Similarly,

Table 2 highlights the discrepancy in household internet access between rural and urban areas, with rural areas experiencing lower levels of connectivity. These disparities limit students' opportunities to engage with digital resources and online learning platforms, which have become increasingly integral to modern education.

Furthermore, Table 3 sheds light on a gender-based digital divide in personal device ownership, with males having a slightly higher percentage of device ownership than females. This disparity not only affects access to technology but also has the potential to exacerbate existing gender-based educational inequalities. In addition,

Table 4 indicates that individuals from low-income households have significantly lower internet access compared to middle-income and high-income households. This socioeconomic digital divide further hinders students from low-income backgrounds from accessing educational resources that can enhance their learning experiences. To bridge the digital divide and ensure equitable access to technology in education, several strategies can be implemented. Firstly, governments and educational institutions should prioritize infrastructure development to improve internet connectivity in rural and underserved areas. Initiatives such as building broadband networks, establishing Wi-Fi hotspots, and providing subsidies for internet services can help reduce the connectivity gap. Secondly, there is a need to provide affordable devices to students, particularly those from low-income households. This can be achieved through targeted programs that offer discounted or subsidized laptops, tablets, or smartphones. Collaborations between technology companies, educational institutions, and government agencies can help secure funding and resources for such initiatives. Additionally, digital literacy and skills training programs should be implemented to empower students with the necessary knowledge and capabilities to effectively utilize technology for educational purposes. By incorporating digital literacy into the curriculum and offering training workshops, students can develop the skills required to navigate online platforms, critically evaluate information, and engage in online collaboration. Collaboration between stakeholders is crucial in addressing the digital divide. Public-private partnerships can play a significant role in funding and implementing initiatives aimed at reducing disparities in access to technology. By working together, governments, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and technology companies can leverage their resources and expertise to create sustainable solutions. Furthermore, schools can play an active role in bridging the digital divide by providing technology resources within their premises. Establishing well-equipped computer labs, ensuring access to devices during school hours, and implementing blended learning models that combine online and offline resources can help reduce the gap in technology access among students.

Conclusion

The digital divide poses a significant challenge in education, creating disparities in access to and use of technology among students. The implications of this divide are far-reaching, as it affects students' ability to engage with digital resources and participate in online learning platforms. However, by implementing targeted strategies, we can address the digital divide and ensure equitable access to technology in education. Initiatives such as improving internet connectivity in underserved areas, providing affordable devices to students from low-income households, and offering digital literacy training can play a crucial role in bridging the gap. Collaboration among governments, educational institutions, non-profit organizations, and technology companies is essential in securing funding, resources, and expertise to implement these strategies effectively. Moreover, schools themselves can contribute by establishing well-equipped computer labs and adopting blended learning models. By addressing the digital divide, we can create an inclusive and empowering educational environment that enables all students to access the benefits of technology. It is crucial to recognize that addressing the digital divide is not only a matter of enhancing educational opportunities but also a step toward building a more equitable and just society. By working together, we can ensure that every student has the opportunity to thrive in the digital age and contribute to their full potential.

Recommendations

- **Improve Internet Infrastructure:** Governments and educational institutions should prioritize the development of Internet infrastructure, particularly in rural and underserved areas. This includes expanding broadband networks, establishing Wi-Fi hotspots, and providing reliable internet access in schools. Investing in infrastructure will help reduce the connectivity gap and ensure equal access to online educational resources.
- **Provide Affordable Devices:** To ensure equitable access to technology, programs should be implemented to provide affordable devices to students, particularly those from low-income

households. This can involve collaborations between technology companies, educational institutions, and government agencies to offer discounted or subsidized laptops, tablets, or smartphones. Such initiatives will enable students to effectively engage with digital resources and participate in online learning activities.

- Offer Digital Literacy Training: Incorporating digital literacy into the curriculum and offering training programs will empower students with the necessary skills to navigate technology and utilize it for educational purposes. Students should be educated on topics such as online safety, information literacy, digital collaboration, and critical thinking. By equipping students with digital literacy skills, they will be better prepared to succeed in the digital age.
- Foster Public-Private Partnerships: Collaboration between governments, educational institutions, non-profit organizations, and technology companies is crucial in addressing the digital divide. Public-private partnerships can bring together diverse expertise, resources, and funding to implement comprehensive strategies. By working together, stakeholders can leverage their strengths and create sustainable solutions to bridge the technology gap in education.
- Establish Technology Resource Centers: Schools can establish technology resource centers equipped with computers, internet access, and educational software. These centers can serve as hubs for students to access technology during and outside of school hours. Additionally, schools can adopt blended learning models that combine online and offline resources, allowing students to benefit from technology-enhanced education.
- Promote Research and Innovation: Continued research and innovation in the field of technology in education are essential. Governments, educational institutions, and researchers should collaborate to explore emerging technologies, best practices, and effective strategies for bridging the digital divide. This includes evaluating the impact of interventions and sharing successful case studies to inform future initiatives.
- Prioritize Equity in Education Policies: Addressing the digital divide requires a systemic approach. Education policies should prioritize equity, ensuring that every student has access to quality technology resources and the necessary support to utilize them effectively. This includes allocating adequate funding, designing inclusive curriculum frameworks, and providing professional development opportunities for educators to enhance their digital pedagogy skills.

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DIGITAL LITERACY: ADDRESSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE, THREATS AND PROMOTING DIGITAL LITERACY PROGRAMS BY LIBRARIANS FOR SERVICE DELIVERY

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Abstract

This research study examined digital literacy: addressing the digital divide, threats, and promoting digital literacy programs by librarians for service delivery in the Federal University of Lafia Library. The objectives of this study are to identify the level of digital literacy skills of librarians in FULafia libraries, determine the level of digital competency of librarians in FULafia libraries and identify the challenges of maximum use of digital devices by librarians in FULafia libraries in North- Central, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was used and questionnaire was deployed to gather the required data for the study. One hundred and thirteen copies of the questionnaires were distributed based on the population of the respondents. However, 104 copies of the questionnaires were returned. Findings were based on statistical analysis, percentages, frequency counts, means, tables, and charts. The results indicate that librarians possess high level of digital skills and digital competency required for using information resources that enhance the specificity of searched and retrieved information from the digital environment relative to their needs or assignment. It was also reported that most of the FULafia use smartphones to access electronic resources in their library. The study also revealed that majority of the librarians at high extent agreed to the use of ERIC databases with mean score ($\bar{X} = 4.0$), Science Direct ($\bar{X} = 3.0$), EBSCOHost ($\bar{X} = 3.1$), Agora ($\bar{X} = 3.2$), GOALI ($\bar{X} = 3.0$), and HINARI ($\bar{X} = 2.6$). The major challenges encountered by maximum use of electronic resources is the volume of irrelevant information ($\bar{X} = 3.7$), lack of skills/ productivity in information search ($\bar{X} = 3.4$), information resources mismanagement ($\bar{X} = 3.4$) by the librarians. It is therefore recommended that there should be internet accessibility/high internet bandwidth, librarians should possess adequate digital skills to use relevant databases, high internet access speed, adequate availability of data, accessibility of some electronic resources, availability of time, supporting resources, the volume of relevant information, availability of skills/ productivity in information search and adequate power supply available as ways of reducing challenges faced by maximum use of electronic resources.

Keywords: Digital literacy, digital divide, threats, digital literacy programs, librarians and service delivery

Introduction

In the 21st century, it is tough to remove or isolate ICT and its programs along with digital resources from the activities of libraries, especially in the way and manner they handle information and delivery processes. In the same vein of thought, Inskip (2018) opined that the library and information science profession noted that progress in the 21st century has become increasingly apparent and worried-some that the profession's role needs to adapt continually to the dynamic context caused by the impact of digitisation.

It is on this measure that the realisation of library and information science practitioners is to develop and prime themselves in readiness to effectively sustain the relevance and effectiveness of the profession for the future society and community of users. Obinyan & Enyi (2021) opined that it has become expedient for librarians worldwide to develop resilience through the acquisition of digital literacy skills to provide efficient and effective services and to use technology to interact.

Furthermore, all developing nations like Nigeria seriously need information for economic development. The development of information literacy and the digital environment has made it increasingly difficult to have the appropriate information to formulate sound policies for economic development. To mitigate this problem, libraries and their staff, who are the central institutions that provide improved information services to students, society, and general information seekers, will be proactive in this regard. To achieve these goals, librarians and media resource centres must improve their use of information and digital literacy skills to compete from a position of strength in a globalising world.

Digital Literacy: The term digital literacy was coined by Paul Gilster in 2017 as “the ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from a wide range of sources when presented via the computer device.” Yo (2021) described that digital literacy is a term mostly used interchangeably with digital fluency and competencies. It added that digital literacy means the availability of knowledge and skills necessary for students to safely and effectively use digital technologies and Internet resources. Bawden (2008) views “digital literacy as information literacy in the era of digital age” in line with Gilster's 1997 suggestion that digital literacy is literacy in the 21st century or digital age. By inference, digital literacy encompasses accessing, using and evaluating information from various electronic sources. Possessing digital literacy could imply librarians' ability to solve the broadest range of tasks associated with using electronic information resources to enhance service delivery and research for the profession's advancement. Drawing from the inspiration of Goodyear (2017) writing about students who will effectively use EIRs for study in terms of being savvy, library and information science professionals must necessarily remain savvy to be able to flawlessly service the information needs of modern information seekers operating in this new digital environment. It has become expedient for libraries to develop effective patronage through the acquisition of digital literacy skills to provide efficient and effective services and use technology to interact with the world around them. For the versatility of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) that is set to impact all facets of human endeavour in terms of professionalism, media resource centres that must answer their names in line with the 21st efficiency and standard rating are left with no options than to key into the dictates of the new technologies to scale up skills digital literacy for effect. Campbell (2006), cited by Emiri (2018), observes that “digital technology has permeated every aspect of our civilisation, particularly how we store and transmit recorded knowledge, historical records and a host of other means of communication including how we seek and gain access to digital information-bearing materials” under any condition be it in times of pandemic, insecurity, natural or artificial disaster.

Library and information service centres have witnessed increasing development due to the application of ICT to library services and operations; as such, the pattern of information services in libraries has improved (Obinyan & Enyi (2021). With changing technologies and their use, obtaining appropriate and reliable information through face-to-face, web-based applications, social networking sites, and instant messaging is increasingly becoming more complex, such that scholars have decided that becoming digitally literate and acquiring ancillary skills have become essential for libraries that want to be successful. Digital literacy is seen by Global Alliance to Monitor Learning [GAML] (2018) “as the attitude, interest and ability of an individual to electively and effectively make use of digital technology and communication tools to locate, manage, integrate, and evaluate information, construct new knowledge, create and communicate with others.” According to Shanana, Abuzar and Sadik (2014), digital literacy is “the ability to locate, organise, understand, evaluate, and create information using digital technology, i.e. the ability to understand and use digital technologies effectively for everyday tasks”. “The growing prominence of the internet and other digital environments as educational tools require research regarding learners' digital literacy” (Greene, 2014), as it is expected to impact on library service delivery positively. Janssen, Stoyanov, Ferrari, Punie, Pannekeet, and Sloep (2013) observe that

“digital competence is a conglomerate of knowledge, skills, and attitudes connected to various purposes (communication, creative expression, information management, personal development, etc.), domains (daily life, work, privacy & security, legal aspects), ... For university librarians and students it is necessary to have knowledge and skills in the field of digital technology to be able to use information effectively in its different forms (e-publications, online video, audio recordings, digital libraries, databases, etc.) as students and pupils need to be able to work critically with the information resources that they find for their learning activity and have the competencies to handle independently in resolving scientific issues in projects, studies, etc.”

Components of Digital Literacy

Digital literacy has identifiable components that interact to define levels of librarians' competence, literacy and skills.

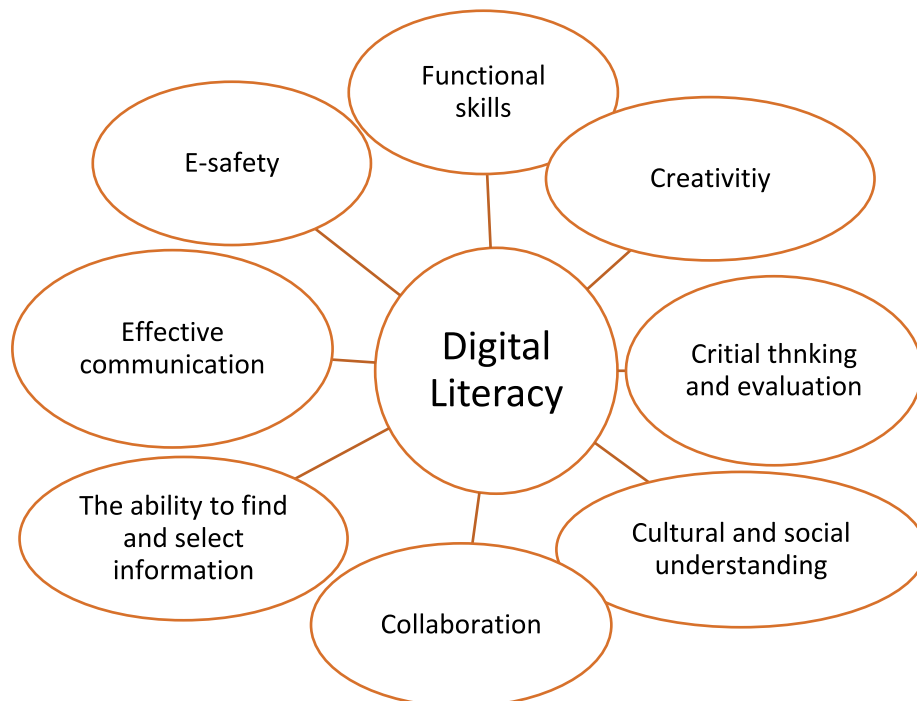


Figure 1: The Eight Components of Digital Literacy (Hague & Payton, 2010, p19)

Digital literacy is further seen to require critical thinking skills, an awareness of the standards of behaviours expected in online environments and an understanding of the shared social issues created by digital technologies (Promethean, 2015). The acquired ability by media resource centres to find and select information, communicate effectively, and maintain e-safety amidst functional cultural and social understanding using digital tools and knowledge, critical thinking and social engagement contributes to defining the strength and quality of librarians' digital literacy and their information resilience. The combination of digital tools and knowledge, critical thinking, and social engagement constitute the building blocks of the conceptual framework of digital literacy.

Digital Literacy Programs: Digital literacy programs are educational initiatives laid down to help individuals develop the skills and knowledge needed to use digital technologies effectively. Media houses, schools, libraries, community centres, or other organisations may offer these programs. The main goal of digital literacy programs is to provide one with the skills required to identify, access, evaluate, and use information from various digital sources and environments. These include learning how to operate a computer's device and internet, identify and evaluate information online, and use digital information tools and resources to communicate, send messages and collaborate. Digital literacy programs may also focus on media literacy, digital citizenship, online safety and electronic resources.

The range of e-resources in focus includes “databases, magazines, archives, theses, conference papers, government papers, scripts and monographs in an electronic form”. Besides, there are "MEDLINE, ScienceDirect, AGORA (Access to Global Online Research in Agriculture), HINARI, and OARE (Online Access to Research in the Environment)". The use of these online resources, according to Watt and Ibegbulam (2005), “greatly depends on the users' ability to navigate and cope with the varieties of electronic resources available in their fields,” and this makes managing information as a digital literacy component imperative for students to acquire and use to keep up with the diverse networks they are a part of. The necessity of all these stems from the fact that digital literacy has become one of the critical elements for developing knowledge societies within the 21st-century new digital literacy framework, where the web has exacted tremendous influence in changing the way learning is conducted in educational institutions.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. To determine the level of digital literacy skills of librarians in FULafia libraries in North-Central Nigeria.
2. To determine librarians' digital competency level in FULafia libraries in North-Central Nigeria.
3. To examine the digital devices used by librarians in accessing electronic resources in FULafia libraries in North-Central Nigeria.
4. To ascertain the librarian's perceived benefits of acquiring digital literacy skills and digital resources in FULafia libraries in North-Central Nigeria.
5. To examine the challenges of librarians' maximum use of digital devices in FULafia libraries in North-Central Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What is the librarians' level of digital literacy skills in FULafia libraries in North-Central Nigeria?
2. What are librarians' digital competency levels in FULafia libraries in North-Central Nigeria?
3. What do librarians use digital devices to access electronic resources in FULafia libraries in North-Central Nigeria?
4. What extent do librarians benefit from acquiring digital resources in FULafia libraries in North-Central, Nigeria?
5. What are the challenges of maximum use of digital devices by librarians in FULafia libraries in North-Central Nigeria?

Significance of the study

Generally, this study will undoubtedly add to the existing body of knowledge in library and information science. In addition, this work's findings are expected to benefit academic libraries, media resource centres (school libraries), university librarians, lecturers, students and researchers.

To the academic libraries, the findings will reveal the relevant information and digital skills available in the libraries and their impact on research productivity among users.

Also expected to benefit from the findings are media resource centres (school libraries), as the findings will give them an insight into the understanding of digital literacy skills that are not available in the school libraries. It will also enlighten librarians on their awareness of digital literacy skills. These will help the management and managers of the university libraries and the school libraries in their decision of choice and strategies on the pattern of digital skills to acquire in their libraries.

The lecturers and school teacher librarians who provide guidance and valuable information to the pupils and students will also find the findings of the work relevant as it will provide insight into the areas of challenges and remedies faced by the students regarding digital skills in libraries and school libraries (media resource centres) in carrying out research. This will enable them to adopt adequate measures that will guide the students in effectively using media resources.

Furthermore, researchers' deduction will be that the work will be relevant in conducting empirical and non-empirical studies related to this topic, which will be helpful particularly in reviewing related empirical studies.

Scope of the Study

This study is restricted to librarians from the Federal University of Lafia, Library Nasarawa State Nigeria. It will discuss in detail the level of digital literacy skills: addressing the digital divide, threats and promoting digital literacy programs by librarians for effective service. The respondents are professionals, paraprofessionals, and the library's supporting staff.

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was adopted in this study to investigate digital literacy skills: addressing the digital divide and threats and promoting digital literacy programs by librarians for service delivery in FULafia library Nasarawa State, Nigeria. There are seven (7) existing Department/Units with a total population of 113 library staff in the Federal University of Lafia library. No sampling technique was used, and the entire library staff was studied. Two experts in the Department of Library and Information Science validated the instrument at the Federal University of Lafia.

Data was collected using a close-ended questionnaire, and analysis was carried out using frequency counts, relative frequencies, means, tables, and charts.

Table 1: Study Population per Department/Units

Departments/ Units	Number of Questionnaires Distributed	Number of Questionnaire Copies Retrieved	Return Rate
Customer Service	30	28	93.3
Reference	9	9	100
E-Library	12	11	91.6
Serial	15	13	86.6
Resource Processing	20	18	90.0
Resource Development	17	15	88.2
Medical Library	10	10	100
Total	113	104	92.0

Table 1 presents a total number of one hundred and thirteen (113) copies of questionnaires administered to the library staff of the Federal University of Lafia library. In the customer service unit, (93.3%) were represent (30) copies of the instrument administered to the librarians. In the Reference unit, (100%) represent a total of (9) copies of the questionnaire administered. In the E-Library unit, (91.6%) was received from the (12) copies of the questionnaire administered. While in the Serial unit, (86.6%) was realized from the (12) copies administered. Also in Resources Processing unit, (90.0%) was also realized from the (20) copies administered. In the Resource Development unit, (88.2%) realized while in the Medicals unit, (100%) was also realized respectively.

Presentation and Interpretation of Results

This section contains the analysis and presentation of results regarding gender, marital status, and respondents' departments/units.

Table 2: The Demographic Data of the Respondents

Demographics of the Librarians	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	62	59.6
Female	42	40.4
Marital status		
Married	31	29.8
Single	73	70.2

Generally, it can be deduced that two genders with the marital status of the respondents were represented, and the result generated covers both male and female likewise married and single library staff opinion, where male staff out-numbered their female colleagues as well as the singles also out-numbered their married counterparts in FULafia library.

Presentation of the Respondents by Department/Units

As shown in Table 1 above, the librarians in the FULafia library are under study. Of the total of the librarians surveyed, majority of them were in customers service unit 28 (26.9%), 18 (17.3%) were in resource development unit, 15 (14.4%) were in resource processing unit, 13 (12.5%) were in serial unit, 11 (10.5%) were in E-library unit, 10 (9.6%) were in medical unit while 9 (8.6%) were in reference unit of the library.

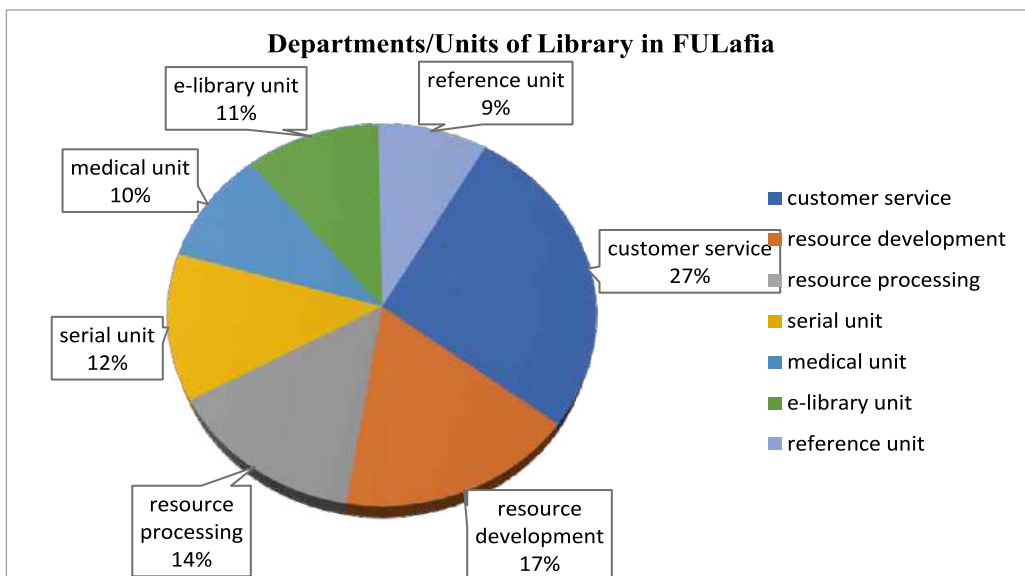


Figure 1: Level of Study of the Respondents (Librarians)

This Section is devoted to Responding to the Five Research Questions Drawn to drive this Study.

Research Question 1: What is the level of digital literacy skills of librarians in FULafia libraries in North-Central Nigeria?

Table 3: Digital Literacy Skills of FULafia Librarians

Digital Literacy Skills	VH	H	L	VL	\bar{X}	Decision
<i>Ability to identify key terms/concepts that describe digital skills</i>	19 (7.2%)	205 (77.9%)	18 (6.8%)	21 (8%)	2.8	Agreed
<i>Ability to determine different types/formats of potential sources of information, e.g. multimedia, databases, audios/videos, books)</i>	10 (3.8%)	253 (96.2%)	-	-	3.0	Agreed
<i>Ability to construct search strategies for locating information</i>	32 (12.2%)	60 (22.8%)	131 (49.8%)	40 (15.2%)	2.3	Disagreed
<i>Ability to differentiate between significant features of separate information resources on the web</i>	4 (1.5%)	251 (95.4%)	3 (1.1%)	5 (1.9%)	3.0	Agreed
<i>Ability to search and retrieve information digitally using specific operator</i>	52 (9.8%)	201 (76.4%)	10 (3.8%)	-	3.2	Agreed
<i>Ability to open, develop and send emails with attachments</i>	40 (15.2%)	214 (81.4%)	9 (3.4%)	-	3.1	Agreed
<i>Personal ability to evaluate internet resources through using digital skills</i>	77 (29.3%)	65 (24.7%)	44 (16.7%)	77 (29.3%)	2.5	Agreed
<i>Personal word processing skills and competencies</i>	52 (19.8%)	127 (48.3%)	52 (19.8%)	32 (12.2%)	2.8	Agreed
<i>Ability to rate the web search skills of others</i>	19 (7.2%)	205 (77.9%)	18 (6.8%)	21 (8%)	2.8	Agreed
<i>Ability to acquire computer literacy skills as touching the use of computers</i>	70 (26.6%)	83 (31.6%)	94 (35.7%)	16 (6.1%)	2.8	Agreed
<i>Internet literacy competence possessed (i.e. the ability to use the Internet effectively)</i>	32 (12.2%)	190 (72.2%)	31 (11.8%)	10 (3.8%)	2.7	Agreed
<i>Ability to use digital devices (i.e. the ability to use digital technology tools/devices)</i>	25 (9.5%)	146 (55.5%)	92 (35.0%)	-	2.7	Agreed
<i>Personal abilities to determine and respond to network issues relating to web-based activities, e.g. cyber safety, plagiarism, etc</i>	15 (5.7%)	80 (30.4%)	71 (27.0%)	97 (36.9%)	2.0	Disagreed

Key: VH= Very High; V= High; L= Low, and VL= Very Low

Table 3 above shows the responses by librarians in columns one and two as “Very High” and “High” It is significantly evident that the responding librarians possess a high level of digital skills required for using information resources that enhance the specificity of searched and retrieved information from the digital environment relative to their needs or assignment at hand and the ability to differentiate between significant features of separate information resources on the web. This is closely followed by the group that possesses the ability to create and send emails and, at the same time, work with attachments as indicated by the \bar{X} = 3.1. Table 3 also reveals that the librarians lack personal abilities to determine and respond to security issues relating to web-based activities ,e.g. cyber safety, plagiarism, etc (\bar{X} = 2.0), and in the ability to construct search strategies for locating needed information in a digital environment (\bar{X} = 2.3).

Research Question 2: What are librarians' digital competency levels in FULafia libraries in North-Central Nigeria?

Table 4: Level of Digital Competency of Librarians

Items Regarding Extent of Agreement or Disagreement in terms of the influence of digital resources	VH	H	L	VL	\bar{X}	Decision
Ability to differentiate between significant features of separate information resources on the web	11 (4.2%)	252 (95.8%)	-	-	3.0	Agreed
Personal abilities to determine and respond to network issues relating to web-based activities, e.g. cyber safety, plagiarism, etc	100 (38%)	163 (62%)	-	-	3.4	Agreed
Ability to use digital devices (i.e. the ability to use digital technology tools/devices)	89 (33.8%)	121 (46.0%)	53 (20.2%)	-	3.2	Agreed
Ability to acquire computer literacy skills as touching the use of computers	115 (43.7%)	148 (56.3%)	-	-	3.4	Agreed
Ability to rate the web search skills of others	92 (35%)	152 (57.8%)	19 (7.2%)	-	3.3	Agreed
Ability to construct search strategies for locating information	116 (44.1%)	147 (55.9%)	-	-	3.4	Agreed
Ability to open, develop and send emails with attachments	24 (9.1%)	239 (90.9%)	-	-	3.1	Agreed
Personal word processing skills and competencies	153 (58.2%)	102 (38.9%)	8 (3.0%)	-	3.5	Agreed
Internet literacy competence possessed (i.e. the ability to use the Internet effectively)	11 (4.2%)	252 (95.8%)	-	-	3.0	Agreed
Ability to search and retrieve information digitally using specific operator	11 (4.2%)	252 (95.8%)	-	-	3.0	Agreed

Key: VH = Very High; H = High; L = Low, and VL = Very Low

Table 4 indicates the librarians' level of digital competency in the FULafia library. To reveal this in proper perspectives, the items were presented in the table for the responding librarians to indicate their levels of digital competence on the subject matter. From the deduction in table 4, the first two columns are "Very High and High". The responding librarians possess a high level of digital competency required for using information resources that enhance the specificity of searched and retrieved information from the relative digital environment. Despite this, most of the responding librarians with an ($\bar{X} = 3.5$) agreed that improving their digital competence and literacy is essential.

Research Question 3: What librarians use digital devices to access electronic resources in FULafia libraries in North-Central Nigeria?

The figure below shows the various digital devices librarians use to access electronic resources and the corresponding relative frequencies.

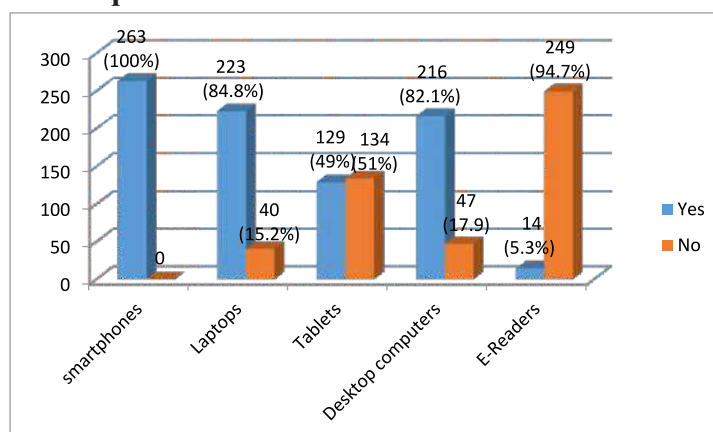


Figure 2: Digital Devices Used by Librarians in Accessing Electronic Resources

It is shown in Figure 2 that 263 (100%) of FULafia librarians use Smartphones to access electronic resources in their library as indicated while 0% indicated that they do not use Smartphones. The next highest number of digital devices commonly used by the librarians in FULafia libraries are Laptops 223 (84.8%), while 40 (15.2%) indicated that they do not use Laptops. It is also indicated that 216 (82.1%) of librarians in FULafia use Desktop Computers to access electronic resources in the library. In comparison, 47 (17.9%) indicate that they do not use electronic devices such as Desktops to access electronic information in the library. 129 (49.0%) of librarians agreed to use tablets to access electronic databases, while 134 (51.0%) indicated that they do not use tablets to access electronic resources. Main, 14 (5.3%) of librarians use E-Readers to access digital devices to access electronic resources, as indicated in the chart. In comparison, 249 (94.7%) say they do not use E-Readers to access electronic resources.

Research Question 4: What is the extent of librarians' benefits of acquiring digital resources in FULafia libraries in North-Central Nigeria?

Table 5: Extent of Librarians Benefits of Acquiring Digital Resources

S/N	Items	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	\bar{X}_E	Decision
1	ERIC	79 (30.0%)	127 (48.3%)	20 (14.1%)	37 (14.1%)	4.0	Agreed
2	PROQUEST	77 (29.3%)	7 (2.7%)	14 (5.3%)	165 (62.7%)	1.2	Disagreed
3	MBASE	62 (23.6%)	12 (4.6%)	32 (12.2%)	147 (55.9%)	1.8	Disagreed
4	EBSCOHost	132 (50.2%)	72 (27.4%)	40 (15.2%)	19 (7.2%)	3.1	Agreed
5	Science Direct	19 (7.2%)	189 (71.9%)	49 (18.6%)	6 (2.3%)	3.0	Agreed
6	AGORA	26 (9.9%)	154 (58.6%)	51 (19.4%)	22 (8.4%)	3.2	Agreed
7	MEDICUS	14 (5.3%)	111 (42.2%)	78 (29.7%)	60 (22.8%)	1.6	Disagreed
8	GOALI	14 (5.3%)	67 (25.5%)	32 (12.2%)	127 (48.3%)	3.0	Agreed
9	OARE	22 (8.4%)	61 (23.2%)	115 (43.7%)	65 (24.7%)	2.0	Disagreed
10	HINARI	32 (12.2%)	114 (43.3%)	91 (34.6%)	26 (9.9%)	2.6	Agreed

Table 5 shows librarians' responses regarding the extent of librarians' benefits of acquiring digital resources. From the table, majority of the librarians at great extent agreed to the use of ERIC databases with mean score $\bar{X} = 4.0$, Science Direct ($\bar{X} = 3.0$), EBSCOHost ($\bar{X} = 3.1$), Agora ($\bar{X} = 3.2$), GOALI ($\bar{X} = 3.0$), and HINARI ($\bar{X} = 2.6$). To an extent, librarians use OARE ($\bar{X} = 2.0$), MEDICUS ($\bar{X} = 1.6$) and PROQUEST ($\bar{X} = 1.2$) in an insignificant manner.

Research Question 5: What are the challenges of maximum use of digital devices by librarians in FULafia libraries in North-Central Nigeria

Table 6: Challenges of Maximum Use of Electronic Resources by Librarians

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	Decision
1	Insensitivity to the use of computer devices	-	142 (54%)	121 (46%)	-	2.5	Agreed
2	Lack of skills/ productivity in information search	115 (43.7%)	148 (56.3%)	-	-	3.4	Agreed

3	Poor internet accessibility/low internet bandwidth	89 (33.8%)	174 (66.2%)	-	-	3.3	Agreed
4	High cost of data usage	12 (4.6%)	49 (54%)	142 (54%)	51 (19.4%)	2.0	Disagreed
5	Information resources mismanagement	124 (47.1%)	132 (50.2%)	7 (2.7%)	-	3.4	Agreed
6	Lack of digital skills to use relevant databases	44 (16.7%)	219 (82.3%)	-	-	3.2	Agreed
7	Inaccessibility of some electronic resources	72 (27.4%)	191 (72.6%)	-	-	3.3	Agreed
8	The volume of irrelevant information	217 (82.5%)	37 (14.1%)	9 (3.4%)	-	3.7	Agreed
9	<i>Limited time factor</i>	-	137 (52.1%)	37 (14.1%)	89 (33.8%)	2.2	Disagreed
10	<i>Slow internet access speed</i>	77 (29.3%)	120 (45.6%)	66 (25.1%)	-	3.0	Agreed
11	<i>Shortage of power supply</i>	188 (71.5%)	-	-	38 (14.4%)	3.0	Agreed
12	<i>Lack of supporting resources</i>	-	52 (19.8%)	159 (60.5%)	52 (19.8%)	2.0	Disagreed

Key: SA=Strongly Agreed, A= Agreed, D=Disagree and SD=Strongly Disagree

Table 6 above it shows that most of the challenges listed were strongly agreed such as volume of irrelevant information ($\bar{X} = 3.7$), Lack of skills/ productivity in information search ($\bar{X} = 3.4$), Information resources mismanagement $\bar{X} = 3.4$) among others by the librarians as limiting to their electronic resources use except for lack of supporting resources ($\bar{X} = 2.0$), high cost of data usage ($\bar{X} = 2.0$), limited time factor ($\bar{X} = 2.2$). Since this limiting factor is not among the digital literacy skills needed by the librarian for using information resources that enhance the specificity of searched and retrieved information from the digital environment relative to their needs or assignment at hand, it is therefore considered by the respondents to exert moderate influence on their service delivery to users.

Discussion of Findings

From a demographic point of view, the breakdown of the data reveals that the majority of the librarians were males, indicating that 62 (59.6%) of them were married, while 31 (29.8%) were married. The level of digital literacy skills of librarians, as supported by the associated means, as shown in Table 4 above, is appreciably high. The two significant areas where the respondents (librarians) recorded low digital capabilities were in personal abilities to determine and respond to network issues relating to web-based activities, e.g. cyber safety, plagiarism, etc. ($\bar{X} = 2.0$), and in the ability to construct search strategies for locating information needed in a digital environment. This finding is supported by Shopova's (2016) research outcome that pointed out university librarians' need for digital literacy skills to enable librarians to access electronic databases effectively. Also of interest to the study is the fact that ERIC ($\bar{X} = 4.0$), AGORA ($\bar{X} = 3.2$), EBSCOHost ($\bar{X} = 3.1$), Science Direct and GOALI ($\bar{X} = 3.0$) databases were considered as academic databases by the respondents (librarians) to have a significant perceived influence on their academic disciplines, while PROQUEST ($\bar{X} = 1.2$), MEDICUS ($\bar{X} = 1.6$), MBASE ($\bar{X} = 1.8$), and OARE ($\bar{X} = 2.0$) were of low perceived significance.

Further findings from the study revealed that 263 (100%) librarians use Smartphones, 163 (100%) use Laptops, 216 (82.1%) use Desktops Computers, 129 (49.0%) use Tablets and 14 (5.3%) librarians make use of E-Readers as their foremost digital devices in FULafia library to access electronic databases. This could, therefore, be substantiated by the findings of Khalid, Chin, and Haiten (2016), who state that: "the Portable Electronic Devices [PEDs] such as desktop computers, smartphones, laptops, tablets, etc. have become an integral part of the librarian in almost every area of the library as learning toolbox.

Another part of the findings reveals some challenges to librarians' maximum use of electronic databases in the FULafia library, as indicated in Table 6. Of all the barriers, the high cost of data usage (overbar cap $X = 2.0$), lack of supporting resources (overbar cap $X = 2.0$), limited time factor (overbar cap $X = 2.0$), and insensitivity to the use of computer devices ($\bar{X} = 2.5$) were not significant.

This, however, is in line with Chimah and Nwokocha (2016), who revealed that insufficient computers with internet facilities in libraries coupled with low power supply, lacked ICT skills, low internet connectivity, difficulties in finding relevant information, and inadequate IT infrastructure were the key barriers to access electronic resources. As supporting evidence, Barfi and Afful-Arthu (2018) pointed out "that limited time and lack of effective information retrieval skills are barriers to using ICT tools in accessing electronic resources."

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has critically explored the impact of digital literacy skills on librarians' use of electronic databases in the FULafia library. The study also revealed the challenges librarians face when using electronic resources. It is on this background that the following recommendations were put forward:

1. Librarians should develop the habit of acquiring the necessary digital literacy skills to effectively use electronic databases to access information in the library.
2. To this end, the study recommends, among other things, that the digital literacy skills of librarians should be facilitated and improved to keep the library 24-hour working.
3. In addition to regular subscriptions to library databases and improvements in regular electricity supply, proper ICT facilities should be made available to enhance internet connectivity and access to electronic resources in university libraries.

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DIGITAL LITERACY AND INCLUSION IN THE LIBRARY; A PERSPECTIVE FROM ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS IN RIVERS AND DELTA STATES.

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ABSTRACT

Digital literacy has to do with skills, knowledge, and behaviors that involve effective and efficient use of digital devices. Digital inclusion involves fostering the social inclusion of individuals who have been sidelined through a lack of access to technology and literacy. Library goals are to ensure information literacy and inclusion by providing access to digital devices and digital literacy programs. This paper seeks to explore digital literacy and inclusion from the perspective of Nigerian academic librarians in Rivers and Delta States. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The areas of the study were Rivers State and Delta State. The population of the study comprised all 26 academic librarians in the Donald Ekong Library, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, and Delta State University of Science and Technology Library, Ozoro, Delta State. Census sampling was used to select all the respondents for the study. The questionnaire was the research instrument used for data collection. Data collected was analyzed using mean scores and 2.50 was used as the benchmark. The study's major findings show that academic librarians in Rivers State possess digital literacy skills. The respondents also agree that their libraries were digitally inclusive through the provision of free internet access and digital rental services for users. The study revealed that the high cost of maintaining digital devices and internet connectivity were major barriers to digital literacy and inclusion. Based on the findings, the study recommends that library management should provide improved funding for staff digital literacy training and there should be provision of alternative sources of power for digital devices.

KEYWORDS: digital literacy, digital inclusion, academic librarians, library, digital resources

Introduction

Universal access to information envisages the accessibility and usability of information resources to all regardless of their disabilities, social status, gender, age, context, etc. (Queir os *et al.* 2015). These ideals are enshrined in international treaties and conventions as well as country-specific antidiscrimination laws. For instance, the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights frames access to information as part of human rights. Digital literacy encompasses the skills needed to navigate the vast online landscape effectively, from accessing information to critically evaluating its credibility. Libraries play a vital role in democratizing access to technology and knowledge, ensuring that all community members have the opportunity to develop essential digital skills.

According to Ofilli, (2017), a digitally literate person should have the knowledge and skills to use traditional computers, such as desktop PCs and laptops - computer literacy, he should be able to analyze facts to form accurate judgments- critically and objectively, he must have the ability to engage in online community meetings and social networks while in obedience to behavioral protocols, possess the capability to find, capture, disseminate and evaluate information. Such a person should have the capability to understand the emerging societal issues caused by the evolution of digital technologies and possess critical thinking skills. He should also possess a range of digital skills, know the basic principles of computing devices, and possess adequate skills in handling computer networks and the internet.

Libraries have a long record of working for all-inclusive information services. This service ethic can be exemplified by their longstanding tradition of acquiring audio and braille books for the benefit of users with visual impairments long before the introduction of anti-discrimination laws (Bertot *et al.*, 2015). However, the advent of digital technology and the production of information in electronic formats, coupled with the introduction of accessibility guidelines, have created a favourable ground for pursuing the ideals of all-inclusive information services (Beyene 2016).

Digital inclusion is not a new concept to libraries—they have been working as “digital inclusion and social inclusion actors” or “eInclusion intermediaries” along with others such as public Internet access points, non-governmental organizations, and social workers (Misuraca, Centeno, and Torrecillas 2014). Libraries' key roles include providing public access to computers, Internet connectivity, digital content, and digital literacy programs (Bertot et al. 2015). According to ITU (2019), “Digital inclusion means empowering people through Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)”. It also means the promotion of ICT accessibility and use for the social and economic development of people with specific needs, e.g. Persons with disabilities, women and girls, youths and children (ITU, 2019). Digital inclusion in academic libraries is essential to ensure that the different needs of information users are met.

Akidi and Oduagwu (2021); Onuoha and Chukwueke (2021) define the academic library as a library established, maintained, and administered by tertiary institutions such as universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, colleges of agriculture, and other mono-technics. The purpose of academic libraries is to foster teaching, learning, and community services. This they do through the provision of an array of information resources and library services. Some of the academic library services as given by Adegoke (2021) may include digital library services, virtual reference services, 'ask a librarian' services, adaptive learning services (ALS), referral services, current awareness services, knowledge creation and digital humanity services, inter-library lending services, data services, data consultation services, publishing support services, digital scholarship services, maker space services, reservation services, selective dissemination of information services, information resources lending services, translation services, photocopying services, and library instruction services. Others include indexing and abstracting, OPAC services, cataloging and classification, collection development, bindery, and Internet and e-mail services.

Libraries stand at the forefront of promoting digital literacy, assuming a pivotal role in equipping individuals with the skills necessary to navigate an ever-expanding digital landscape. Beyond their traditional role as repositories of books, libraries have metamorphosed into dynamic hubs of digital learning and access. In today's society, where proficiency in digital tools and information technology is essential, libraries serve as catalysts for bridging the digital divide. They offer free access to technology, internet connectivity, and educational programs tailored to diverse skill levels. By providing these resources and opportunities, libraries empower patrons to develop the digital literacy skills vital for success in the modern world. Through their dedication to digital inclusion and education, libraries emerge as indispensable support pillars, ensuring everyone has the means to thrive in an increasingly digital society.

In terms of digital literacy, there is also a need for librarians to address disintermediation through the wider use of computer analysts and other ICT personnel. Scholars (Odu & Omosigho, 2017) have identified several factors that hinder academic librarians from effective use of their digital literacy skills on their job as follows; inadequate information and communication technology infrastructures and efficient online access, lack of in-depth digital skills plus information searching skills among library staff and the users, lack of adequate digital skills among staff and users, low basic information literacy levels in the population and prohibitive access of internet in developing countries, constant power failure, weak internet network, high workload in the office and shortage of time on the librarians.

A look into related literature reveals that libraries have largely focused on expanding physical access to digital technologies and promoting digital literacy (Seale, Draffan, and Wald 2010). However, it is evident that people can be privileged in terms of access and skills, but remain digitally excluded for different reasons. For instance, video content may exclude people with hearing impairment if subtitles are not included. Similarly, blind people may not be able to access digital text that cannot be read by screen reader technologies. In such cases, digital inclusion may need to go beyond access and skills to address participation and usage (Jaeger et al. 2012). This paper seeks to explore digital literacy and inclusion from the perspective of Nigerian academic librarians.

Statement of the problem

Information proliferation, globalization, and the advent of digital technology have made the world a global village where easy access to and use of digital technology have become very common. Information is now part of our everyday life and without information, society cannot function properly. Digital inclusion is a strategy pursued to foster the social inclusion of those who have been side lined by the mainstream of information society due to a lack of access to digital technologies and the skills to use them. Libraries have been working to close the gap by providing access to computers, the Internet, digital content, and digital literacy programs. Preliminary observation shows that librarians are yet to fully grasp digital literacy skills which will help them access information on the internet. This may be why there are few or no fully automated libraries in Nigeria.

However, research reveals a new type of divide where digitally competent people could be digitally excluded. This shows the need for a better conceptualization of access and literacy. Contemporary, academic librarians face the acquisition task of both print and e-resources, organization, dissemination, retrieval, and storage of the same resources for the use of the library clientele who are the potential users of the information resources in the library. This has constituted a problem in the provision, maintenance, and general management of information resources in many academic libraries all over the Nigerian nation. Therefore, given this scenario, the present study was necessitated.

Objectives of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine digital literacy and inclusion among academic librarians in the Rivers and Delta States. Specifically, the study will,

1. *Find out the digital literacy skills possessed by academic librarians.*
2. *Investigate how the librarians in academic libraries acquire their digital literacy skills.*
3. *Find out the level of digital inclusion in the libraries.*
4. *Find out the barriers to digital literacy and inclusion in libraries.*

Research questions

1. *What digital literacy skills are possessed by academic librarians?*
2. *How do academic librarians acquire digital literacy skills?*
3. *What is the level of digital inclusion in the libraries?*
4. *What are the barriers to digital literacy and inclusion in libraries?*

Literature review

Digital literacy builds upon the concept of the digital divide to indicate the ability not just to access digital infrastructure, but also to utilize it. Digital literacy skills are encapsulated in understanding, navigating, and using digital technologies and the Internet. As described by Yo, (2021), digital literacy is a term often used interchangeably with digital fluency and digital competencies. He added that digital literacy connotes the availability of knowledge and skills necessary for the safe and effective use of digital technologies and Internet resources by students.

Julien (2018) defines digital literacy from a pragmatic point of view stating that it is the set of skills, and knowledge attitude required to access digital information effectively, efficiently, and ethically. Harvin (2020) sees digital literacy as the ability to utilize ICTs to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, involving cognitive and technical skills. This literacy in the 4 clear words of Chan, et. al. (2017) encompasses critical thinking skills, information and communication technology skills in the areas of having the ability to read and interpret the meaning of a digital text, symbols, and graphs. Digital literacy can be regarded as an umbrella framework of skills, knowledge, and ethics (Okeji, et. al., 2020). Fakunle, et. al. (2022) describes a digitally literate person as someone with the ability to identify, access, manage, integrate, evaluate, analyse, and synthesize digital resources.

Fatiloru, Adesola, Hammed, and Adewumi (2017) indicate that from a social, cultural and economic point of view, libraries play a fundamental role in our society most especially in promoting digital literacy skills in this era of digital connectivity. They are the collectors and stewards of our heritage; organizers of the knowledge in the books they collect – adding value by cataloging, classifying, and describing them; and, as public institutions, ensuring equality of access for all citizens. Libraries take the knowledge of the past and present and lay it down for the future for meaningful societal development. According to Julien (2018), university libraries play very important roles in supporting the university's academic work and students' academic productivity. Without a library, the university's academic work will not be successful, because it is the university library that provides services that help in teaching, research, and learning.

Digital inclusion encompasses approaches to narrowing the digital divide and increasing digital literacy. Inclusion is a concept rooted in the acknowledgment that there are segments in a society that are excluded from mainstream society due to poverty, disability, race, or cultural differences (Alam and Imran 2015; Peters and Besley 2014). The goal is thus to ensure equal participation of all in social, economic, and community affairs of their society (Lloyd, Lipu, and Kennan 2016). With the advent of the information society and the growing role of technology in everyday life, access to technology and the skills to use it have become crucial for people to integrate into a new society, communicate effectively, understand the new society, and express their own cultural identity (Andrade and Doolin 2016).

Digital inclusion can reference any strategies to provide training, services, or opportunities designed to address the challenges of the digitally disadvantaged. Components of digital inclusion include economic and workforce development and training (IMLS, 2011). For individuals without access, digital inclusion is a means of gaining access to digital resources. Studies aligned with the positivist tradition attempted to measure the digital divide in society by analysing statistics related to poverty, income, broadband connectivity, public access points, and literacy (Misuraca, Centeno, and Torrecillas 2014).

Mohammadi (2016) examined digital literacy and its implications for Nigerian digital libraries. The study aimed to bring to light the essence of digital literacy in digital libraries, the consequence of not being digitally literate, and ways libraries can promote digital literacy. The study employed a qualitative approach as a research design. The researcher used online journal articles, and databases and looked at various studies carried out on digital literacy, the importance, of digital libraries, the implication of digital literacy in libraries, and ways libraries can promote digital literacies in their libraries with a focus on Nigeria and proffered solutions for tackling the menace of digital divide to digital libraries and to the society generally.

Research Methodology

The descriptive survey design was adopted for this research work. The study was conducted in Rivers and Delta State Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 26 practicing librarians drawn from the Donald Ekong Library, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, and Delta State University of Science and Technology Library, Ozoro. Census sampling was used to select all the respondents for the study. A questionnaire was designed for data collection. Out of the 26 questionnaires, 23 were returned. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Mean scores from 2.50 and above for any item, were considered to be acceptable while scores below 2.50 were regarded as non-acceptable.

Analysis and Discussion of Findings of the Study

Distribution of questionnaires and responses received

Table 1: Distribution of questionnaires sent and response received

User's Category	Donald Ekong Library, University of Port Harcourt	Delta State University of Science and Technology Library, Ozoro	No. of Questionnaires Sent	No. of Questionnaires received
Academic librarians	16	10	26	23

Table 1 indicates that Donald Ekong Library University of Port Harcourt has 16 academic librarians while Delta State University of Science and Technology Library, Ozoro has 10 academic librarians. The table also shows that a total of 26 questionnaires were sent to the academic librarians. Overall, out of the total sample of 26 questionnaires distributed, 23 questionnaires were returned which showed an 88% response rate.

Table 2: What digital literacy skills are possessed by academic librarians?

SN	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	x	Decision
1	I can use the Internet in search of information	22	3	0	0	3.9	Agree
2	I can use email to communicate information	20	5	0	0	3.8	Agree
3	I can use computer systems for information dissemination	19	6	0	0	3.8	Agree
4	I can conduct website evaluation	7	16	1	1	3.2	Agree
5	I can use different library software	13	10	2	0	3.4	Agree

Results from Table 2 show that librarians have digital literacy skills. As part of digital literacy skills, respondents agree they can use the internet for information search. This is closely followed by the ability to use email to communicate information and the ability to use computer systems for information dissemination. On the other hand, respondents agree that they are not highly skilled in conducting website evaluation with a low mean score of 3.2.

Results from the table align with Okeji *et al.* (2020) who revealed that academic librarians in private universities in Anambra State possessed digital literacy skills. Also, these findings support that of Emiri (2017) who found e-mailing skills to be the most prominent digital literacy skills among subject librarians. The study agrees with Subaveerapandiyan, Sinha and Ugwulebo (2022) study on digital literacy skills among African libraries and information professionals which revealed that African librarians had digital literacy skills and these skills were effective in their daily lives.

Table 3: How do academic librarians acquire digital literacy skills?

SN	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	x	Decision
1	I have improved my digital literacy skills over time through my training and work	15	9	1	0	3.6	Agree
2	I sponsor myself to digital literacy training workshops	7	16	1	1	3.2	Agree
3	My institution provides adequate funds for staff training and sponsorship	4	9	9	3	2.6	Agree
4	My office organizes computer training for staff over time	7	11	5	2	2.9	Agree
5	I engage in private ICT tutorship and training	8	11	4	2	3.0	Agree
6	It is not easy for me to learn and practice using ICT gadgets	1	10	10	4	2.3	Disagree

Results from Table 3 show that all items showing how librarians acquire digital literacy skills were accepted by the respondents. I have improved my digital literacy skills over time through my training and work (item 1) was the highest item with a mean score of 3.6 by the respondents which is closely followed by I engaged in private ICT tutorship and training (item 5) with a mean score of 3.0. I sponsored myself to a digital literacy training workshop revealed a mean score of 3.2 and my institution providing adequate funds for staff training and sponsorship revealed a mean score 2.6. Respondents disagree that item 6 which state that it is not easy for me to learn and practise using ICT gadget hindered their knowledge of digital literacy skills. This finding agrees with Emiri, (2015) who revealed that librarians acquired digital literacy skills through colleague's assistance, trial and error, IT programs, self-sponsorship, and personal efforts.

Table 4: What is the level of digital inclusion in the libraries?

SN	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	x	Decision
1	My library offers digital rental services	19	5	1	0	3.7	Agree
2	My library provides free internet access for users	8	8	7	2	2.9	Agree
3	My library conducts technology literacy classes	5	8	11	1	2.7	Agree
4	My library provides information resources for users with special needs	5	13	6	1	2.9	Agree
5	My library conducts digital literacy training for users	2	14	7	2	2.6	Agree
6	My library provides information resources for civic, health, and employment needs	4	11	6	4	2.6	Agree

Results from Table 4 show that all the items were accepted by the respondents. The library provides free internet access for users was the highest with a mean score of 3.7 followed by the library providing free internet access for users and providing information resources for users with special needs tied with a mean score of 2.9. On the other hand, the library conducting digital literacy training for users had a low mean score of 2.6.

The findings agree with the Digital Inclusion and Framework Practises Report (2023) which revealed that libraries should provide digital support to users, digital device rentals, information communication technology training, and internet connectivity to users. The findings also agree with the Digital Empowerment and Inclusion Working Group Digital Inclusion Subgroup Report (2018) which agrees that libraries are providing digital inclusion through the introduction of broadband services to public library users.

Table 5: What are the barriers to digital literacy and inclusion in libraries?

SN	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	x	Decision
1	High cost of internet connectivity	15	7	2	1	3.4	Agree
2	Lack of policy on digital inclusion	2	6	12	5	2.2	Disagree
3	Power failure issues	9	12	4	0	3.2	Agree
4	High cost of maintaining digital devices like laptops, desktops and data cables	9	9	6	1	3.0	Agree
5	Financial constraints	14	6	3	2	3.3	Agree
6	Inadequate funding for trainings and workshops	12	9	3	1	3.3	Agree

Table 5 reveals that respondents agree that all the items were barriers to digital literacy and inclusion in libraries. The high cost of internet connectivity was the highest accepted item with a mean score of 3.4 closely followed by the high cost of maintaining digital devices like laptops, desktops, and data cables with a mean score of 3.0. Also, Inadequate funding for training and workshops with a mean score of 3.3, and power failure issues with a mean score of 3.2 were accepted as barriers to digital literacy and inclusion in libraries. On the other hand, respondents disagree that the lack of policy on digital inclusion was a barrier to digital literacy and inclusion in libraries.

Findings agree with Hamad, Al-Fadel, and Fakhouri (2021) who highlighted financial constraints as one of the major challenges that hinder the acquisition of digital literacy skills by subject librarians. The study also agrees with Odu and Omosigho (2017) which revealed that constant power failure and weak internet networks were barriers to digital literacy and inclusion in libraries.

Findings and Recommendations

The researcher observed the following about digital literacy and inclusion among academic librarians in Rivers and Delta State.

1. A total of 23 academic librarians from Donald Ekong Library, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State and Delta State University of Science and Technology Library, Ozoro participated in the study.
2. The majority of the respondents have digital literacy skills. Librarians agree that they can use computer systems for information dissemination and they can use email for information communication.
3. *It is observed that respondents have improved their digital literacy skills over time through training and their daily work activities. Respondents also agree they engage in private ICT tutorship and training to build their digital literacy skills.*
4. *Respondents agree that as part of digital inclusion, the library provides free internet access for users as well as information resources for users with special needs. The library also conducts digital rental services for users and provides information resources for the civic, health, and employment needs of its users.*

5. Respondents agree that the high cost of maintaining digital devices like laptops, desktops, and data cables was one of the barriers to barriers to digital literacy and inclusion. Also, the high cost of internet connectivity and inadequate funding for training and workshops were barriers to digital literacy and inclusion in the library.
6. The study recommends improved funding for staff digital literacy training. When librarians are trained in digital literacy, they will be able to cater to the needs of their teaming users.
7. The study recommends that library management should come up with a digital literacy and inclusion policy. This policy will guide the planning, design, and coordination of library activities to give room for all types of users in the library.
8. There should be provision for alternative sources of power for internet connectivity and digital equipment in the library to ensure optimal performance and round-the-clock usage. Due to the epileptic power situation, digital resources cannot function properly without a backup source of power.

Conclusion

Libraries are agents of social communication. They help to bridge the awareness and information gap among members of the society. Libraries and librarians as information/specialists and brokers have roles to play in bridging the digital divide and improving on digital inclusion for their clientele. To effectively accomplish this task, librarians must possess digital literacy skills. The host institution must ensure that academic librarians are equipped with the necessary skills to encourage digital literacy and inclusion in their libraries. Inclusion is a multifaceted concept difficult to interpret without context.

This paper attempted to explore this idea in the context of digital library environments. Libraries have been playing an important role in expanding access to digital resources. The level of competencies of the academic librarians will determine to a large extent how effectively they should be able to perform their duties and carry out routine jobs in the library. This paper focused on digital literacy and digital inclusion so as to explore it from the perspective of academic librarians and how to show how librarians are encouraging inclusivity. users with print disability.

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DIGITAL NATIVES VERSUS DIGITAL IMMIGRANTS: ADVOCACY FOR AN ALL-INCLUSIVE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT IN LIBRARIES OF THE 5TH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

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Abstract

This paper explores the evolving role of libraries as catalysts for digital inclusion in the 5th Industrial Revolution (5IR), utilizing a systematic literature review. The paper also examines how libraries have transformed into dynamic digital hubs that offer access to digital resources and technologies, promote digital literacy, and advocate for equitable access to information and technology. However, it examines the differences and characteristics between digital natives and digital Immigrants in libraries of the 5IR. In so doing, the paper highlights the importance of libraries in bridging the digital divide and empowering individuals to thrive in the digital age. It concludes with a call to action for libraries to prioritize digital inclusion efforts and emphasizes their role as crucial agents of change in building an inclusive digital society.

Keywords: Digital natives, digital Immigrants, digital environment, libraries, 5th industrial revolution, advocacy

Introduction

Amid the rapidly evolving digital landscape, the distinction between those who have grown up immersed in technology and those who have adapted to it later in life has become increasingly apparent. Coined as "digital natives" and "digital immigrants," these terms delineate two distinct groups navigating the complexities of the digital age. Digital natives are individuals who have been raised in an environment saturated with technology, seamlessly integrating it into their daily lives. Conversely, digital immigrants are those who have encountered digital technologies later in life, often facing challenges in adapting to this rapidly changing digital terrain.

Simultaneously, the world finds itself amidst the dawn of the 5th Industrial Revolution (5IR), characterized by the convergence of digital, physical, and biological domains, heralding transformative changes across various sectors. As technology continues to redefine societal norms and reshape economic landscapes, the role of libraries as inclusive spaces in the digital age has become increasingly paramount. Traditionally regarded as repositories of knowledge and gateways to information, libraries have evolved into dynamic hubs of digital literacy and access, catering to the diverse needs of their communities (Lim, 2019). In this context, advocating for an all-inclusive digital environment in libraries emerges as a pressing imperative, crucial for bridging the gap between digital natives and Immigrants in the 5IR. As society grapples with the implications of technological advancement, ensuring equitable access to digital resources and fostering digital literacy becomes imperative. By championing inclusivity within library spaces, we not only empower individuals to navigate the complexities of the digital realm but also foster a sense of belonging and community in an increasingly interconnected world. Thus, this paper endeavors to explore the multifaceted dimensions of digital inclusion within libraries, and underscore its pivotal role in shaping a more equitable and accessible digital future for all.

Understanding Digital Natives and Digital Immigrants

In the contemporary digital landscape, the terms "digital natives" and "digital immigrants" have emerged as pivotal descriptors of two distinct groups with varying levels of familiarity and adaptation to digital technologies. As noted by Kesharwani (2020), digital natives, often associated with younger generations, are individuals who have grown up surrounded by digital technologies from an early age. They are accustomed to navigating digital platforms, such as social media, smartphones, and the internet, as integral components of their daily lives. Several scholars such as Argardi and Alt (2020) and Kincl and Strach (2021) have identified some characteristics of digital natives. These include:

- ✓ **Native Fluency with Technology:** *Digital natives possess an innate fluency and comfort with technology. They seamlessly integrate digital devices and applications into their routines, utilizing them for communication, entertainment, education, and social interaction.*
- ✓ **Multitasking Abilities:** *Digital natives exhibit adept multitasking skills, often engaging with multiple digital devices or platforms simultaneously. This multitasking behavior reflects their ability to process information rapidly and adapt to the fast-paced nature of digital environments.*

- ✓ **Preference for Visual and Interactive Content:** Digital natives gravitate towards visual and interactive content formats, such as videos, images, and interactive websites. They value engaging and immersive digital experiences that cater to their preferences for instant gratification and sensory stimulation.
- ✓ **Informal Learning Practices:** Digital natives engage in informal learning practices facilitated by digital technologies, such as self-directed online research, video tutorials, and interactive educational platforms. They leverage digital resources to acquire new skills, knowledge, and information outside of traditional educational settings.

In contrast, digital immigrants refer to individuals who have adapted to digital technologies later in life, often due to societal or professional pressures. Safarov (2021) states that digital immigrants may belong to older generations or demographic groups that did not experience widespread digital adoption during their formative years. Chen et al. (2020) highlighted several characteristics of digital immigrants as discussed below:

- ✓ **Learning Curve with Technology:** Digital immigrants experience a learning curve when adapting to digital technologies, as they may lack the intuitive familiarity and fluency exhibited by digital natives. They may require additional time and support to navigate digital devices, software applications, and online platforms effectively.
- ✓ **Reliance on Traditional Communication Methods:** Digital immigrants may exhibit a preference for traditional communication methods, such as face-to-face interactions, phone calls, or written correspondence, over digital communication channels. They may perceive digital technologies as supplementary tools rather than primary modes of communication.
- ✓ **Caution and Skepticism:** Digital immigrants may approach digital technologies with caution and skepticism, particularly regarding issues of privacy, security, and trust. They may express concerns about the potential risks and drawbacks associated with digital platforms, such as data breaches, online scams, and misinformation.
- ✓ **Limited Exposure to Digital Culture:** Digital immigrants may have limited exposure to digital culture and online communities, resulting in gaps in their understanding of digital etiquette, norms, and trends. They may feel disconnected or alienated from digital spaces that are integral to the social and cultural fabric of contemporary society.

Despite the growing ubiquity of digital technologies, digital immigrants often face a myriad of challenges in adapting to the digital landscape. Some of the challenges as observed by Oriji and Torunarigha (2020) include:

- ✓ **Technological Literacy:** Digital immigrants may encounter difficulties in developing technological literacy and proficiency, particularly if they lack access to formal training or educational resources. They may struggle to grasp fundamental concepts related to digital devices, software applications, and internet navigation.
- ✓ **Digital Divide:** Digital immigrants may confront disparities in access to digital infrastructure and resources, exacerbating existing socioeconomic inequalities. Limited access to affordable internet connectivity, digital devices, and technical support services can hinder their ability to participate fully in the digital economy and society.
- ✓ **Cognitive Load:** Learning to navigate complex digital interfaces and software systems can impose cognitive load on digital immigrants, leading to feelings of frustration, overwhelm, and cognitive fatigue. They may experience difficulty in processing and retaining information, following step-by-step instructions, and troubleshooting technical issues.
- ✓ **Social and Cultural Barriers:** Digital immigrants may encounter social and cultural barriers in integrating into digital communities and online social networks. They may struggle to adapt to the informal communication styles, cultural norms, and social etiquettes prevalent in digital spaces, leading to feelings of social isolation or exclusion.

Given these, the characteristics of digital natives and digital immigrants are instrumental in elucidating the complexities of digital inclusion and the challenges faced by individuals in the digital age. While digital natives exhibit native fluency and comfort with technology, digital immigrants may encounter obstacles in adapting to digital technologies. Therefore, an attempt to address these challenges requires comprehensive efforts to promote digital literacy, equitable access to digital resources, and inclusive digital environments that cater to the diverse needs and experiences of all individuals in the digital age.

The Changing Role of Libraries in the 5IR

Libraries have long served as pillars of knowledge, providing access to information and resources to communities worldwide. However, in the era of the 5th Industrial Revolution (5IR), characterized by rapid

technological advancements and digital transformation, the role of libraries has evolved significantly. Today, libraries are not only repositories of books but also dynamic digital hubs that play a vital role in facilitating access to information and technology for all members of society (Klinger-Vidra et al., 2022). One of the most notable transformations in the role of libraries in the 5IR is their evolution into digital hubs. Libraries have embraced digital technologies to expand their offerings beyond physical collections of books and periodicals. They now provide access to a wealth of digital resources, including e-books, online databases, multimedia content, and educational software platforms (Shonfeld, 2020). These digital collections enable libraries to cater to diverse learning styles and preferences, offering users access to a vast array of information and knowledge at their fingertips.

According to Vergara-Rodríguez et al. (2022), digital literacy has emerged as a cornerstone of the modern library's mission in the 5IR. As technology becomes increasingly integrated into everyday life, the ability to navigate digital platforms, critically evaluate online information, and utilize digital tools effectively is essential for success in the digital age. Chao et al. (2021) note that libraries play a crucial role in promoting digital literacy by offering educational programs, workshops, and resources designed to equip individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in a digital society. From basic computer skills to advanced programming languages, libraries provide opportunities for lifelong learning and skill development that empower individuals to harness the full potential of digital technologies.

Furthermore, libraries serve as champions of equitable access to information and technology for all members of society (Zdjelar & Zajdela-Hrustek, 2021). In an age where access to digital resources can determine opportunities for education, employment, and civic engagement, libraries play a pivotal role in bridging the digital divide. Bagur-Femenias et al. (2020) indicate that libraries ensure that individuals from all socioeconomic backgrounds have the tools they need to participate fully in the digital economy and society by providing free or low-cost access to computers, internet connectivity, and digital resources. Libraries also serve as safe and inclusive spaces where individuals can access information and technology without fear of discrimination or exclusion, fostering a sense of community and belonging for all. Given the foregoing, the role of libraries in the 5IR has undergone a profound transformation, from traditional repositories of books to dynamic digital hubs that promote access to information and technology for all members of society.

Promoting Digital Inclusion in Libraries

In the digital age, access to information and technology is essential for full participation in society. Libraries have a critical role to play in promoting digital inclusion. Wang (2024) states that libraries can empower individuals to navigate the digital landscape and thrive in the digital age by providing equitable access to digital resources and technology, designing inclusive digital literacy programs, and addressing cultural and linguistic barriers. Additionally, Lim (2019) notes that equitable access to digital resources and technology is fundamental to digital inclusion. However, disparities in access to technology and internet connectivity persist, particularly among underserved communities. In so doing, libraries can bridge this digital divide by offering free or low-cost access to computers, internet connectivity, and digital resources (Wang & Si, 2024). By providing public access to computers, Wi-Fi hotspots, and digital lending programs, libraries ensure that individuals from all socioeconomic backgrounds have the tools they need to access information, pursue educational opportunities, and participate in the digital economy (Strover et al., 2020).

In addition to providing access, libraries play a crucial role in designing inclusive digital literacy programs that cater to the diverse needs and abilities of their communities. Frank et al. (2021) state that digital literacy encompasses a range of skills, including basic computer skills, internet navigation, information literacy, and critical thinking. Libraries can offer a variety of educational programs, workshops, and one-on-one support sessions to help individuals develop these skills. By tailoring programs to different learning styles and preferences, offering multilingual resources, and incorporating universal design principles, libraries can ensure that everyone has the opportunity to enhance their digital literacy and confidence in using technology.

Community engagement is key to reaching diverse populations and fostering digital inclusion. Libraries can engage with community members through outreach events, partnerships with local organizations, and participatory programming that reflects the interests and needs of the community. Panzarella (2020) mentions that libraries build trust, strengthen relationships, and ensure that digital inclusion efforts are relevant and responsive to the needs of the community via community feedback, involving community members in the planning and implementation of digital initiatives, and providing opportunities for collaboration and co-creation. Furthermore, Quan et al. (2021) state that addressing cultural and linguistic barriers is essential for promoting digital inclusion in diverse communities. Libraries can provide multilingual resources, offer language-specific digital literacy programs, and train staff to be culturally competent and sensitive to the needs of diverse populations (Strover et al., 2020). In so doing, libraries can break down barriers to digital access and foster a sense of belonging for all members of the community. It can also be noted that libraries can serve as catalysts for digital empowerment, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to fully participate in the digital age.

Bridging the Gap Between Digital Natives and Immigrants

In the digital age, the divide between digital natives, who grew up surrounded by technology, and digital immigrants, who adapted to digital technologies later in life, presents unique challenges and opportunities for promoting digital inclusion. Bridging this gap requires intentional efforts to create opportunities for intergenerational learning, facilitate mentorship and peer learning programs, and recognize and leverage the strengths of both groups in fostering digital inclusion. Panzerella (2020) notes that one effective strategy for bridging the gap between digital natives and immigrants is to create opportunities for intergenerational learning. Digital natives, who possess native fluency with technology, can share their knowledge and expertise with digital immigrants, who may be less familiar with digital technologies. Himayah and Hasan (2022) believe that intergenerational learning initiatives, such as workshops, seminars, and collaborative projects, provide a platform for digital natives and immigrants to come together, exchange ideas, and learn from each other's experiences. This is because intergenerational learning promotes empathy and reduces the stigma associated with digital literacy gaps through fostering mutual respect, understanding, and collaboration between different age groups.

Going forward, Igbinovia and Aiyebilehin (2023) opine that facilitating mentorship and peer learning programs is another effective approach to bridging the gap between digital natives and immigrants. Mentors, who are typically digital natives with advanced digital skills and knowledge, can provide guidance, support, and encouragement to digital immigrants as they navigate the complexities of digital technologies. Peer learning programs, where individuals learn from their peers in a collaborative and supportive environment, offer opportunities for digital natives and immigrants to learn from each other's strengths and perspectives. By fostering meaningful connections and relationships between mentors and mentees, and among peers, mentorship and peer learning programs empower individuals to build confidence, develop new skills, and overcome barriers to digital inclusion.

The need to recognize and leverage the strengths of both digital natives and immigrants is essential for fostering digital inclusion. Quan et al. (2021) submit that digital natives bring native fluency with technology, creativity, and adaptability to the table, while digital immigrants bring life experience, resilience, and diverse perspectives. By acknowledging and valuing the unique strengths and contributions of each group, libraries and other organizations can create inclusive environments that promote collaboration, innovation, and mutual learning. By fostering a culture of inclusivity and respect, where individuals feel valued and empowered to contribute their knowledge and skills, libraries can harness the collective strengths of digital natives and immigrants to advance digital inclusion efforts. In essence, libraries and other organizations can promote digital inclusion and empower individuals of all ages and backgrounds to thrive in the digital age.

Way Forward: Relevance of Advocacy Programmes for Digital Inclusion in Libraries

In an increasingly digital world, libraries play a vital role in promoting digital inclusion by providing access to information, technology, and digital literacy resources for all members of society. However, achieving digital inclusion requires more than just providing access to digital resources; it requires advocacy efforts aimed at raising awareness, addressing barriers, and promoting equitable access to technology and information. Advocacy programs for digital inclusion in libraries are crucial for ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to fully participate in the digital age. One of the key reasons why advocacy programs are relevant for digital inclusion in libraries is the persistent digital divide that exists in society. Despite the widespread availability of digital technologies, disparities in access to technology and digital literacy skills persist, particularly among underserved and marginalized communities. Advocacy programs can help raise awareness of these disparities and advocate for policies and initiatives aimed at bridging the digital divide. By highlighting the importance of digital inclusion and advocating for equitable access to technology and information, libraries can mobilize support and resources to address the root causes of digital inequality.

Advocacy programs also play a crucial role in addressing the diverse needs and barriers faced by different populations in accessing digital resources and technology. For example, individuals with disabilities may encounter barriers such as inaccessible websites or lack of assistive technology, while immigrants and refugees may face language and cultural barriers to accessing digital literacy resources. Advocacy programs can raise awareness of these unique challenges and advocate for solutions that address the specific needs of different populations. By advocating for inclusive design principles, multilingual resources, and culturally sensitive programming, libraries can ensure that digital inclusion efforts are accessible and responsive to the needs of all members of society.

Furthermore, advocacy programs are essential for promoting the value of digital literacy and lifelong learning in the digital age. Digital literacy skills are increasingly important for success in education, employment, and civic engagement, yet many individuals lack the skills and confidence to navigate digital technologies effectively. Advocacy programs can raise awareness of the importance of digital literacy and promote initiatives aimed at improving digital literacy skills for people of all ages and backgrounds. By advocating for funding, support, and collaboration with community partners, libraries can expand their digital literacy programs and reach more individuals in need of digital skills training.

In addition to raising awareness and addressing barriers, advocacy programs for digital inclusion in libraries are also important for building partnerships and fostering collaboration. Digital inclusion is a complex issue that requires coordinated efforts from libraries, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and other stakeholders. Advocacy programs can help build coalitions, leverage resources, and coordinate efforts to maximize impact and reach. By advocating for policy changes, funding opportunities, and strategic partnerships, libraries can amplify their impact and create lasting change in promoting digital inclusion.

Conclusion

In the 5th Industrial Revolution (5IR), libraries emerged as crucial catalysts for promoting digital inclusion and building an inclusive digital society. Throughout this paper, we have explored various aspects of the role of libraries in the digital age, including their evolution as digital hubs, their efforts to promote digital literacy, and their advocacy for equitable access to information and technology. As we conclude, let us recap the key points discussed and consider the significance of libraries' role in shaping a more inclusive digital future. Libraries have evolved from traditional repositories of books to dynamic digital hubs that provide access to a wealth of digital resources and technologies.

In the 5IR, libraries play a vital role in promoting digital literacy by offering educational programs, workshops, and resources designed to equip individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in a digital society. Moreover, libraries serve as champions of equitable access to information and technology, ensuring that everyone, regardless of socioeconomic background or digital proficiency, has the opportunity to access digital resources and participate fully in the digital economy and society. While projecting into the future, libraries must prioritize digital inclusion efforts in the 5IR. The rapid pace of technological advancement presents both opportunities and challenges for libraries, requiring them to adapt and innovate to meet the evolving needs of their communities. Libraries must continue to invest in digital literacy programs, expand access to digital resources and technology, and advocate for policies and initiatives aimed at bridging the digital divide. By prioritizing digital inclusion efforts, libraries can empower individuals to navigate the digital landscape with confidence, participate in lifelong learning opportunities, and fully engage in the digital economy and society.

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DIVERSITY FOR ALL ROUND INCLUSION IN A LIBRARY ASSOCIATION: THE ANAMBRA STATE CHAPTER STRATEGY

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Abstract

The organizations that practice diversity and inclusion will likely develop good working environment with full supports from their members. The concept of diversity is becoming a center stage even within the library sector and library associations. There seems to be scanty studies that showcase the library association's enablement for diversity among their members in Nigeria. This study, therefore, examined the areas of diversity in NLA Anambra State Chapter. It also looked at the impact, satisfaction and the challenges of diversity in NLA Anambra State Chapter. It was a mixed research design with qualitative study. It has a population of thirty five members from NLA Anambra State Chapter. Interactive session and interview were used for data collection. The results were presented in simple frequencies and percentages, logical framework analysis and narrative formats. It was discovered that NLA Anambra State Chapter created areas of diversity through collaboration, library activities and capacity building, thereby enabling diversity of human resources and library engagements. The impacts of diversity included connection, innovations, facilitations, competencies, visibility among others. All the participants are satisfied with the diversity and inclusion of members from all library sectors and geographical locations. However, challenges included time, sheer refusal to join by some members, among others. The study concluded that library associations must set the pace for diversity and take actions in achieving it for good result and best practices. It was recommended that library associations should enhance diversity and inclusion and regularly evaluate their actions for more effective actions.

Keywords: Diversity, inclusion, library, library activities, library association

Introduction

Over the years, library associations have been taking actions in innovating strategies that enhance members development. Some of these strategies are collaborations, adopting new trends, re-strategizing engagements and upskilling of members. The library leaders have also initiated activities outside the core library areas to incorporate new learning, new narratives, global trend and new strategies for invigorated information services. Even in the LIS education sector, curriculum has embraced diversity to offer new opportunities to career ready students in developing their potential and not to become stereotype professionals (Sahlberg & Cobbold, 2021). Thus, the term diversity seeps in to wrap and integrate the ideas of equity and inclusion.

Diversity is an aspect of extending the roles and approaches to include a wider circle for social justice. According to Cruz (2019) diversity is a cornerstone of the library profession. It is viewed as a critical factor that sustains members' supports and sustainability. The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) has recently announced a renewed emphasis on diversity and inclusion. Since a library association has members from different library sectors, geographical locations, tribe and ethnic groups, language and culture, belief and religion, physical attribution, it makes sense that diversity which integrates ideation is made to be inclusive for that longitudinal sustainability.

Diversity has impacts which are embedded in its different aspects. These are in the diversity of language, resources, services, human resources, engagements, gender, age and culture (Inegbedion, Sunday, Asaley, Lawal, & Adebajji, 2020). The impacts are to ensure that members understand the importance of connecting and building relations with other organizations other than the library sectors as well as participating in activities that build their personal development (Pont, 2017). Albeit it to say that diversity has two sides of a coin that benefits and challenges. However, the good things are that they generate increased awareness on the relevance of library profession and the many degrees of skills librarians possess. Clearly, diversity needs the participation of the people to accept and be convinced of the initiative. This is the only way they can take ownership and fully respond to its implementation in their areas of information services.

In Nigeria, diversity, equity and inclusion are discussed in the library sectors. However, there seems not to be many literature on Nigeria strategies on diversity. According to Inazu, Itsekor, Omonori, Olalere and Sulaiman (2021) the National Library of Nigeria has diversified workforce that cuts across age, gender, tribe, religion and political affiliations which is reflected in the branch system it runs across States. On the

contrary, another study on diversity, justice equity and inclusion seem not to exist in the Kwara State Library Board, Nigeria (Adeyemi, 2023).

In whatever case it appears, the Nigerian Library Association (NLA), Anambra State Chapter has existed for years under different leaders who have introduced various forms of collaboration and innovations to enhanced professional development. Although, strong indications for professional and personal development are applied, some members of the State Chapter seem to question the rationale in engaging in certain activities that do not speak “library” in their own understanding. While some members have strong sense of collaboration, others are hesitant in their participation which affect the diversity and inclusion for development. In NLA Anambra State Chapter, there are different library sectors that are situated in different parts of the state. Some are in the cities, towns and communities. The association tries to bring every member and every sector into the new realm to maintain full inclusion. These activities offer resources, support and sense of belonging. However. It is not very clear how members view the diversity in the association. This study evaluates the diversity for all round inclusion of members in a library association in Anambra State Chapter.

Statement of the problem

Diversity is a good concept that incorporates inclusion, equity and social justice. The mere fact that it is practiced in every association shows the successful delivery of actions. In a library association that has different levels of members with diverse status, library sectors, geographical locations, gender, language and culture, there ought to be inclusive participation of members in all activities for best practices. However, the members of the State Chapter have not been enjoined to state their feelings and analyses of the diversity of actions going on over the years. The output on the library activities, collaborations, impacts, satisfaction and challenges do not seem to give off total acceptance for the diversity. Thus, this study evaluated the diversity for all round inclusion in Anambra State Chapter.

Objectives

The general objectives were to investigate the areas of diversity and inclusion within the Anambra State Chapter. Specifically, the paper:

1. Identified the areas of diversity in Anambra State Chapter for professional development.
2. Examined the impact of diversity and inclusion of members in Anambra State Chapter for professional development.
3. Ascertained the satisfaction of the members on diversity and inclusion in Anambra State Chapter for professional development.
4. Identified the challenges of diversity and inclusion in Anambra State Chapter for professional development.

Literature review

Diversity is more than fulfilling a moral ground in extending a hand of fellowship for all without real effectiveness. It is meant to be intentional with super strategies. It has become a global necessity being adopted in all sectors. ALA (2024) stressed that diversity is an essential component of any civil society. Everyone can benefit from diversity, and diverse populations need to be supported so they can reach their full potential for themselves and their communities. No doubt, libraries need diversity to fully unleash their potentials and remain relevant. Anderson (2018) intoned that diversity also includes characteristics such as professional skills, working style, and life experiences. In other words, diversity includes the language, work ethics, behavioural traits, connections, collaborations, infrastructures and many more.

It is not an overstatement to state that libraries adopt diversities for enriched and effective information services. Just as policy statement, diversity policy indicates the readiness and willingness of libraries to allow diversity to thrive in their libraries for members well being. This is the reason many libraries and leaders are committing to enhancing diversity for best practices with public statements and actions (Bresnahan, 2022). Similarly, Maryland State Library (2024) noted that the standard code under "Standard 9. Cross-cultural leadership stated that library leaders shall influence, support, and encourage the creation of proactive processes that increase diversity skills; empower colleagues, co-workers, and constituents from diverse backgrounds; share information about diverse populations; and advocate for their concerns." Again, in a library statement on diversity in University of Toronto (2024), it stated that:

University of Toronto Libraries (UTL) is committed to creating a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment that supports learning, teaching, research and work. This commitment extends to everyone regardless of race, ethnic group, nationality, socioeconomic status, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, ability, language, religious affiliation, or age. The fulfillment

of the library's purpose depends upon an environment of acceptance and mutual respect. Everyone should be able to work, live, teach and learn in a University free from discrimination and harassment.

With this notion, it is easy to affirm that a strategic and visionary leader should be bold and intentional with open minds to change, create ideas, initiate and work with global perspectives (ALA, 2024). If these are adopted, they are likely to be stepped down by the local representative leaderships which will ensure total quality services to the people they serve. Again, diversity is the totality of what the professional stands for at any point, anytime and anywhere. What is required is the creation of inclusive information environment, equitable learning, representation and social justice (Ghalioungui, 2023). In other words, diversity is acknowledged and good leaders in library associations ought to adopt it even in the image making of public relations.

Importantly, library associations are viewed as the strong platform that position their members into assimilating the global trends and good practices. This is seen in IFLA's (2024) supports of [Management of Library Associations Section \(MLAS\) in collaboration with the New Professionals Special Interest Group \(NPSIG\) when announcing the first event in a new webinar series to empower new library. In March, 2024, the North American Region of the IFLA started with the first webinar out of the six webinars' courses of library associations in each Regional Divisions on fostering diversity within the library profession and leadership. Thus, a forward and visionary leaders in any association will always present opportunities and insights to include everyone for development.](#) In other words, every leader is a guide and an administrator by the virtue of his/her position. The indication is that leaders of library associations have the responsibility of ensuring that diversity, equity, inclusion, and [justice](#) are exercised within their organizations (Schwartz, 2021; Fife, Stephens, Lyons & Huang, 2021). With today's strategic leadership and global trend of the activities of library association, nothing stops the leaders from embracing the best practices for professional development.

Diversity is simply essential. It was observed that organizations that render diverse services and products are becoming more successful (Larsen, 2017). It brings awareness, behavioural changes, commitment (Dali, Bell & Valdes, 2021). There is also evidence of having new members registering with the associations and joining in the collaborative activities and other diversity areas, building their skills as well as developing their professional goals (Bresnahan, 2024). Thus, diversity in library and information is sine quo non to being relevance and strategic. But then with different mind sets and individual goals set by people, there are bounds to be challenges.

Even though diversity is a critical aspect of global practices, some people are still not very sure of its effectiveness in their organizations. Reports have also started that some leaders do not feel confident enough to adopt diversity while another report had it that some leaders do not take meaningful actions to support the diversity strategies laid out for more inclusive participation (McKenzie, 2021). The issue of policy is another criterion that may likely challenge diversity. Many organizations and institutions do not have policy on diversity (Soda, 2023; Tian & Huber, 2020). The study carried out by Bresnahan (2022) revealed that there were challenges around the emotional and invisible labor. These included logistics like the scheduling, planning, and facilitating effective and inclusive meetings. There were also frustration, stress, vulnerability of making the members to attend the inclusive activities. Perhaps the major challenge library association and leaders may be facing on embracing diversity is the that librarians are so unyielding. This demure attitude has made others to look down on the profession and the seemingly relevance of the professionals.

Methodology

This was a mixed method research design. It was a qualitative study that showcased the setting of diversity and inclusion in NLA Anambra State Chapter. The population consisted thirty five (35) members of Nigerian Library Association, Anambra State Chapter. The instruments for data collection were interactive discussion and interview. The interactive discussion took place in Awka during the quarterly meeting of the NLA Anambra State Chapter in March, 20224. The interviews were held at different times in the month of March with some members who participated in different NLA activities. All the responses were documented and collated for analysis. The data were presented in simple frequencies and percentages, logical framework analysis (LFA) and narrative formats. Research question 3 was presented in simple frequencies and percentages while research question 1 was presented in LFA and research questions 2 and 4 were presented in narrative formats following the interview sessions.

Results

Table 1: Characteristics of the respondents

S/N	Designations	Participants		Sex			
		F	%	M	%	F	%
1.	Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka	15	43	1	3	14	40
2.	Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Igbariam	10	28	2	6	8	22
3.	Paul University Awka	1	3	-	-	1	3
4.	Federal Polytechnic Oko	2	6	1	3	1	3
5.	Federal College of Education (Technica)l Umunze	1	3	-	-	1	3
6.	Government Library	1	3	-	-	1	3
7.	Anambra State Library Board	4	11	-	-	4	11
8.	University on the Niger	1	3	1	3	-	-
	Total	35	100	5	15	30	85

The Table shows the designation of the respondents at the interactive session. It shows that members from 8 institutions/libraries were represented at the discussion. There was a total of 35 respondents with 30 (85%) being female while 5 (15%) were males. There was a combination of male and female as well as representations from the library sectors in Anambra state which are the Universities, Polytechnic, College of education, Library Board, Government library and a Private University. This shows the diversity in the institutions and different location that participated in the study. Therefore, there is a diversity of sex, human resources, geographical locations and library sectors in Anambra State Chapter.

Table 2: Areas of diversity in Anambra State Chapter for members inclusion

Table 2a: Diversity in collaboration

S/N	Diversity	Types of action	Collaborators	Type of organizations
1.	Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Collaboration for enhanced information engagement</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Anambra State ICT Agency</i> • <i>Climate Action Africa</i> • <i>Anambra State Library Board</i> • <i>Development Initiative with Technology & Empowerment</i> • <i>Wikimedia Anambra Network</i> 	Government Agency NGO Library Board NGO NGO

The Table shows the diversity in the collaborative activities with different collaborators with Anambra State agency ICT, non-government organizations and library Board. The collaborations opened new opportunities in engaging on climate issues, prison engagement and digital literacy. Members were given spaces for inclusive participation.

Table 2b: Diversity in library activities and inclusive locations

S/N	Diversity	Types of activity	Action taken	Location
2.	Library Activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Library week activities</i> 2. <i>International Literacy day</i> 3. <i>World Book and Copyright Day</i> 	<p>Activities took place simultaneously in all the public libraries and campuses in Anambra State</p> <p>NLA members joined the activities in their different zones and institutions while videos, reports, photos, were sent to the center and discussed in the general meetings</p>	Onitsha, Awka, Ithemboji, Amichi, Umunze, Igbariam, Uli, Oko, Nnewi

This Table shows how the library activities were decentralized to all the different sectors and locations with different activities. The NLA Anambra State Chapter organized activities to be inclusive in the campuses with members therein facilitating and engaging the community members. These activities were run simultaneously while reports are made at the center during the meeting.

Table 2c: Diversity in capacity building/New learning

S/N	Diversity	Types of capacity building	Action taken	Output
3.	Capacity building/New learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Wikipedia</i> 2. <i>Graphics design</i> 	Facilitation, training, open knowledge	<p>Copetency in Wikipedia</p> <p>Competency in graphic designs</p>

The Table shows diversity in learning other skills and competencies outside the core library services. NLA Anambra organized Wikipedia activities for the members as well as the graphics design to enhance new learning and skills. Therefore, the areas of diversity of activities in NLA Anambra state chapter opened spaces for human resources, collaborations, activities and capacity learning.

Impact of diversity and inclusion of members

From the interview, the followings were gathered:

A respondent from Unizik stated that:

“Diversity and inclusion make the members of the library association to participate more and give visibility to their work”

Another respondent disclosed that: “They bring new ideas and innovations to the library activities.”

“They enhance upskilling and learning something new in the area of Wikimedia and graphic designs.”

“They help them to connect and network with other professionals.”

A respondent also stated that: “Some of them have become competent in the graphic designing while some have received grants from Wikipedia to carry out events.”

Table 3: Satisfaction of the members on the diversity of areas of activity in NLA Anambra State Chapter

S/N	Item	Highly satisfied		Moderately satisfied		Low satisfied	Not satisfied
		F	%	F	%		
1.	General satisfaction level of the members	31	89	4	11	-	-
2.	Extension of activities to all the campuses and libraries and in senatorial zones	35	100	-	-	-	-
3.	Capacity building of members	32	91	3	9	-	-
4.	Inclusion of all members	35	100	-	-	-	-

There is a 100% highly satisfaction level of diversity on extension of library activities and engagements in the different campuses and senatorial zones and inclusion of members on library activities. There is also a 91% highly satisfaction level on capacity building and 89% highly satisfaction level of general satisfaction of the members on diversity and inclusion. However, 11% and 4% rated moderately on satisfaction extension of library activities and engagements in the different campuses and senatorial zones and on capacity building of the members. There were no responses for low and no satisfaction. This shows a massive satisfaction level of members of NLA Anambra State Chapter on diversity and inclusion in library activities.

Challenges of practicing diversity in Anambra State Chapter

During the Focus group discussion, the respondents stated that:

- “ The planning and facilitating of the activities for inclusive participation can be stressful and frustrating. That many colleagues and members still refuse to attend the planning meeting and the actual event even when the activities are done right on their campuses and in their own building.”
- “ Some members feel they are not cut out for such activities like the Wikipedia and they never attended for once.”
- “ Some feel that some activities are not in their area of interests or research and will not offer to support the activity.”
- “ Some members actually have loads of work piled on their desks and refuse to participate.”
- “ Some did not participate in some activities because the facilitators are their friends.”

Discussion

The results that members of the NLA Anambra State Chapter are positioned in different library schools and institutions, with different working style and experiences as well as having male and female show there are diversity in sex and different library services. In other words, this natural grouping in the state chapter indicates the need to plan for activities where all the institutions must be included without anyone being left behind. It agrees with the statement of Anderson (2018) that diversity includes characteristics such as professional skills, working style, and life experiences. Thus, joining the dots with strategic leadership on diversity will prove successful association.

The revelation that the areas of diversity in NLA Anambra state chapter covered collaboration, library activities and building capacities of the members indicate intentional lines of actions. This must be what Maryland State Library (2024) meant when it noted that library leaders shall influence, support, and encourage the creation of proactive processes that increase diversity skills; empower colleagues, co-workers, and constituents from diverse backgrounds; share information about diverse populations; and advocate for their concerns. Indeed, with creation of spaces for human resources inclusive information environment, equitable learning, representation and social justice which are hall marks of diversity (Ghalioungui, 2023). It is time library associations do the right thing for their members development.

So there are truly impacts of diversity and inclusion of members. With the testaments on the new growth with connection, visibility, skills and competencies and new ideas (Bresnahan, 2024), it shows that anyone that excludes himself from these enriching concept is truly not a professional. This is because professionals always upskills and remain relevant. It is time librarians come out from the shadows and take the front seats of knowledge and confidence in all areas of development. It is time they exhude satisfaction in this profession and show that they can master it all.

Inspite of the goodness of diversity, it has been revealed that some professionals will always play backward and would not compromise to new learning. It beats the mind that some people will exclude themselves from gaining new skills because the facilitators are not their allies or with the excuse that they are not cut out with certain activities. Perhaps the greatest challenge is the lack of policy on diversity (Soda, 2023; Tian & Huber, 2020) which might have made some members to waive it away without even coming closer. Diversity goes and will continue to garner more assessments.

Conclusion

The study has shown that library leaders and associations have critical roles to play in driving diversity among their memebers. It is not enough to ride on the fame and the popularity leadership offers, when there are no good practices to set the trail blazing. The modern leadership traits are about initiatives, strategies, equity, social justice and sustainability. Therefore, every act of including members in diverse activities must be upheld. Thus, this study concludes that Library Associations must set the pace for diversity and take actions in achieving it. The association must evaluate the impacts of their actions and levels of competences with diversity to know where to intensify activities. They must seek members' views and perceptions to enable good results. They must also work to eliminate challenges of diversity to the barest minimum for best practices.

Recommendation

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. *Professional organizattions should initiate areas of diversity for their members to foster inclusive participation and learning*
2. *There should be regular assessment of impacts of diversity to ensure that the right initiatives are taken for members effective development.*
3. *There is need to check for satifaction level of the members on the diversity. This is to enable effective strategies and inclusion.*
4. *Efforts should be made to resolve all challenges affecting diversity to enable full professional and personal development.*

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DIVERSITY IN WORKPLACE AND ADMINISTRATIVE INCLUSIVENESS AMONG LIBRARY STAFF IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

This study examined diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness among librarians in university libraries in Rivers State. Four objectives and its corresponding research questions guided the study. The study employed the descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised all the 79 librarians in three University Libraries in Rivers State (University of Port Harcourt Library, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Library, and Pamo University of Medical Science Library). Purposive sampling technique was used to select only professional and para-professional librarians in these libraries. Out of which 59 responses were collected and used as sample of the study. A four-point scale of strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree and disagree response type online questionnaire was used for data collection. Mean response of 2.5 and above was consider accepted while mean response below 2.5 was adjudged rejected. Data was analysed using mean and standard deviation while the hypothesis was tested using regression statistics. Findings of the study revealed that the factors militating against workplace diversity include poor communication, lack of training and lack of policy on diversity in the library. The researchers therefore recommend among others, that academic libraries should support and implement the different components of diversity such as age, gender, and marital status diversity in the library as to promote administrative inclusiveness among library staff. Management of academic library should formulate and implement policy on diversity as to promote inclusivity among her staff.

Key words: Diversity, Workplace, Administrative Inclusiveness, Library Staff, University Libraries.

Introduction

Individuals in the society are not of one stratum but differ in age, gender, educational, marital status, beliefs among others, the same is applicable to employees in the organization. An organization comprises of employees with diverse backgrounds and characteristics that makes them unique to deserve respect and equally treatment with others. No organization can thrive in an atmosphere of exclusion and bias, members of staff are supposed to be equally valued and accorded a sense of belonging and not to be administratively excluded from benefits or responsibilities that are due them, because of ethnicity, gender, age, marital status, family background, language and the likes.

The concept of diverse in the workplace refers to the co-existence of people from different social, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds within the organization. Diversity also signifies the differences between individuals on their attributes which indicate how the people distinguish from one another and demand diverse administrative practices (Kundu, 2003). A diverse workplace foster a stronger sense of belonging among those the underrepresented groups. When an employee is no longer the only woman, person of colour, person with a disability or the only married one, they may begin to feel more integrated into the team. This can lead to higher employee engagement and better productivity.

Workplace diversity as postulated by Dobbin, and Kalev, (2018) refers to the different characteristics employees have that make them unique which include gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, physical abilities and ideologies. Diversity also includes employees' life experiences, how they solve issues and socio-economic status. Diverse and inclusive work environments help employees feel

welcomed and valued and this boosts morale and enhance cohesion in workplace. Ding, & Riccucci, (2022) revealed that encouraging diversity in the workplace is crucial in fostering innovative ideas, creativity and harmonious working relationship among staff members, this gives them sense of respect and inclusivity.

Libraries are learning hubs that serves a pluralistic society where numerous groups coexist upholding their common causes, beliefs or cultural practices and also actively participate with other groups to improve the society. Therefore, library managers needs to promote diversity as to have all the staff included in the administration of the library. The library work environment should be all embracing, employing librarians and others relevant professionals of different background and learning especially in age, gender, marital status which is the content scope of this study.

Age diversity in the workplace is a significant aspect to consider, particularly in academic libraries where a blend of experience, fresh perspectives, and technological proficiency is vital for adaptation and growth. As highlighted by Dobbin and Kalev (2018), age-diverse team in the work place are more innovative and better equipped to solve complex problems, thus enhancing the library's ability to meet the evolving needs of its users. Recruiting and retaining staff members from different age groups, marital backgrounds fosters knowledge sharing, mentorship opportunities, and a create opportunities to understand other people and their unique differences.

Marital status diversity also has a vital role in the workplace dynamics, marriage influences the commitments, priorities and perceptions of employees. Therefore, accommodating different marital status such as married, single or divorced creates a supportive and respectful working atmosphere, helping workers separate work from their personal lives. Gender diversity is a critical factor in the creation of a balanced and fair working environment (Cook, and Glass, 2014).

Librarianship throughout the world should not be a gender-based career, due to fairness and justice, it should promote equitable opportunities for all irrespective of any differences. The academic libraries promoting individuals with diverse backgrounds, will be more positioned to meet it objectives of supporting teaching, learning, research and community service to her user community and beyond.

Statement of the Problem

Workplace diversity is the current trends in academic libraries because of its positive impact on entrenching good organizational culture and improved service delivery. Some of the consequences of poor workforce diversity management is unhealthy tensions between individuals of different culture, race, age, sexual orientation in the workplace and this in turn give rise to loss of productivity.

A number of studies have been conducted on workplace diversity in libraries but the problem still persist as some positions or responsibilities are still based on either age, gender, marital status among others and this has caused unhealthy rivalry and conflict in the organization. What can be done to promote workplace diversity in academic libraries? To find answers to this menace necessitated the study which examined diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness among library staff in academic libraries in Nigeria.

Research questions

1. What are the impacts of age diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness among library staff in academic libraries?
2. What are the effects of gender diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness among library staff in academic libraries?
3. How does marital status diversity in workplace impact on administrative inclusiveness among library staff in academic libraries?
4. What are the factors militating against diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness among library staff in academic libraries?

Objectives of the study

1. To ascertain the impact of age diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness among library staff in academic libraries.
2. To find out the effects of gender diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness among library staff in academic libraries.
3. To find out the impact of marital status diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness among library staff in academic libraries.
4. To ascertain the factors militating against diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness among library staff in academic libraries.

Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between age diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness among library staff in academic libraries.

Literature Review

Age diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness

Age diversity refers to the varieties in the age distribution of employees. It is literally impossible for an organization to have their personnel of the same age from the management to the auxiliaries' staff. This is something that ideally has to draw the attention of an organization because the disparities are a potential cause of conflicts and cohesion distraction. Ordinarily, age, particularly in workplaces, influences relational affiliations. As employees become older, their priorities related to work assignments also changed. Recent studies found that employees as per their age behave differently in the workplace and situation, hence there is need for the older to transfer their expertise, skills to the younger age through mentorship and training (Kundu, and Mor, 2017).

Qluseyi, Dalekan, Adekunle and Temi (2019) in their contribution added that having an age diverse environment produces and creates better working relationship and enhances social cohesion for all. However, Finn, (2015) in his study observed that a poorly managed age diversity workforce results in boring and uninspired ideas, conservative attitude towards strategies and flexibility to change, he added that a workforce with people of a particular age group has the potential of becoming obsolete if the experience attuned by the order generation is not passed down to younger professionals. Matz-costa, Carapinha & Pilt-catsouphe (2012) describes age as a very visible type of diversity which gives almost instant rise to discrimination.

Marital Status and Administrative Inclusiveness

There is increased engagement of people in their work responsibility which puts a strain in their dedication to having quality time with their families. Women especially, have lots of constraints in properly managing two aspects of their life, personals and professionals (Barak, 2013). There has been a link between work-family conflicts with the responsibilities of parents at home due to greater job demands (Dike, 2013). Padmanabhan and Magesh (2016) suggests that concentration required to run a family both financially and economically make married employees more motivated to earn more, thereby increasing their productivity of female employees in organization tend to decrease when they are the bread winners of the family. This is mainly because they have to concentrate on caring for their family and raising their children (Barak 2013). However concluded that unmarried employees perform better at workplace because they have little or no commitments to words their families compared to their married counterparts.

Gender and Administrative Inclusiveness

Gender is the description of masculinity or feminist employees in an organization which is usually referred to as sex distribution. (Oluseye et al, 2019). According to Kosseke, Lobel and Brown, (2015), workforce gender diversity requires equal treatment and acceptance of both males and females in a company, even though only few women within the working age bracket are in the workforce worldwide compared to the numbers of men.

Amalival (2015) study findings concluded that balanced gender diversity brings more balance to teams, thus creating less volatility and few conflicts. Gender in equality has always been seen as the most common diversity issue around the heard. Gender inequality at workforce results to loss in productivity. Discrimination of employees based on their gender reduces their morale, decreasing their motivation and self-esteem making it difficult for the person to work effectively. Patrick and kumar (2012) found that there were significant differences between man and women professionals towards strategies for increasing awareness about workplace diversity as women are more likely to work with diverse others to achieve goals.

Factors militating against diversity in workplace

Different factors affect diversity in different contexts in the workplace, these include organizational policies, management practices, perceived bias and others as opined by Zvinaiye, Lighton, and Emmanuel, (2020). Also, Ngina, (2014) pointed that there may be the quest to make workplace diversity possible if there is regular communication, aware creation and penalty for been unfair to others based on race, colour or beliefs in workplace. Murtala and Zam, (2020) pointed out that most time only a particular gender is expose to the right resources and opportunities or are allow into leadership positions in some workplaces which directed caused disaffection and conflict in the workplace.

Methodology

The study employed the descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised of all the 79 librarians in three University libraries in Rivers State (University of Port Harcourt Library, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Library, and Pamo University of Medical Science Library). Purposive sampling technique was used to select only 59 professional and para-professional librarians in these libraries as sample of the study. A four-point scale of 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' response type online questionnaire was used for data collection. Fifty-nine (59) responses were collected and used as sample for the study. Mean response of 2.5 and above was consider accepted while mean response below

2.5 was adjudged rejected. Data was analysed using mean and standard deviation while the hypothesis was tested using regression statistics.

Results

What are the impacts of age diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness among library staff in academic libraries?

Table 1: Age Diversity in work place and administrative inclusiveness among Library Staff in Academic Libraries

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Me an	SD	REMARK
1	Library staff of different ages are valued equally and fairly	20	28	8	3	2.7	0.28	Accepted
2	I experience lack of bonding with staff of different age group in the library.	7	28	8	16	2.1	0.23	Rejected
3	My institution provides equal opportunities for training and career development for staff with different age group in the library.	23	27	4	5	3.3	0.31	Accepted
4	I am not given the same level of attention/responsibilities because of my age	9	13	13	24	2.8	0.26	Accepted
	Grand mean					2.7		

Table 1 shows the responses on the impact of age diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness among library staff in academic libraries. Respondents accepted to item 1, 3 and 4 which states that library staff of different ages are valued equally and fairly, that they experience lack of bonding with staff of different age group in the library and that their institution provides equal opportunities for training and career development for staff with different age group in the library. However, respondents rejected item 2 which states that they experience lack of bonding with staff of different age group in the library. Table 1 therefore shows that all the items listed have mean values above the criterion mean of 2.5, more so, the grand mean (2.7) is greater than the criterion mean (2.5) shows a positive relationship between the variables.

What are the effects of gender diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness among library staff in academic libraries?

Table 2: Gender diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness among library staff in academic libraries

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	SD	REMARK
1	Fair treatment is given to all library staff whether they are male or female.	25	24	8	2	3.2	0.32	Accepted
2	There is no discrimination on gender basis during recruitment of library staff	13	39	4	3	3.0	0.31	Accepted
3	Gender diversity affect service delivery negatively in academic library	11	9	25	14	2.2	0.25	Accepted
4	There is no discrimination on gender basis in assigning responsibilities.	12	32	9	6	2.9	0.30	Accepted
	Grand mean					2.8		

Table 2 above, shows that respondents accepted to all the items on the table with mean scores of 3.2, 3.0, 2.2, and 2.9 respectively. However, with a grand mean of 2.8 which is greater than the criterion mean of 2.5 shows that there is a positive relationship between gender diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness in academic library.

What are the impact marital status diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness among Library Staff in Academic Libraries?

Table 3: Marital status diversity in work place and administrative inclusiveness among library staff in academic libraries

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	SD	REMARK
1	Recruitment in the library is not based on marital status	29	23	5	2	3.3	0.31	Accepted
2	Training opportunities in the library are not based on marital status	36	19	2	2	3.6	0.33	Accepted
3	Training opportunities in the library are not based on marital status	23	30	6	0	3.2	0.30	Accepted
4	Promotion in the library is not based on marital status.	36	19	4	0	3.5	0.32	Accepted
	Grand mean					3.4		

Table 3, shows that respondents accepted to all the items on the table with mean scores of 3.3, 3.6, 3.2, and 3.5 respectively. However, with a grand mean of 3.4 which is greater than the criterion mean of 2.5 means that there is a positive relationship between marital status diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness in academic library.

What are the factors militating against diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness among library staff in academic libraries?

Table 4: Factors militating against diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness among library staff in academic libraries

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	SD	REMARK
1	Poor communication	31	21	5	2	3.3	0.32	Accepted
2	Lack of policies	27	24	2	6	3.2	0.30	Accepted
3	Lack of training	25	22	5	7	2.6	0.27	Accepted
4	Librarians' bias	17	22	5	7	2.5	0.26	Accepted
	Grand mean					2.9		

Table 4, shows that respondents accepted to all the items with mean scores of 3.3, 3.2, 2.6 and 2.5 respectively. However, with grand mean of 2.9 which is greater than the criterion mean of 2.5 it means that poor communication, lack of policies, training, and bias among librarians are the factors militating against diversity in workplace diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness in academic library.

Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between age diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness among library staff in academic libraries.

Table 5: The relationship between age diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness among library staff in academic libraries

Correlations

		Age diversity	Administrative inclusiveness
Age diversity	Pearson Correlation	1	.871**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	59	59
Administrative inclusiveness	Pearson Correlation	.871**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	59	59

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 shows the relationship between age diversity and administrative inclusiveness among library staff in academic Libraries. The table shows a strong positive correlation coefficient of .871 and a p-value of 0.000. Testing the hypothesis at 0.05, the p-value is less than the alpha value of 0.05. This means that the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative which states that there is a positive relationship between age diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness among library staff in academic libraries is accepted.

Discussion of findings

Findings of the study revealed that there is positive relationship between age diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness among library staff in academic libraries. The result agrees with the position of Qluseyi, Dalekan, Adekunle and Temi (2019) in their contribution added that having an age diverse environment produces and creates better working relationship and enhances social cohesion for all. Also, Finn, (2015) assertions that an active age distribution is an asset that positively impact the organizational output is in line with the findings. Therefore, promoting age diversity is a proportionally related to administrative inclusiveness.

The finding of the study also shows that, there is a positive relationship between gender diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness among staff in academic libraries. The finding agrees with the findings of Amalival (2015) who revealed that balanced gender diversity brings more balance to a workplace team, thus creating less volatility and few conflicts. Gender in equality has always been seen as the most common diversity issue around the workforce that results to loss in productivity.

On the marital status, the finding of the study shows that there is a positive relationship between marital status diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness in academic library. Dike (2013) holds that there is increased engagement of people in their work responsibility when there is no bias in composition of workplace administration. Also, Patrich and Kumar (2012) in a contrary view found that there were significant differences between man and women professionals towards strategies for increasing awareness about workplace diversity as women are more likely to work with diverse others to achieve goals. The finding is in agreement with Murtala and Zam (2020) who affirmed that placement and training in the academic library should not be based on relationship and family background as these are private lives of the employee and should not be brought into the workplace administration.

Finding shows that, poor communication, lack of policies, training, and bias among librarians are the factors militating against diversity in workplace diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness in academic library. The finding is in conformity of the finding of Ngina, (2014), it is also agreed with the discovery of Murtala and Zam, (2020) who in their studies revealed the challenges to workplace diversity to include lack of a spelt out organizational policies, management practices, perceived bias and poor communication

Testing the hypothesis at 0.05, the p-value is less than the alpha value of 0.05 level of significant shows that there is a positive relationship between age diversity in workplace and administrative inclusiveness among library staff in academic libraries.

Conclusion

Diversity in workplace is the co-existence of employee from different social, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds within the organization. It also implies the differences between individuals on their attributes which indicate how the people distinguish from one another and demand diverse administrative practices. Libraries as an information disseminating organization that is serving the needs of users from multicultural backgrounds demand staff of diverse perspective.

Recommendations

From the findings of the study the following are recommended:

1. Academic libraries should support and implement the different components of diversity such as age, gender, marital status diversity in the library as to promote administrative inclusiveness among library staff.

2. Management of academic library should formulate and implement policy on diversity as to promote inclusivity among her staff.
3. There should be effective communication and training in the library as to increase the level of awareness among staff on the idea, challenges and prospects of diversity and administrative inclusiveness in the library.
4. Academic libraries should discourage every form of bias in the library as to promote inclusiveness among staff.

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DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT FOR SERVICES DELIVERY IN THE LIBRARY OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITY LOKOJA LIBRARY, KOGI STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated diversity management for effective services delivery in the library federal university Lokoja, Kogi State Nigeria.. Four objectives and research questions were formatted respectively to guide the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted for this study, the population is librarians from universities libraries; questionnaire was used to gather the data for the study; data collected will be analysed descriptively using statistical tool. The findings of the study revealed that diversity management is perceived as vital tools for improving workplace; valuing staff, promoting qualified individuals, Staff inclusiveness, staff productivity, foster unity, promotes workflow, encourages collaborations and cultivate a sense of belonging all foster effective services delivery in the library of federal university Lokoja, Kogi State of Nigeria. In conclusion the study places emphases on the significance of embracing and leveraging staff diversity as a strategic asset for university libraries. By enforcing an environment that celebrates differences, promotes inclusivity, and provides an equal opportunity for staff to grow and develop. Recommendations Federal University Lokoja should develop and implement a complete diversity management policy and strategy; set up a diversity committee to oversee the implementation and conduct regular diversity and cultural sensitivity training programs for the University Library

Keywords: *Library, Diversity, staff Diversity, Diversity Management, effective Services Delivery, Library staff*

Introduction

Universities are institutions that employ people from all works of life and breeds with varying culture, gender, beliefs, language, intellectual capacities, capabilities and human capital resources lays the strength and foundation on which universities achieve their goals and objectives. Libraries are major organ of the university this is because of their fundamental role in promoting library services for the university community members through the provision of various services.

Hence, in attempt to achieve their roles they have to recruit staff from all areas of human endeavor. With equity, value and diverse background to enhance workflow and harmony toward achieving the goal of the university. Often times when the subject of diversity in workplace is discussed, emphasis are focus only on the positive and tend to ignore the negative impact on productivity and other hazard accompanied with it practice. It is important to note therefore, that workforce diversity is not an innovative subject it has long existed in organizations it could be traced in libraries in the United States of America (USA) as far back as 1920s, but it is a subtle subject that is not easily noticeable and are rarely discussed yet they exist (ALA, 2017).

The subject of diversity in the workplace is a fundamental value policy of the American Library Association (ALA) and its members (2018). Library profession recognizes the value of a diverse workforce in achieving this vision. With this understanding and experiences embrace multiple diversities like age, gender, ethnicity, physical ability, sexuality ((Martins, 2015; Inegbedion, Sunday, Asaley, Lawal, & Adebani, 2020; Fagbe et al, 2019). It further, advocates that libraries can continue to innovate and improve services and respond to the needs of the nation's changing communities. It is less discussed yet it is subtly in operation and there is less awareness.

A diverse campus leadership significantly contributes to cultural competencies, inclusive pedagogy, and fosters positive student interactions 2016 report of US Department of Education. Library Professional association recommends “encouraging the professional development of co-workers and fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession” (ALA, Professional Ethics, 2017). Diversity management has become critical and fundamental in fostering and maintaining a positive work environment.

This is achieved via promoting respect for individual value, and differences. Diversity management in organization is an important awaken that has rise the awareness stakeholders in recruitment and training of workforces to enhance workflow in order to achieve organizational goals and for their survival. This supports (Kung et al (2020) and Van der Walt & Du Plessis (2014) that posited that users flow more with library staff with whom their share common vales irrespective of the diversity.

Diversity management is perceived as the process which voluntary organization put in place to enhance greater inclusion of employers from various background into a formal and informal organization structure through deliberate policy and program (Harvey and Allod 2012; Lee and Nathan, 2011 and Ogbo2014 Cited in Osibanjo, 2020). It also, entails management of hetrogenous ethnic groups.

The purpose of diversity management is for acceptance in organizational performances and effective service delivery. In order to To promote the effective library services among library staff as a matter of fact diversity management has to be prioritized and valued as the greatest asset towards achieving effective services delivery. Diversity management is the ability to control, direct, organize staff in other to enhance smooth and quality service delivery and workflow with mutual understanding. In this regard, Therefore, Library staff diversity encompasses acceptance of cultural, race, ethnicity, gender group, intellectual capacity and capabilities with equity and value towards meeting work environment goals. Challenges of effective management of diversity in workplace could be attributed to some factors, such as lack of skills, initiative, value and equity for staff employee's individualistic behavior, ideologies and belief system (Nwokpoku et al 2017; Rahman, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

Diversity in the work environment is critical toward achieving work progress and organization advancement. This subject is gradually becoming an issue of concern globally and in Nigeria. This situation is worrisome arisen from global crisis, people no are no longer free or motivated to take up appointment or apply for job opportunities where vacancies abound, this could be attributed to fear of discrimination, tribalism, religious intolerance, cultural difference and many more. The work place is such accommodates people from all works of life irrespective of background provided they have the knowledge, skills and human capabilities and capacities for contributing to services delivery and advancement of the library or the work environment.

Some many studies abound on diversity in work places from public and academic libraries in various countries and mostly reported under representation as a concern but in the context of Nigeria there is paucity of literature. In work place today from experience, observation and interaction amongst library staff, they feel marginalized, not value, recognizes and even side line. Thus, this study seeks to explore more to gain insight on managing library staff diversity for effective services delivery in federal university Lokoja library, Kogi State Nigeria. Hence, it is the gap in Knowledge that this study seeks to cover and to the best of the researcher knowledge no work has been done in this regard from literature from the areas covered in managing library staff diversity for effective services delivery in federal university Lokoja library, Kogi State Nigeria..

Objective of the Study

- i. *Determine the impact of diversity management in improvement of workplace by library staff for effective service delivery in the library of federal university Lokoja, Kogi State Nigeria.*
- ii. *Examine measures taken by library staff to manage diversity for effective service delivery in the library of federal university Lokoja, Kogi State Nigeria..*
- iii. *Identify library programs that supports and promotes diversity for effective service delivery in the library of federal university Lokoja, Kogi State Nigeria..*
- iv. *Ascertain how diversity in workplace influence library staff for effective service delivery in the library of federal university Lokoja, Kogi State Nigeria.*
- v. *Identify factors militating against management of diversity for effective service delivery in the library of federal university Lokoja, Kogi State Nigeria.*

Research Questions

- i. *How does diversity management impact/improve workplace by library staff for effective service delivery in the library of federal university Lokoja, Kogi State Nigeria?*
- ii. *What measures can be taken by library staff to manage diversity in workplace for effective service*

delivery in federal university Lokoja library, Kogi State Nigeria?

- iii. *What library programs that supports and promotes diversity for effective service delivery in the library of federal university Lokoja, Kogi State Nigeria?*
- iv. *How does diversity in workplace enhances library staff for effective service delivery in the library of federal university Lokoja, Kogi State Nigeria?*
- v. *What are the factors militating against diversity management of diversity for effective service delivery in the library of federal university Lokoja, Kogi State Nigeria?*

Literature Review

Public Library Association (PLA's) (2021) conducted a study of Staff and Diversity Survey capture essential information about the people who empower the nation's libraries to thrive and efforts to ensure equitable service to our communities. The finding of the study reveals that libraries encountered significant challenges like persistent difficulties filling vacant positions and offering competitive salaries, racism and taking steps to counter its effects. It also shows that it has already begun, ALA and PLA will continue to work closely with our members and partners to continue to support and advocate for library workers, and to strive for libraries as more inclusive and accessible places.

Nilda Alexandra Sanchez-Rodriguez (2020) studied on in pursuit of diversity in the CUNY library profession: an effective approach to leadership in academic libraries This research explores equity, diversity, and inclusion within the library profession, with the intention of implementing strategic frameworks to attract, recruit, and retain underrepresented groups within the University. To spotlight areas of upward mobility within CUNY academic libraries, a CUNY-wide Library Workplace Climate survey on the perceptions of diversity, universal inclusion, and career progression was conducted. The scope of the survey study compares the different perspectives of CUNY librarians, full-time library classified paraprofessionals, and part-time classified staff to measure CUNY's commitment to addressing the diversity gap in the library profession. CUNY-wide, 141 library employees participated in a survey study to uncover professional development opportunities in support of career advancement and upward mobility. Nearly 2 in 5 African American/Black library staff-members are paraprofessionals, while 13.5% are faculty. A stark contrast to 3 in 5 or 64% CUNY library faculty, which identified as White/Caucasian. The findings reinforce the need for measures to maximize workplace diversity through support-staff mentoring, guidance, and recruitment. Workplace mentorship and career development—across all levels within CUNY libraries cultivate skills for a better work environment that can lead to promotion and successful plans for succession.

Inazu, I. Q., Itsekor, O. V. Omonori, A. Olalere, J. and Sulaiman, A. M. (2020), carried out a study on Managing Workforce Diversity in Nigerian Libraries they looked at various dimensions of workflow diversity consisting of age, gender, religion, background, ethics, education, subject specialization, and politics. Their views are in consonant with the current study for managing diversity of library staff for effective service delivery because of the various dimensions of diversity.

Methodology

The study adopts both quantitative method and descriptive survey design for this study, the population is made-up of 33 library staff. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data for this study, no sampling was done due to the manageable size. Hence, the entire population was used for the study. Data collected were analysed using frequency, percentage and mean with a criterion mean of 2.5. Statistical package for Social Science (SPSS) for the result.

Findings

Q1: How does diversity management impact/improve workplace in libraries for effective service delivery in the library of federal university Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria?

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Enhances workflow output	28	105	3.75	.441
Promotes unity amongst staff	28	100	3.57	.504
Promotes harmony for workflow	28	101	3.61	.497

Promotes and encourages peace and tolerance among staff	28	101	3.61	.497
It promotes respect amongst staff	28	104	3.71	.460
It promotes value and self worth amongst staff	28	98	3.50	.577
Help harness talents and potentials	28	101	3.61	.567
Encourages continuous innovations	28	98	3.50	.577
It promotes collaboration and networking	28	96	3.43	.504
Valid N (listwise)	28	CM	3.58	

Data from the above table revealed that diversity management as a viable tool for improving the workplace for effective service delivery in the library of Federal University Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria with mean values ranging from 3.43-3.75. Enhances workflow output emerged the strongest choice with a mean score of 3.75, while “It promotes respect amongst staff” came second choice of the respondents with mean score of 3.71, the rest of the items of the table were all accepted by the respondents as they all cross the criterion mean of 2.5.

Q2: What measures can be taken by libraries to manage diversity in workplace for effective service delivery in the library of federal university Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria?

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Value staff	28	100	3.57	.573
Prompt promotion of all qualified staff	28	99	3.54	.576
Staff inclusiveness in workplace activities	28	95	3.39	.629
Given staff equal opportunities to participate in decision making process	28	90	3.21	.738
Encourage staff mentorship	28	95	3.39	.567

Assign responsibilities to staff	28	93	3.32	.548
Encourage staff development program for all categories	28	95	3.39	.629
Avoid discrimination among staff	28	99	3.54	.508
Valid N (listwise)	28	CM	3.41	

The above table shows the responses from respondents revealed the measures taken by the library to manage diversity in workplace for effective service delivery in the library of federal university Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria is accepted with means response of (3.54-3.57) with the cumulative value of 3.41 shows the level of acceptance. Respondents select “Value staff” (3.57) as the best measure taken by libraries to manage diversity in workplace for effective service delivery while “Given staff equal opportunities to participate in decision making process” was the least accepted. All other items were accepted.

Q3. What library programs that supports and promotes diversity for effective service delivery in the library of federal university Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria?

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Conference sponsorship for all staff categories	28	97	3.46	.576
Scholarship for all qualified irrespective of status	28	99	3.54	.576
Workshop	28	97	3.46	.637
Mentorship opportunities	28	98	3.50	.509
Rewarding staff effort	28	95	3.39	.629
Staff training and development	28	100	3.57	.573
Valid N (listwise)	28	CM	3.48	

The above table shows the responses from respondents revealed that the Staff training and development (3.57) and Scholarship for all qualified irrespective of status (3.54) with a cumulative means of 3.48 is highly accepted as measures taken by the library to promote and manage staff diversity in workplace for effective service delivery in the library of federal university Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria.

Q4. How does diversity in workplace enhances library staff for effective service delivery in the library of federal university Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria?

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Foster unity	28	104	3.71	.460
Promotes workflow	28	101	3.61	.497
Promotes productivity	28	100	3.57	.573
Encourages collaborations	28	98	3.50	.638
Encouraged inclusiveness	28	98	3.50	.577
Show sense of belonging	28	103	3.55	.572
Encourages workplace fulfillment	28	99	3.54	.508
Promotes trust and acceptability	28	97	3.46	.637
Foster peace and national unity	28	96	3.43	.573
Valid N (listwise)	28	CM	3.54	

The table above shows that the mean responses from respondents ranges from 3.46 - 3.43 with a cumulative means of 3.54 is moderately accepted as measures taken by the library to improve and manage staff diversity in workplace for effective service delivery in the library of federal university Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria. All other items on the table were al accepted by the respondents with a mean score above the criterion mean of 2.5

Q5. What are the factors militating against management of diversity in federal libraries for effective service delivery in the library of federal university Lokoja Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria?

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Retard work progress	28	103	3.68	.476
Attitudinal barrier	28	104	3.71	.460
Social isolation	28	101	3.61	.497
Cultural difference	28	99	3.54	.576
Religious sentiment	28	96	3.43	.634

Language barrier	28	94	3.36	.678
Gender expression	28	97	3.46	.637
Gender identity	28	92	3.29	.659
Physical barriers	28	98	3.50	.509
Educational barriers	28	93	3.32	.670
Valid N (listwise)	28	CM	3.49	

Data from the above table indicated that diversity management as criteria for improving the workplace for effective service delivery in Federal University Library Lokoja with mean values ranging from 3.71-3.29 is also moderately accepted. “Attitudinal barrier” has the highest response with a mean score 3.71, “Retard work Progress” also followed with a mean of 3.68. other items were also accepted by respondents.

Summary

The summary of findings for this study is established from research questions and data analysis research findings.

1. *Library Staff perceived that managing diversity will Enhance workflow output, promote unity, encourages peace and tolerance among staff enhance effective staff delivery in university library in federal university Lokoja library, Kogi State, Nigeria.*
2. *Staff strongly agree with research on the item identify as the measures that library can be taken to manage diversity in workplace for effective service delivery in federal university Lokoja library, Kogi State, Nigeria*
3. *Respondents believes that scholarship, workshops, mentorships among others are programs that encourages diversity for effective service delivery in federal university Lokoja library, Kogi State*
4. *Staff in agree that diversity in workplace enhances library staff productivity for effective service delivery in federal university Lokoja libraries in Kogi State Nigeria*
5. *Diversity management as measures for improving the workplace for effective service delivery in federal university Lokoja library, Kogi State, Nigeria.*

Discussions of findings

The finding from the study indicates that diversity management is perceived as a vital tool for improving the workplace and fostering effective service delivery in Federal University Lokoja Library. The responses from the respondents firmly agreed that managing diversity improves workflow output, promotes unity, encourages peace and tolerance among staff, thereby promoting effective service delivery in the library with mean score ranging from (3.43-3.75). this resonates with the assertions made by Acher (2016) the diversity management promotes productivity in organizations.

On Effectively managing diversity in the workplace, the responses from the respondents highlighted several measures the library can adopt, the measures includes valuing staff, promoting qualified individuals, fostering staff inclusiveness in workplace activities, providing equal opportunities for decision-making, encouraging staff mentorship, assigning responsibilities equitably, supporting staff development programs, and avoiding discrimination (cumulative mean of 3.41). these measures align with the recommendations of the American Library Association (ALA, 2017) on the promotion of professional development and fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession, also in the work of Inegbedion et al. (2020) on the management of diversity for organizational efficiency.

Responses from respondents shows that staff training and development programs, as well as scholarship opportunities for all qualified individual, are key programs that support and promote diversity for effective

service delivery (mean score of 3.57 and 3.54, respectively) the findings align with the recommendations of the ALA CORE (2021) on recruiting and developing a diverse workforce through training, mentorship, and scholarship opportunities.

However, the study also revealed that diversity in the workplace enhances the library staff productivity, foster unity, promotes workflow, encourages collaborations and cultivate a sense of belonging (cumulative mean of 3.54). these findings corroborate the assertions of Fagbe et al. (2019) and Kung and Fraser (2020) on the positive impact of diversity initiatives on staff productivity, collaboration and organizational efficiency.

Additionally, respondents identified some key factors that may militate against effective diversity management, such as attitudinal barriers, work progress retardation, social isolation, cultural differences, and language barriers (mean score ranging from 3.71 to 3.29). these challenges are in line with the observations of Nwokpoku et al. (2017). And Rahman (2019) on the barriers to diversity management, including attitudinal issues, cultural differences, and communication barriers.

Findings from the study reveals the importance of diversity management in improving the workplace and fostering effective service delivery in the university library. By enacting measures that places staff on high value, promote inclusiveness, provide equal opportunities and support professional development, libraries can harness the benefits of a diverse workforce and enhance overall productivity and service delivery.

Conclusion

The study places emphases on the significance of embracing and leveraging staff diversity as a strategic asset for university libraries. By enforcing an environment that celebrates differences, promotes inclusivity, and provides an equal opportunity for staff to grow and develop. With all mentioned, the library will not only improve on the delivery of services but also contribute to the bigger goals of creating a more just and equitable society.

Recommendation

Arising from the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

Federal University Lokoja should develop and implement a complete diversity management policy and strategy for the University Library, The policy should elucidate clearly the guidelines and initiatives for fostering and inclusive workplace, promoting equal opportunities and support professional development of all staff members, irrespective of the backgrounds or identities.

Federal University Lokoja should set up a diversity committee to oversee the implementation of the diversity management policy and initiative within the university library.

Federal University Lokoja should conduct regular diversity and cultural sensitivity training programs for all the library staff. The training should be aimed at raising awareness, challenging biases, and equipping employees with the necessary skills to navigate cultural differences, communicate effectively and build inclusive work relationship.

Federal University Lokoja library should review and revise recruitment and promotion practices to ensure fair and equitable opportunities for all qualified candidates.

Federal University Lokoja library should conduct regular assessments and gather feedback from staff members to evaluate the effectiveness of diversity management initiatives and identify areas for improvement

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EMBRACING INCLUSIVE AESTHETICS IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES: IMPLICATIONS FOR ENHANCING PATRONAGE AND READING CULTURE

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the embracing inclusive aesthetics in public libraries: implications for enhancing patronage and reading culture in diverse societies. The paper adopts review of related literature and observation in presenting arguments to support the enhancement of reading culture in Nigeria and similar diverse societies with library aesthetics, targeting excluded members of the community. It describes inclusion as a means of ensuring fair representation and integration of every group in the society in the development and programmes of the society. Diversity is the unique differences that characterises a society. The paper argues that public library aesthetics can help increase library patronage and improve the general reading culture and inclusiveness if strategies such as wide consultation of, and collaboration with community members, adaptation of indigenous designs, introduction of interactive and aesthetically rich library websites, among others are adopted. The implication of these excluded persons will be able to use the library more to attain inclusion. However, in the face of challenges such as poor consultation by government officials with librarians in designing libraries, lack of proper evaluation of library projects, inadequate training, budgetary deficiencies, the goal of inclusive library with aesthetics is at risk. This paper recommends extensive consultation among stakeholders, proper training of librarians on library aesthetics and proper to address the issues raised.

Keywords: Inclusive Aesthetics, Public Libraries, Reading Culture Diversity

Introduction

Naturally, the exponential growth of the volume of information resources in different formats, the rise of literacy, and the emergence of information society should be a great advantage for the attainment of societal development through an enlightened citizenry. They allow the society to harness the potentials of global communication technologies in accessing the various information and knowledge assets for self and communal goals attainment. However, the problem of illiteracy remains a major concern for information professionals in developing countries like Nigeria. Readership in Nigeria, despite the increasing digital penetration, is not commensurate with expectations. There were 103.0 million internet users in Nigeria in January 2024. Nigeria's internet penetration rate stood at 45.5 percent of the total population at the start of 2024. Kepios analysis indicates that internet users in Nigeria increased by 2.2 million (+2.2 percent) between January 2023 and January 2024 (Kemp, 2024). Yet, the poor reading culture in Nigeria is attributed to the lack of adequate awareness on its importance, inadequate library facilities, poor access to books and other reading factors among other factors (Kari, 2015).

Reading has sustained man for ages, helping teachers and learners that have never crossed paths to learn from experiences and build on learned experiences to teach even generation unborn by committing the learned experiences of man into writing that would be read and assimilated by future generations. The foundations of some of the landmark breakthroughs in research today, emanated from having read what scholars from the present and even the past had written and documented. Reading entails an encapsulating process which is integrative in nature, and which affects the reader's perceptual, cognitive, and affective domains, vital for everyday activities of being better informed, sharpening and shaping the mind, rational and objective reasoning leading to greatness in life (Oriogu, 2015).

The significance of reading and developing the appropriate mindset towards reading are limitless. Independently learning a skill, being taught a trade, combating a defective attitude or addiction, mastering a craft, or perfecting an art can all be facilitated by purposive reading. This is why Rossi (2017) proposed that

idiosyncratic variables like cognitive skills, efforts, willingness to study, among other factors help in enhancing academic performance. This will culminate in an overall improved human capital development for any nation. Yet, these massive potentials of reading have not been harnessed by members of the society due to poor reading culture. Reading culture is the process of building up positive reading attitude among people over a period of time. When an individual habitually and regularly reads books and other information materials that are not necessarily required for him to advance in his profession or career, he is said to have a reading culture (Dominic, 2015). Mohamed (2018) found that that learning technique, home-related aspects, study habits and physical resources have a strong positive relationship with the academic performance of students. Meanwhile, Istifanus (2021) argues that a reading society is a knowledge-based society, and by extension, a developed one. Reading therefore empowers both the students and those outside academic environment.

While reading is adjudged to be a ladder to greatness, developing the appropriate reading culture is fundamental to harnessing the potentials of reading. The information infrastructure provides several sources through which readers can assess knowledge assets such as books and other bibliographic items with human recorded knowledge. One of the critical components of the information infrastructure is the library. It is a social institution that selects, acquires, processes, organizes, retrieves and disseminates information in various formats to target group of users in the society. A library is invested with the function of acquiring information resources in various formats, processing information resources, organising them, storing the information resources and disseminating them through the process of making them available for users (Fashola, 2024). Oji and Habibu (2011) state that the *raison d'être* of public libraries are to serve as a pivot or fulcrum of reading and promoting of reading habit. The public libraries bring together books and other formats of literacy materials and the readers under the expert guidance of a certified librarian. Unfortunately, for years, Librarians, saddled with the responsibilities of managing libraries and delivering information services have decried the declining rate of readership in Nigeria. The current status of libraries, especially public libraries have not helped the situation either, as most of the public libraries are in deplorable state that cannot be of any significant attraction to readers.

The imbalance created by poor readership, occasioned by exclusion from social amenities like modern and contemporary libraries will only deepen the rot in the society. The case in excluded communities combating infrastructural deficiencies can only be imagined. Yet, the library community considers diversity to be a core value, where people of diverse backgrounds are factored into the service delivery of the library (Schonfield, & Sweeney, 2017). Okiilu and Otikeye (2016) lament that there is a declining trend in library usage all over the globe and hence an increase of library non-users. This portends grave and dire consequences for the discipline of librarianship on one hand, and national development on the other. Hence, it is essential to seek to address the problems of readership decline in Nigeria by embracing inclusive library aesthetics for enhanced readership in a culturally diverse nation like Nigeria.

Concept of Inclusion

Inclusion is the practice of including and accommodating people who often face discrimination and exclusion due to race, gender, ability, sexuality, or identity (Jagoo, 2024). It came about as a concept, in the face of growing complexities and diversity of the human society and inherent marginalization of several groups by the majority and the influential. It is the act or practice of including and accommodating people who have historically been excluded (because of their race, gender, sexuality, or ability) (Merriam Webster, 2024). Inclusion involves more than just making sure that people are represented in a group. Instead, it refers to how diversity is utilized to create healthy, fair, and equitable spaces that help people to feel included and respected (O'mara & Richter, 2011).

Historically, Inclusion as equality was presented, then, as a new space of politic and possibilities, an opportunity perhaps to create a democratic or even subversive world which offered the chance for disability and equality to be located within a new cultural framework (Hodkinson, 2011). Inclusion is a social construct with many sub-themes. It could be viewed from an education perspective as educational inclusion, from an economic perspective as financial inclusion, or from a technological angle as digital inclusion. In fact, people can be excluded from participating in general societal activities due to the nature of their occupation. According to the World Bank (2024), the disadvantage that leads to exclusion could be based on gender, age, location, occupation, race, ethnicity, religion, citizenship status, disability, and sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), among other factors. Irrespective of the perspective it is viewed from, inclusion is aimed at ensuring equal representation of the diversity in an immediate or the larger society.

The Public Library as an Inclusive Social Institution

The public library is one unique form of library. Babayi, Makintami and Tumba (2019) state that the public library is established to provide materials, which communicate experience and ideas from one generation to another and make them easily and freely available to all people. The public library is a center for information readily available to its users. It is established, supported and funded by the community, either through local, regional or national government or through some other community organizations.

Therefore, public library provides access to knowledge, information and works of imagination through a range of resources and services. It is equal available to all members of the community regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion, language, disability, employment status and educational attainment. According to Obizue and Obizue (2016) public library is a library that can be easily accessed by the general public and they share characteristics such as being generally supported by taxes usually local, though any level of government can and may contribute, they are governed by a board to serve the public interest, they are open to all, and every community member can access the collection, they are entirely voluntary in that no one is ever forced to use the services provided; and they provide basic services without charge.

According to Agim and Oraekwe (2019), the role of the public library is to make significant contributions to formal and informal education, including lifelong learning and various forms of literacy by providing facilities, resources and services designed to ensure access to relevant information in appropriate formats, language, content and contexts, ensure social inclusion and cohesion by providing access to information and knowledge to all women, men, and children. This critical access, when used by the disadvantaged—such as the poor, the elderly, the disabled, and the unemployed—forms the foundation of poverty reduction, since information poverty is often the root cause of economic poverty; preserve and promote cultural heritage and diversity and foster mutual understanding and respect among cultures and peoples; create citizen awareness and engender social values for democratic governance and traditions, by opening multiple windows to the world and its alternate possibilities through their collections, facilities and programmes; and harness information and knowledge for economic development through professional processing, storage and dissemination to stimulate innovation and human capacity for efficiency and productivity.

Library Aesthetics: Conceptual Definition and Importance

Library aesthetics has to do with the design and beauty of the library in a way that is attractive and appealing to the taste of library users. It consists of the interior and exterior library decoration, the painting and colour choice of the library building, signage, floor plans, furniture, art drawings, landscape, lightening, ventilation etc. (Usuka, Nwachukwu, & Nwachukwu, 2019). Oyedum (2012) is of the opinion that apart from the main duty of acquiring and preserving information materials, efforts are required in ensuring that the reading environment is encouraging and attractive for the utilization of library resources. Hence, library aesthetics plays a great role in fascinating the users to utilize information materials of the library and as such should be embedded not only on the library building, but also on the library physical environment or surrounding to encourage positive perception of users of the library in order to make use of the library more frequently for their information needs.

In library context, aesthetic facilities are those items in libraries that add to the beauty and attractiveness of library usage in terms of indoor and outdoor environment such as good landscaping, colour, interior decoration, lighting, ventilation, temperature and signage/direction (Ibrahim & Sakiyo, 2016). Aesthetics of the library is not limited to physical structures. Electronic structures such as the library's website and its interface are also involved. As such, users' satisfaction is enhanced when content and aesthetic features (such as user interface) on a library website reflect user viewpoint of usability (Pant, 2015). In the absence of good aesthetic design or layout, users get bored and at times find it difficult to locate information on the library website. Good aesthetic design is equally as important as the content quality, and this is because users lose interest in the library website when the design and layout fail to provide them with quick navigation tools to access the needed information. This position was buttressed by Rosy, who stressed that no matter how high-quality information a library website may contain, users stop using it once they reflected on it to be time-wasting (Rosy, 2019).

Library building aesthetics therefore refers to the beauty of the library environment with keen attention to the landscaping, lighting, ventilation and other attributes that makes the library appealing to the eyes (Esan & Ifijeh, 2023). Ig-Worlu (2021) revealed that aesthetics and functionality of the library building will significantly influence patronage by library users.

Importance of Reading Culture to Societal Development

According to Olasehinde, Akanmode, Alaiyemola, and Babatunde (2015) the reading culture is one of the valuable assets which boost human generative powers of thinking for new innovations and development of personal talents and natural endowments. Thus, reading in all its variety is vital to becoming better informed. It helps us to have a better understanding of ourselves as well as others. Leading world nations in Europe and America are proud of their endorsement of reading and see the high level of literacy in their society as being one of the major sources of their efficiency and growth. Without doubt, the economic, social and political health of our nation today depends on building literate citizens who are able to read widely and apply this practically for development. The development of Nigeria depends on the quality of its human resources.

Reading has been scientifically proven to have the power to improve the lives of individuals and communities. This suggests that the amount of time a community spends reading determines its existence and sustainability. In this instance, it is recommended that habitual reading be developed from the

individual to the community level (Danladi & Soko, 2018). Developing a good reading culture helps the individual to attain critical thinking skills, expand memory retention, improve one's knowledge, expand one's vocabulary base, stimulate one's mental capacity, relive stress, and improve overall engagement in contributing positively to national development (Alex-Nmecha & Horsefall, 2019). All these roles offer the individual the needed social capital to be a part of societal development and improve sense of belonging in the process.

Implications of Public Library Aesthetics for Enhanced Reading Culture in Diverse Societies

After series of annual readership promotion campaign, the literature of poor readership in Nigeria has not reported any form of improvement. Advocacy for reading culture has apparently not provided the desired results. It calls for deeper introspection into the root cause of poor readership in Nigeria. An observation shows that the physical status of the public libraries is one of the most fundamental negative factors that retard reading culture. Ranganathan emphasises the importance of “use” in the library by stating that the library is a growing organism that is for use. Thus, if it is not well utilized, if the library has a single bibliographic item that is not utilized, it has not achieved its purpose. Without users patronizing the library, the library will go into extinct and will become valueless (Usuka, Nwachukwu, & Nwachukwu, 2019).

Ogwu (as cited in Kari, 2015) states that provision of conducive atmosphere for reading is one of the methods that could be used to enhance reading culture in Nigeria. Similarly, Usuka, Nwachukwu and Nwachukwu (2019) assert that library patronage can be enhanced through library aesthetics. Therefore, library buildings should be designed with intention, and a more thoughtful approach utilizing DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) principles can lead to an intrinsically inclusive facility (Gascon, & Bryant, 2023).

Libraries are ideal places to celebrate the diversity of a community (Gascon & Bryant, 2023). At the basic level, public libraries, as a trusted community space where people can come together to access, share, and create cultural resources and materials, provide an optimal setting for the development of objectified cultural capital (Summers, & Buchanan, 2018). Objectified cultural capital in the library context has been defined as “access to libraries and their resources,” which contain objects of “cultural significance” (Ignatow et al. 2012). It is also said that public libraries play an important role in the provision of formal and informal lifelong learning opportunities, which are “complementary” to those offered by the education sector (Scottish Library and Information Council 2015).

Fashola (2024) found out that the perception of users about the aesthetics available in the library was also high; the influence of library aesthetics on library patronage was also considered high. The tested hypotheses showed that there is a strong relationship between library aesthetics and user patronage.

Strategies for Embracing Public Library Aesthetics for Enhanced Reading Culture in Diverse Societies

Most public libraries are designed and planned without contributions from members of the public which the libraries are meant to serve. This scenario does not apply to libraries alone. Most government projects in Nigeria, especially those executed during the days of military dictatorship have experienced similar fate. This is why the case of exclusion has remained rampant in public institutions. To address the impact of these anomalies such as poor reading culture and patronage of libraries through aesthetics, the authors of this paper identifies the following strategies:

- i. *Choice of library location: Before building the library itself, the government must ensure that the location is one that factors in the peculiarities of the people. Locating public libraries in locations considered sacred by local people, or in disputed land sites and locations can fuel disaffection towards the library. Road accessibility, distance from residential and commercial areas, proximity to schools, etc., are very important factors to be considered. Fashola (2024) stated that users' opinions should be sought before public buildings are erected.*
- ii. *Collaboration with community members in the design phase of public libraries: this involves incorporating the public into the design of the structure of the library, its physical space and its interior designs as well. This will give the immediate users of the library a sense of belonging that makes them view the library as a property of the community and not just another building for civil servants to 'lord over' with offices. Jones (2006) notes that it is important for the needs of community and staff to be canvassed thoroughly, partly to encourage a sense of ownership and partly of course to alert the librarians to critical things which might not be thought of at the initial stage. According to Gascon and Bryant (2023), with all the care that librarians put into creating inclusive library programmes, policies, and collections, the design of library buildings should aid and expand their tremendous efforts. This implies that the members of the public should be considered as stakeholders from the design stage. It helps in identifying and introducing culturally enticing designs into library designs.*
- iii. *Adaptation of indigenous aesthetics: The introduction of culturally appealing designs will be a unique and innovative way to entice the modern day library user. Most Nigerian libraries lack*

African architectural designs. Yet, Nigerian cultures are very rich in architectural and artistic designs. Examples can be seen in rich Northern Nigerian architectural designs that have stood the test of weather and climate for centuries but have never been adopted in modern Nigerian libraries.

- iv. *Expanded Use of Local Terminologies in Designation of Library Sections and Services: To engage an excluded community, and not to make a library look exclusively like a strictly high-level, elite class academic community, the public library can enhance inclusivity by using local languages in its library shelf marks, labeling of sections, divisions, and pathfinders within the library. This will enhance an easier navigation within the library.*
- v. *Identify recreational activities that can be accommodated in spaces around the library building and create rooms for integrating them into the library's structure, even if it is as an extension of the main building in order to limit distraction or mitigate its effects on other users. Such activities could be a viewing centre for cultural activities in the state or even occasionally hosting local dramas in a designated section of the library extended from the main building.*
- vi. *Introduction of highly interactive library website that reflects the same aesthetic values of the physical structure of the library. Ogunbanjo and Bakare (2022) assert that e-aesthetic issues should be taken into considerations in the development of digital library webpages to create a user-friendly environment and also ease of usage is of high premium in ensuring increase usage and sustainability of Nigerian library. Oyedokun, Kayode, Ambali, and Komolafe (2021) also emphasised that library websites were found to be useful and yet not optimally utilized by the users due to the absence of some content and aesthetic features that tend to improve the usability of the library website.*
- vii. *Identification of the right safety measures in the design of the building, for the physically fit and the physically challenged. According to Jones (2006), it is important to identify any occupational health and safety or access issues.*

Public libraries are also an important part of the sense of normalcy in the city (Alajmi, & Albudaiwi, 2021). Thus, if more green elements can be incorporated into the exterior space of a library, this could significantly improve the sense of community life. The sense of normalcy has become increasingly important in the post-pandemic era (Zang et al, 2023).

Zang et al (2023) further state that enhancing the library's interaction with the city by increasing the transparency of the facade. The ability to see the activities inside the library enhances the sense of normality and increases the vitality of the city. This could attract more users to the library.

- a. Use external spaces as urban public spaces. External public spaces in libraries can help increase the possibility of intergenerational communication and provide social space for work-at-home residents. For the library, public spaces provide the possibility of business opportunities. In the post-pandemic period, Japan changed from a model of unipolarity and local decline in Tokyo to a model of multi-point networks (Shirato, 2021). There are more opportunities for piecemeal businesses in communities now. Semi-outdoor space close to the entrance is often suitable for hosting social activities.
- b. Provide seating in the exterior space. Outdoor seating adds resilience to the city while extending the service hours of public libraries. Seating can be installed in all directions of the library and can support different types of activities depending on the location.
- c. Provide outside spaces to support work, meetings, and education. The post-pandemic era has led to public libraries performing new functions as information exchange centers. Libraries must be prepared for the era of online work and learning. Because work and meetings require a certain level of privacy, they are better suited to atrium, backyard, or rooftop spaces. Off-line activities can also help the library (Kuno, 2014).
- d. Events in exterior spaces are an extension of public libraries' activities and can be used as a medium to better communicate the library's impact on the city. Events in public spaces could be useful for attracting potential users and activating cities. Display activities are more appropriate at the interface with the city, particularly in the entrance spaces.
- e. Including more green spaces in external spaces. Intensive cities require additional functional public facilities. At the same time, in the post-pandemic era, there is also a need to provide more green spaces at the community scale to meet residents' health needs. In addition to improving the reading environment, green spaces can also inject more vitality into the library from crowds attracted by the landscape. If there is insufficient space for landscaping at the site, the surrounding green resources can be maximized.

Challenges and Prospects of Enhancing Reading Culture through Inclusive Aesthetics in Public Libraries

Inclusion is taking centre stage in agitations for fairness and equity among the different groups, races, genders, ages, cultures, etc., of the society. Another prospect is the growing interest in inclusive library services among researchers in LIS. However, one observed trend that has posed to be a source of challenge to librarians is the fact that librarians have not had much training that target the delivery of inclusive information services in multicultural societies. According to Mestre (2010), librarians surveyed feel library schools did not train them to work with multiple culture. This assertion is true in most Nigerian library schools. For a nation with a multicultural and heterogeneous demographic, this is a major loophole. The librarians surveyed by Mestre feel they need more skills to communicate, build coalitions, learn the cultural nuances, and be approachable to people of different ages, faiths, races, ethnicities.

Most library aesthetic faults stem from the design stage, which even affect the functionality of the libraries, and not just attractive features. According to Oyewunmi, Olatunji and Adegun (2017), librarians have sometimes complained that some of the library buildings which have been used to accommodate libraries have been inadequate for the demands made upon them. Besides, the environmental condition and exterior do not express the purpose and functions of the interior. This is because most of those who commission library buildings are not librarians and their priorities may be different from those of professional librarians. The failure of the library architects to consult with the librarian or with library building experts often result in the inadequacy of the library in meeting its objective. The library building is usually the first impression given to any potential user.

Lack of technological knowhow, lack of evaluation checklist for quality assurance, lack of provision for library staff training and development, absence of sufficient budget and funding for the library affect the provision of aesthetic values in Nigerian libraries (Oyedokun, Kayode, Ambali, & Komolafe, 2021). This is visibly reflected in the physical appearance of several government-owned libraries in Nigeria. Failure to address these challenges will further deplete the declining reading culture in the country as more users will not be encouraged to use the library to enhance their reading culture.

Conclusion

Reading culture has been established as one of the tools for attaining national development. A nation of readers is a nation of great leaders and even better followers. Regarding reading culture, literature and observation reveals that the Nigerian situation is too fragile and calls for concern. As tertiary education becomes increasingly expensive, it is expected that public libraries and information centres will leverage on their statutory philosophy of being the 'people's university' to provide the needed information resources and services that will help create a balance between those who are privileged to have access to advanced education and those who are excluded, mainly due to economic challenges. Unfortunately, the public library has fallen short of this goal due to its inability to attract users, largely as a result of the unattractive and poor functionality of the library structure itself. This poses great threat to the attainment of an inclusive society as excluded citizens are denied the opportunity of acquiring knowledge, critical thinking, skills acquisition support, cultural integration, and other values that the public library offers those who cannot afford the cost of those human capital ingredients on their own. This inability of the public library to attract users with its aesthetics, and build positive reading culture, is linked by literature, to problems such as lack of extensive consultation among stakeholders, poor understanding of the importance of library aesthetics by major stakeholders, inadequate funding of public library and inadequate training of librarians on aesthetics and inclusive library services.

Recommendations

This paper recommends the following to address these challenges reported and observed:

- i. *Proper training of librarians on the needs for enhanced aesthetics in order to enhance patronage and readership. Readership advocacy, without giving the library a favourable outlook will not be adequate to ensure patronage.*
- ii. *Government should ensure that community stakeholders and librarians are well consulted simultaneously in order to consider for inclusion in library designs, appropriate features that are considered to be supportive of functionality and aesthetics in the library. Without this, even funds released for renovation and building of library projects may not achieve the desired objectives.*
- iii. *There should be increased funding of public libraries. The status of most Nigerian public libraries leaves much to be desired. And it does not cost a fortune of taxpayers' funds to execute or maintain a decent public library. Government can incorporate the use of corporate social responsibility support from the private sector into the development of public libraries in Nigeria.*

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EMBRACING INCLUSIVE LIBRARY SERVICES DELIVERY TO THE SPECIAL NEEDS PATRONS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF LIBRARY WEBSITES OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This is an exploratory study of the library websites of Ten Best Federal Universities in Nigeria with the view to finding out the inclusive services they embraced or practiced. The data used for this study were derived from the library websites of the sampled universities; literature review; and responses from phone calls of librarians working in those universities. Three research questions guided the study. Data collected from RQ1 was analysed quantitatively using a frequency table and simple percentages. Data from RQ2 obtained from both the phone calls and websites were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively while data from RQ3 obtained from the literature reviewed were analysed qualitatively. The findings of this study revealed that 3 (30%) of the 10 sampled university libraries have inclusive library services for special needs patrons on their library websites while 7(70%) do not. Further findings revealed other inclusive services embraced by these libraries. Data for challenges faced by university libraries to offer/embrace inclusive services were gathered from the literature. These challenges include but are not limited to the non-existence or exclusion of services for the disabled; the architectural barrier of the library, inadequate/non-existence of facilities for disabled patrons e.g. assistive technologies, software; and inadequate finance. The study recommends that the library website should be inclusive to give equal access to all library patrons; library architecture should be redesigned, renovated, or innovated to suit ALL patrons; adequate provision of resources and facilities for disabled patrons should be prioritized like any other library patrons.

Keywords: inclusive; library services; disability; special needs patrons, library websites; Federal University, Nigeria.

Introduction

Marginalization, segregation, discrimination, or exclusion is a global phenomenon. Some of these often result in protests, wars, killings, etc. In academic libraries, marginalization does occur when the library services are not inclusive. In other words, the services were only meant for a select few, whereas the University Library is committed to creating an inclusive, safe, and supportive environment both online and in the physical libraries for ALL members of its community (University of South Australia (UniSA), 2023). Conversely, exclusivity in library service could limit educational, employment, health care, etc, opportunities for the patrons affected.

A library can be a friend of all persons when the library policies are inclusive for everyone regardless of disability thereby giving all persons equal opportunity of participation (Echezona, Osadebe & Asogwa, 2011). This could be the reason why the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons

with Disabilities (CRPD), which guarantees that people with disabilities have the same access and opportunities as everyone else to participate in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private settings open to accommodate the general public United Nations (2006), which academic library also falls into.

Disabled patrons are among the special needs patrons. Disabled and people with special needs are used interchangeably in this work and they mean the same thing. According to International Labour Organisation (nd) cited in Disability: IN (2024) a “disabled person” “means a person who has received preliminary or permanent certificate of disability to have condition which is expected to continue permanently or for a considerable length of time which can reasonably be expected to limit the person's functional ability substantially, but not limited to seeing, hearing, thinking, ambulating, climbing, descending, lifting, grasping, rising, any related function or any limitation due to weakness or significantly decreased endurance ...” Often, the level of inclusion of these people are lean in every aspect of life, academic library services are not exempted. People with special needs in this study, are those who cannot use normal library services such as the wheelchair-bound, the blind and partially sighted among others.

Again, special needs patrons are used interchangeably with disabled patrons in this study.

Inclusion according to Mills (2019) is the support of individuals across areas such as generations, race, sexual orientation, gender, education, disability, citizenship, work experience, etc. In the library parlance, an inclusive library is an important element for an inclusive education and thereby an inclusive society (Moirangthem and Phuritsabam, 2022). Unfortunately, most university libraries face a lot of challenges in making their library services inclusive to ALL their patrons including patrons with special needs. Some of the problems are caused by the exclusivity of some library websites.

A Website is an electronic brochure and also a source of information made available to the whole world 24/7 (Kehinde and Tella, 2012). According to Kumar and Bansal (2014), a library website is the only way to make the services of the library available to the users. But most oftentimes, some library websites are not designed with accessibility to all patrons in mind thus making it difficult for people with special needs to browse and understand information (Uvodic, Rangra & Shiferraw , 2023). Some university libraries face problems with acquisition policies, inadequate finance, use of untrained personnel to serve those who are disabled or need special treatment, etc. A lot has been written about inclusive library services to patrons with different kinds of disabilities but not much has been written about the extent of inclusivity of library services on the library websites of Federal Universities in Nigeria. This present study wants to fill this gap by using the library websites of the ten best Federal Universities in Nigeria (Ranks NG) as a sample in finding out the level of inclusivity in the library services delivery to patrons with special needs.

Objective of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the Library websites of Federal University in Nigeria to determine the level of inclusion of the Library Services Delivery to special needs patrons.

The specific objectives include:

1. To find out the federal university libraries in Nigeria that embrace inclusive library services on their websites
2. To find out the inclusive services offered by federal university libraries in Nigeria.
3. To find out the challenges faced by university libraries in embracing inclusive library services.

Research Questions

1. What number of the ten best Federal University libraries in Nigeria have inclusive services for special needs patrons on the website?
2. What types of inclusive services did these ten best Federal University libraries offer to the special needs patrons?
3. What challenges do university libraries face in embracing or offering inclusive services?

Literature Review

Inclusion in academic libraries is a noble and endless endeavour to absorb to meet the objectives by which the library is set up. Inclusion is the practice of ensuring that everyone feels a sense of belonging and support (Mills, 2019). Integrating or embracing inclusivity into academic libraries involves making ALL library users feel welcome, accepted, and respected in an inclusive space and ensuring that the materials within the library's holding reflect the community it serves (EBSCO Information Services, 2023 and Tan, 2023). In other words, there would be no discrimination against non-disabled, or special needs patrons.

The word “Disability” is defined by the World Health Organization (2011) as an inevitable human phenomenon that limits equitable access as a result of activity limitation and participation restriction in society. IFLA (ND) Section on **“Library Services to People with Special Needs”** gave examples of these groups to include but limited to people who are in hospitals, nursing homes, and other care facilities; people in prisons; people who are experiencing homelessness; people with physical disabilities; people who are deaf, hard of hearing, among others. American Library Association in one of the articles titled “Libraries Transforming Communities: Serving Patrons with Disabilities in Small and Rural Libraries Practitioner's Guide” has many definitions of disability some of which include the one defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (2005) which defined disability as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity, and also that by The U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which also defined disability as 'those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full, equal, and effective participation in society. Under the ADA, it is unlawful to discriminate against a person because of disability. Apart from that, to deny more than 29 million people access to information is inhumane based on the report of the World Health Organization, that in 2018, about 29 million of the 195 million people who comprise Nigeria's national population were living with a disability (World Bank, 2020). This number is likely to have increased by now.

Irvall and Nielsen (2005) on the IFLA checklist on Access to libraries for persons with disabilities-classified disability variously as physical disability, Visual impairment, deaf and hearing impairment, reading difficulties, cognitively disabled, etc. These people need information just like non-disabled persons, and therefore should not be excluded. After all, one of the main objectives of an inclusive library is to promote the right of every user including people with special needs to be able to access information to develop their knowledge index and be independent and self-reliant (Gaur and Bhatt, 2016). As a result, libraries and librarians are now looking for ways to embrace inclusion in their services, staffing, resources, facilities, etc. Doing so will make everyone feel belong, thus averting the ugly consequences of exclusion.

In Nigeria, Disability Decree of 1993 stipulates that “disabled persons shall be guaranteed treatment as equals to other Nigerians for all purposes in the Federal Republic of Nigeria”. Again Part 11 of the ACT on Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities, stipulates that “ a person with disability has the right to access the physical environment and buildings on an equal basis with others. In affirmation, Irvall and Nielsen (2005) reported that physical access and Access to materials and services should be accessible for persons with different kinds of disabilities.

Globally, here are some examples of the University Libraries that practice inclusive services but are not limited to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, University of Malaya Library,

University of South Australia Library, Michael Schwartz Library: Cleveland State University, etc, The University of Nevada Las Vegas library has on their library website a diversity and inclusion statement written that welcomes everyone irrespective of colour, race, belief systems or religions, gender, sex, and all other members of marginalized communities into their library. At the University of Malaya Library, equal opportunity in information access and information resources is one of the major concerns of the library to provide good services to all the residents. The library has a section for disabled users called Special Disables Users (SDU), with all the resources and facilities meant to serve them e.g. automatic voice system, Braille embosser machine, and Jaws software installed in the computer for the visually impaired (VI) with selected librarians trained on how to use the software to teach information literacy to them; library track to guide the VI and Ramp for wheelchair user to enter the library. Other services provided include accessible toilets to accommodate users with physical disabilities, volunteer readers to assist blind persons in enjoying the library services, and a special parking facility is also provided.

Like the University of Malaya Library, the University of South Australia Library has a special section for disabled patrons. Off-campus library services are offered through email or postal service to students who were unable to visit the library, and alternative formats for course readings and other library materials for

study and research are offered to patrons with disability. Other services provided are adaptive technology suites, multi-access suites; and spaces for all members of the University community including breastfeeding mothers among others. Other services offered include wheelchair-accessible lifts to every floor; and campus maps fitted in any entrance of the library. The facilities provided are a toilet lift, a hearing loop, accessible parking, etc. The collection policy of UniSA encourages staff and students of the university to recommend resources, including resources that promote inclusivity. The library has an inclusion working Group, a professional development programme, and feedback services to identify and eliminate barriers to inclusion.

Michael Schwartz Library: Cleveland State University (2024) has a section for disabled patrons. It has links to different services for these patrons. Contact information of librarians is provided for the patrons. The Library staff assists students with disabilities with the same priority as other patrons while accessing information materials in the library.

University libraries are meant to serve ALL their library patrons but unfortunately, some previous studies on inclusivity pointed out some challenges faced by libraries that practiced, or which attempted to embrace inclusive library services. Some of these include the practice of stereotype collection development policy; lack of finance for the acquisition of the resources and facilities for special needs patrons or the disabled; non-inclusivity on the architectural design of the library and library website; inadequate spaces for people with special needs etc.

According to citation at the reference list Adetoro (2011); Lucky and Achebe (2013); and Zaid and Zaid (2017) in their studies reported that it is caused by inadequate budget, inadequate access to high-speed Internet, low take-off of open access repositories and digital libraries, non-availability of adaptive technology and specialized software packages. Other challenges include inadequate facilities and equipment (Chaputula and Mapulanga (2016); library Orientation programmes and training and workshops on the use of Assistive Technology are rarely done in most of libraries. Mazinge and Stilwell (2013) observed that the information services provided by academic libraries for people with special needs in most developing countries tend to be unimpressive due to improper formats of information and assistive equipment used.

A study conducted by Moirangthem and Phuistabam (2022) revealed most of these challenges. The libraries studied have little collection of assistive devices/technologies or none at all. For instance, out of 16 libraries studied only one library each 6.25% has a magnifier and

Braille Printer, in five libraries (31.25%) had Headphones for Audio Books in five libraries, Screen Magnification in three libraries (18.75%), Braille Software for conversion of Text to Braille format (in two libraries i.e. 12.5%), Trackball Mouse (in two libraries i.e. 12.5%), Universal adjustable keyboard (in three libraries i.e. 18.75%), Speech Synthesizer with Speech Output (only in IIT, Guwahati i.e. 6.25%), Screen Reading Software is only in five libraries, etc.

Methodology

The library websites of the ten best Federal Universities in Nigeria according to Ranks NG (n.d) were used for data collection, and responses to phone calls from librarians working in these sampled universities, and contents of the literature reviewed were also used to gather data for this study. The researcher from the home page of these universities got into their library websites. The researcher critically browsed through all the library websites of these sampled universities to identify libraries that have inclusive library services. Any link to such a service was browsed to get further information. The researchers also contacted their colleagues through phone calls to confirm information on the website and more about other inclusive services practiced knowing full well that some universities may/do not update their web page regularly. Previous studies were also used to extract data mostly on the challenges faced by universities in embracing inclusive services. Some university library websites of other nations were also browsed to get some relevant data. It took the researchers three weeks (from Feb 2nd- Feb 23rd, 2024) to navigate through the library websites. This study was guided by three research questions RQ1 is on the identification of sampled University libraries with inclusive services; RQ2 is to ascertain the types of inclusive services embraced by those libraries and RQ3 is to find out the challenges faced by university libraries in offering inclusive services. Data for RQ1 were obtained from the library websites, RQ 2 from phones and websites too; while RQ3 was obtained from the literature reviewed. RQ1 was arranged in a Table and analysed quantitatively using simple percentages, RQ2 was also arranged in the Table and analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively while RQ3 was analysed using deductions drawn from the content analysis of literature reviewed and findings on RQ2. Recommendations were made based on the results of the findings.

Results of Findings

The result of findings were done in line with the research questions and presented in tables.

Table1: Library Websites of Ten Best Federal Universities in Nigeria

S/N	Name of the University	Year	Name of the Library	URL of the Library	Date Updated	Inclusive Lib Services Yes	Inclusive Lib. Services
1	University of Ibadan (UI)	1948	Kenneth Dike Lib.	library.ui.edu.ng	2023		No
2	University of Lagos (Unilag)	1962	University of Lagos Main Library	library.unilag.edu.ng	n/a	Yes	
3	University of Nig. Nsukka (UNN)	1955	Nnamdi Azikiwe Library	library.unn.edu.ng	2020	Yes	
4	Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU)	1961	Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library	https://librarytechnology.org/library/42629 Or https://oauife.edu.ng/library/	1994- 2024		No
5	Ahmadu Bello University (ABU)	1962	Kashim Ibrahim Library	Library.abu.edu.ng	2024	Yes* Content coming soon	
6	University of Ilorin (Unilorin)	1975	Uni of Ilorin Main Library	https://www.unilorin.edu.ng/main-library/	n/a 2024		No
7	The Fed. Uni of Tech Akure (FUTA)	1981	Albert Ilemobade Library	lib.futa.edu.ng	2018		No
8	University of Port Harcourt (Uniport)	1975	Donald Ekong Library	library.uniport.edu.ng	2023		No
9	Uni. of Benin (Uniben)	1970	John Harris Library	Jhl.uniben.edu	2024		No
10	Fed. Uni. of Tech Minna (FUTMinna)	1983	Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Lib. Complex	Library.futminna.edu.ng	2023		No
	Total					3(30%)	7(70%)

Source: Ranks NG (n.d)

Table 1 shows ten best Federal Universities in Nigeria according to Ranks NG (n.d): UI, Unilag, UNN, OAU, ABU, Unilorin, FUTA, Uniport, Uniben, and FUTMinna. The focus of this study is on their library websites. This Table shows the year of establishment of these universities, the names of their libraries; the library website URL, the last date updated, and Yes or No responses to inclusive services. Findings revealed that out of the 10 sampled federal University library websites, only 3 or 30% displayed on their websites the library services for special needs patrons while 7 or 70% did not. For instance, the University of Lagos Main Library- University of Lagos and Nnamdi Azikiwe Library -University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) have on their websites services for special needs patrons, and also on the library website of Kashim Ibrahim Library- Ahmadu Bello University is written that they will soon display the content of their inclusive services, while others did not display any of such service(s) on their website.

Types of Inclusive Library Services Embraced by the Libraries of the Ten Best Federal Universities in Nigeria

Table 2: Types of Inclusive Services Embraced by the Federal University Libraries in Nigeria

S/N	Types of Inclusive Services (IS)
1	Ramp for the wheel chair patrons, computers for the virtually impaired patrons
2	Provision of assistive tools on students' personal devices; scanning and converting course materials to Braille or audio; transcription and conversion of resources to accessible format; Editing of materials in accessible formats; Research Assistance (For in - depth research assistance, students are expected to book appointment with the Reference/Faculty Liaison Librarians; Reader Assistance (reading citation, abstracts, and other materials); Continuous library orientation and information literacy programme; Extended loan periods; Provision of document delivery service; Provision of appropriate accommodation (a Visually Impaired Resource Centre); and Provision of ramps for users on wheel chair.
3	Braille Machine, Volunteer librarians who assist the disabled patrons
4	Ramp and space for the physically challenged patrons (patrons on
5	No such service yet
6	No such service yet
7	No such service yet
8	No such service yet
9	No such service yet
10	Space for the wheel chair patrons

This table presents the types of inclusive services embraced by the ten best Federal University libraries in Nigeria. No 1 represents Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan; No 2 represents University of Lagos main library, University of Lagos; No 3 represents Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN); No 4 represents Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU); No 5 represents Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University (ABU); No. 6 represents University of Ilorin Main Library, University of Ilorin; No7 represents **Albert Iemobade Library**, The Fed. Uni of Tech Akure (FUTA); No 8 represents Donald Ekong Library, University of Port-Harcourt; No. 9 represents John Harris Library, University of Benin while No.10 represents Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Lib. Complex, Federal University of Technology, Minna.

Data from Table 2 are obtained from the websites of the ten best Federal University Libraries in Nigeria, and telephonic messages from the librarians of these universities. The library websites of these universities were browsed again to extract the types of inclusive services, the facilities, and the resources each of the libraries has. Table 2 shows that only one or (10%) of these universities have many inclusive services to serve different types of disabilities. These services include the provision of assistive tools on students' personal devices; scanning and converting course materials to Braille or audio; transcription and conversion of resources to accessible format; editing of materials in accessible formats; research assistance (for in-depth research assistance, students are expected to book an appointment with the reference/faculty liaison librarians; reader assistance (reading citation, abstracts, and other materials); provision of ramps for users on wheelchair among others. Four or 40% of these universities have either one or two services each to serve either the visually impaired (VI) or patrons on wheelchairs or both. These services were the Braille, Ramps, the computers installed with software to help the VI patrons, or the assistive or volunteer librarians. Five (50%) others did not embrace inclusive services in their libraries.

Challenges Faced by University Library in Embracing or Offering Inclusive Library Services

From the literature reviewed, the result of findings revealed that many libraries faced budget constraints; architectural barriers; non-availability of adaptive technology and specialized software packages; inadequate access to high-speed Internet; Lack of training on the use of assistive technology by library staff to attend to persons with special need; inadequate assistive devices like magnifier, headphones; Braille Printer, Braille software for conversion of text to Braille format; and inadequate facilities and equipment, etc.

Findings from Table 2 revealed some of the challenges faced by these libraries. There is inadequate or non-provision of inclusive services by university libraries in Nigeria. Only 4 (40%) of the libraries provided Ramps for the wheelchair patrons others did not. Some inclusive services of the library are not integrated into the websites. For instance, in this study, only 3 (30%) out of 10 libraries displayed services for special needs patrons. Information about inclusive services embraced by 2 libraries was obtained from the telephonic messages from the librarians.

Discussion of the Findings

From the result of the findings, it is evident that most of these libraries apart from the University of Lagos Main Library have a substantial number of inclusive services on the web page, while others have inadequate inclusive services on their web page; the few that provided the link have only services for the VI and wheelchair patrons only thus denying other special needs patrons access to information. This finding implies that library services on the websites of Federal University did not adhere to either the Americans with Disabilities Act (2005) against discrimination of persons with disability Or the Nigeria Disability Decree of 1993. It is also not different from the study reported by Zaid and Zaid (2017). Again, it also revealed that Federal University libraries in Nigeria were at the bottom of the ladder as far as inclusivity is concerned.

The library website represents the face of the library and serves as a knowledge portal to all library patrons including persons with special needs. Loading the library website with inclusive services and making it accessible to all patrons is one sure way to make patrons feel welcome in the library. It should have been the best platform to serve special needs patrons like the deaf, the blind, the visually impaired, learning disability, etc., but the findings of this study revealed that almost all the Federal University libraries studied have no section or provision for the persons with disability on their library webpages. It is only 3 (30%) out of 10 libraries that provided such a section, and upon that, the services provided were inadequate. Ideally, one would have expected that these 3 libraries would have loaded their webpage with diverse services for different categories of users including persons with special needs, but the opposite is the case.

Surprisingly too, from the telephonic message received, one of the libraries that have computers installed with the software to help the VI, and Ramps for the wheelchair patrons did not display these services on their website to create awareness of such services. The implication is that most of the university libraries did not even know the importance of a website, the need to integrate all their services on the webpage or the implication of discriminating against persons with disability.

Furthermore, the result of the findings in Table 2 clearly showed some of the challenges faced by these libraries. There is inadequate or non-provision of inclusive services by university libraries in Nigeria. Only 4 libraries provided Ramps for wheelchair patrons, others did not. Again only one library has different facilities and resources to serve different categories of special needs patrons, few others have one or two facilities to serve their disabled patrons while up to 5(50%) libraries out of 10 in this study have nothing at all. An implication that many Federal University Libraries in Nigeria lacked facilities and resources to offer inclusive library services, thus the result of this study aligns with the findings of Adetoro (2011) on the Availability and use of information materials by persons with visual impairment in Nigeria; Chaputula and Mapulanga (2016) on Provision of library services to people with disabilities in Malawi.; Moirangthem and Phuistabam (2022) on “ Inclusion in the Library: a case study of accessibility in the Central Institutes in the North Eastern Region of India”, among others.

Conclusion

It is noted from the present study that the libraries in the Federal Universities in Nigeria were at the bottom of the ladder as far as inclusivity in library services is concerned. This is evidenced by the nonexistence in most libraries and the scanty presence of inclusive services on the library websites sampled. Most of the resources and services found on the websites of these libraries are generic and not meant to service the disabled clientele. It is often said that change is constant and as such university libraries should embrace creativity and innovation in their library service delivery. It is therefore high time for university libraries to think outside the box and change most of the policies they have that hinder equal access to All library patrons. After all, the main objective of an academic library is to offer service to ALL members of its community irrespective of race, sex, colour, disability, etc. They should therefore re-examine all their library holdings and make them inclusive and accessible so that every library patron will feel belonged, welcomed, accepted, etc. Some of the things that are to be looked into are the entrance to the library building; the library websites; spaces in the library; shelves; the library personnel, library facilities, and other resources of the library.

Recommendations

The architectural design of the federal university libraries should be renovated or modified to enable all library patrons to have equal access to the library holdings.

Library website developers should create a separate community for the disabled services on the webpage to enable special needs persons to access the services of the library with ease like any other library patron.

Management of libraries should make all the library policies inclusive - the acquisition policy, collection development policy, etc, and the committee members should comprise both the non-disabled and persons with special needs.

Libraries should provide adequate facilities and resources for people with special needs like, assistive devices, assistive technology; specially trained personnel to assist those with special needs, etc.

Libraries of today be it academic, school library, public, etc should integrate innovative services on their library webpage to be able to give equal access to all their library patrons without discrimination.

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EMERGING ROLES OF LIBRARIES IN DOCUMENTING AND PRESERVING THE DIVERSE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nigeria's rich cultural heritage covers a wealth of intangible forms, including oral histories, artistic expressions, and traditional knowledge. These narratives face increasing vulnerability due to rapid modernization, globalization, and changing knowledge transmission systems. This research examines the role of Nigerian libraries in documenting and preserving this diverse cultural heritage. It aims to throw more light on the challenges, opportunities, and potential best practices of archiving the diverse cultural heritage of Nigeria. Specific objectives included investigating current preservation practices, identifying barriers, exploring technological solutions, proposing collaborative models, and advocating for policy support. A qualitative research approach was employed. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with a sample size of 20 respondents selected through purposive sampling comprising of librarians, archivists, community representatives, and cultural experts. Thematic analysis revealed that libraries while demonstrating dedication, face limitations in resources, technology, and specialized expertise. Community collaboration proved crucial for successful archiving, necessitating frameworks to address issues of intellectual property, ownership, and representation. While libraries see digitization as an essential technological hurdle, the need for community-centered design emerged. A lack of clear national policies limits sustainable preservation efforts, emphasizing the need for targeted advocacy. This study highlights the importance of building capacity in libraries through training, resource sharing, and guidelines that prioritize community partnerships. Technology must be developed with local input to ensure accessibility and cultural sensitivity. Advocacy for policies that essentially recognize libraries' role in preserving intangible heritage is recommended. By implementing these recommendations, Nigerian libraries can become vital custodians of the nation's untold stories, safeguarding invaluable cultural heritage for current and future generations.

Keywords: Cultural heritage, libraries, Nigeria, intangible heritage, preservation, community collaboration

Introduction

Nigeria is a nation of immense cultural mosaic with a rich heritage connected with the narratives of its diverse ethnic groups. Within these narratives lies a wealth of knowledge, traditions, and perspectives, often passed down orally through generations. Such stories contain the essence of Nigeria but remain endangered to erosion and loss as modernization alters traditional knowledge transfer systems (Ekechukwu & Okoli, 2014). Many aspects of Nigeria's cultural heritage remain at risk of fading into obscurity due to a lack of systemic documentation and preservation efforts. Libraries hold an important role in safeguarding this heritage, serving as repositories of knowledge and cultural artifacts for present and future generations (Edewor & Oyedum, 2021). Libraries shoulder the great responsibility of documenting and safeguarding this invaluable cultural heritage, ensuring its preservation for posterity.

The concept of cultural heritage covers both tangible and intangible elements. Tangible heritage includes physical artifacts such as artworks, traditional objects, buildings, and archaeological sites (UNESCO, 2003). Intangible cultural heritage embodies practices, expressions, knowledge, and skills passed down through generations. These elements include oral traditions, performing arts, social rituals, festivals, craftsmanship, and traditional knowledge systems (UNESCO, 2003). While tangible heritage receives considerable attention, intangible aspects often remain undocumented and susceptible to loss (Kurin, 2004).

Cultural heritage serves as a repository of a society's identity, providing a sense of belonging, continuity, and grounding (Meskell, 2018). It embodies the collective wisdom, beliefs, and artistic expressions of generations, shaping a community's understanding of itself and its place in the world. Within Nigeria's context, cultural heritage offers a window into the country's intricate history, its diverse ethnicities, and its evolution as a nation. Moreover, cultural heritage preservation fosters intergenerational dialogue, promotes social cohesion, and provides a foundation for future innovation and creativity (UNESCO, 2003).

A significant portion of Nigeria's cultural riches reside in its intangible heritage – the oral histories, folktales, music, dance, rituals, and traditional knowledge systems that hold deep value yet are susceptible to disappearance. Rapid urbanization, globalization, and the prioritization of Western knowledge

paradigms contribute to the erosion of traditional ways of life, jeopardizing the transmission of these valuable cultural assets (Bussert-Webb, 2018). As elders pass away and younger generations assimilate into a homogenized global culture, the risk of losing these irreplaceable narratives intensifies. Libraries therefore, stand as vital institutions entrusted with the mission of safeguarding cultural heritage. Traditionally associated with books and text-based materials, libraries increasingly recognize their pivotal role in preserving intangible heritage (IFLA, 2022). Through collaborative efforts with communities, libraries can proactively document, digitize, and archive oral histories, music, traditional knowledge, and other cultural expressions. Such efforts could help combat the ephemerality of oral tradition and ensure the accessibility and preservation of cultural heritage for current and future generations.

The challenges facing the preservation of Nigeria's cultural heritage are multifarious. Indeed, Nigerian libraries face numerous hurdles in undertaking cultural archiving initiatives. Rapid urbanization, modernization, and globalization contribute to the erosion of traditional practices and knowledge systems (Ogunrinade & Mutsvairo, 2021). Limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of specialized training often hinder effective preservation practices (Ajuwon, 2018; Akussah, 2014). Moreover, gaining the trust and cooperation of communities, navigating intellectual property rights, and grappling with issues of cultural appropriation and misrepresentation pose further complexities (Srinivasan et. al., 2009). Additionally, conflicts and natural disasters pose a continuous threat to cultural heritage sites and collections.

Libraries, as institutions dedicated to knowledge preservation and dissemination, have the potential to play a pivotal role in addressing these challenges and preserving Nigeria's untold stories (Adeyemi, 2016). Through the strategic collection, documentation, and digitization of cultural resources, libraries can create accessible archives that safeguard the nation's heritage. Collaboration with local communities, cultural institutions, and educational organizations is essential to ensure the authenticity and sustainability of these efforts (Ojo, 2019). By embracing digital technologies, harnessing partnerships with cultural institutions and community stakeholders, and advocating for policy support, libraries can effectively document, archive, and disseminate the nation's diverse cultural heritage.

This research article delves into the critical role Nigerian libraries play in archiving the country's wealth of underrepresented narratives. It aims to examine the significance of cultural heritage preservation, the threats to intangible heritage, the challenges and opportunities libraries encounter, and the potential for libraries to proactively shape a future where Nigeria's cultural legacy is safeguarded and accessible to all.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the current practices of Nigerian libraries in the documentation and preservation of diverse cultural heritages.
2. To identify the challenges Nigerian libraries encounter in their cultural heritage initiatives.
3. To explore the potential of digital technologies to enhance the archiving, preservation, and accessibility of Nigerian cultural heritage.
4. To propose best practices for collaboration between libraries and communities in cultural preservation initiatives.

Literature Review

The documentation and preservation of Nigeria's diverse cultural heritage within library contexts present a complex and dynamic field with a growing body of research. This literature review explores existing scholarship, examining core themes, debates, and gaps in current knowledge.

Conceptualizing Cultural Heritage and its Significance

A fundamental concept in this domain is 'cultural heritage' itself. Scholars recognize the importance of moving beyond narrow, object-centric definitions of cultural heritage to embrace broader understandings that include both tangible and intangible elements (Smith, 2006). Intangible heritage, encompassing oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, and traditional knowledge systems, is of particular relevance in the Nigerian context, given its rich oral storytelling culture. Scholarship highlights the essential role of cultural heritage in shaping identity, fostering belonging, and promoting cross-cultural understanding (Meskell, 2018).

The Imperative of Archiving Intangible Heritage and the Evolving Role of Libraries in Cultural Preservation

Studies underscore the challenges of documenting and preserving intangible cultural heritage due to its inherent vulnerability. Factors such as globalization, urbanization, armed conflict, and the diminished intergenerational transmission of traditional knowledge threaten the continuity of oral traditions and other intangible expressions (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). The literature emphasizes that the loss of these narratives results in a fragmented understanding of history, a weakened sense of collective identity, and the erosion of invaluable cultural resources. Libraries are increasingly regarded as critical agents in safeguarding cultural

heritage. Traditionally focused on physical materials, their role is undergoing an important transformation. Scholars advocate for proactive approaches where libraries work collaboratively with communities to document, digitize, and archive intangible cultural assets (Ngulube, 2020). Beyond their traditional association with printed materials, libraries play an increasingly vital role in safeguarding diverse cultural heritage. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA, 2022) recognizes libraries' mandate in preserving knowledge, including intangible cultural expressions. Studies emphasize the potential of libraries as centers for collecting, organizing, and disseminating indigenous knowledge, facilitating intergenerational transmission within communities (Bussert-Webb, 2018; Horton, 2002). Contemporary initiatives spotlight collaborative librarianship models prioritizing principled stewardship and community-centered approaches (Karpati, 2018). Other key strategies explored in the literature include oral history projects, the recording of traditional knowledge, the digitization of cultural performances, and the development of multimedia archives.

Challenges to Cultural Heritage Preservation in Nigeria

The strong presence of oral traditions across Nigeria necessitates a strategic approach to documentation and archiving. Scholars have explored the inherent fluidity and adaptability of oral histories, folktales, and performances (Barber, 2007; Finnegan, 1992). Documentation efforts must acknowledge this dynamic nature and engage with issues of variation and interpretation. Furthermore, principled considerations surrounding intellectual property rights, cultural sensitivity, and potential misappropriation are critical (Srinivasan et al., 2009). Significant challenges complicate the archiving endeavors of libraries in the Nigerian context. Limited resources, inadequate technological infrastructure, and a lack of specialized skills among library staff remain common obstacles (Ajuwon, 2018). Moreover, issues of intellectual property rights, cultural sensitivity, and navigating potential power imbalances between libraries and source communities require careful attention and the development of collaborative models for archival work (Srinivasan et al., 2009). Nigerian libraries and cultural institutions grapple with challenges in their efforts to preserve heritage. Insufficient funding, infrastructural limitations, and a lack of specialized expertise in digital and archival preservation methods are common obstacles (Oyelude, 2013). Additionally, Nigeria's rapid urbanization and exposure to globalization contribute to the erosion of traditional ways of life, jeopardizing oral histories, local customs, and indigenous knowledge systems (Ekechukwu & Okoli, 2014; Onyancha, 2015).

Emerging Trends and Opportunities

Despite challenges, the literature reflects promising trends and opportunities. Digital technologies offer powerful tools for the collection, preservation, and dissemination of intangible heritage (Kreuzer, 2021). Libraries are exploring the use of audio and video recordings, online platforms, and virtual exhibitions to make cultural heritage more accessible and engaging. Additionally, emphasis is placed on strengthening partnerships between libraries, cultural institutions, indigenous communities, and research universities to ensure a holistic approach to cultural heritage preservation (Bussert-Webb, 2018). Libraries are harnessing technological innovations to address challenges in cultural heritage preservation. Digitization initiatives enable the creation of resilient digital archives housing oral histories, music, and visual representations of cultural practices (Akorhonor, 2005; Chiemeké & Ugwuanyi, 2012). Digital repositories and online platforms significantly expand the discoverability and accessibility of Nigeria's cultural heritage for researchers, educators, and the global public (Lor, 2004).

Community Collaboration

The literature consistently emphasizes the importance of community collaboration for successful cultural archiving initiatives in the Nigerian context. Engaging community members as active partners empowers local knowledge custodians and ensures that preservation efforts meaningfully align with communities' priorities. Libraries must establish trust-based relationships that prioritize the respectful stewardship of community heritage, addressing issues of power dynamics, ownership, and access (Srinivasan et al., 2009; Christen, 2012).

Conceptual Framework Documenting and Preserving the Diverse Cultural Heritage of Nigeria in Libraries.

Several theoretical frameworks and models offer valuable insights for our study on documenting and preserving Nigeria's diverse cultural heritage in libraries. The Postcolonial Framework examines the enduring impacts of colonialism on knowledge systems, institutions, and power dynamics (Ashcroft et al., 2007). This framework helps to unpack historical biases within traditional archival practices and analyze how libraries can play a role in decolonizing knowledge and supporting the preservation of marginalized cultural narratives. The Memory Studies framework is an interdisciplinary field that explores the relationship between individual and collective memory, how the past is constructed, and the social and political dimensions of remembering and forgetting (Erlil, 2011). Libraries can be understood as "sites of memory" (Crane, 2000), and applying insights from memory studies helps theorize their role in shaping

societal narratives and constructing cultural identity. The Community Informatics framework emphasizes the use of technology to empower communities and promote social justice (Gurstein, 2007). Drawing on community informatics, helps us investigate how libraries utilize digital tools to facilitate community-driven cultural archiving projects, ensuring that marginalized voices and experiences are represented and preserved. Participatory Action Research (PAR) prioritizes collaborative research practices, empowering communities as active participants in knowledge creation and problem-solving (Kindon et al., 2007). This approach aligns well with our study's focus on fostering collaborative partnerships between libraries and communities, emphasizing the importance of shared decision-making in cultural preservation.

Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) emphasizes collaboration between researchers and community members in all phases of the knowledge production process (Wallerstein & Duran, 2010). It's highly relevant to library-based cultural archiving as it advocates for power redistribution, capacity building within communities, and ensuring that preservation efforts align with community priorities. The Social Construction of Memory framework views memory as dynamic and shaped by social, political, and cultural forces (Olick & Robbins, 1998). Applied to our research, it highlights that libraries are not neutral actors in preservation but play an active role in shaping which narratives are deemed worthy of archiving, influencing how cultural heritage is understood and passed down.

The Information and Communications Technology for Development (ICT4D) framework explores how technology can be leveraged to achieve development aims, including the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage (Heeks, 2008). It emphasizes the need for context-specific implementation and attention to local social structures when using digital tools for cultural archiving. The framework of Intangible Cultural Heritage echoes UNESCO's work on defining and recognizing intangible cultural heritage and provides a foundational understanding. (UNESCO, 2003). The Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) framework emphasizes collaborative knowledge creation. This model promotes ethical, empowering preservation practices in partnership with communities. (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008). The Postcolonial Archival framework critically examines power dynamics in archival work, advocating for culturally sensitive approaches to documentation and description. (Caswell, Cifor, & Ramirez, 2016). The Decolonizing Methodologies framework challenges traditional power hierarchies and emphasizes indigenous knowledge systems, framing libraries as potential sites for decolonization efforts in cultural heritage. (Smith, 2021). The Mukurtu Content Management System (CMS) framework was designed specifically with community control and indigenous knowledge in mind. Mukurtu offers granular control over access, descriptions, and cultural protocols. (Christen, 2005).

The Sustainable Heritage Network framework is a collaborative online tool facilitating partnerships between cultural heritage institutions and community stakeholders, promoting best practices and resource sharing. <https://sustainableheritagenetwork.org/about>

Methodology

This research adopted a qualitative methodology to investigate the role of Nigerian libraries in documenting and preserving the nation's diverse cultural heritage. Data collection was done mainly through semi-structured interviews. The interview was conducted recently with Librarians, archivists, community representatives, and cultural experts selected from the six geopolitical zones. Purposeful sampling guided the selection of the respondents. A sample size of 15 was deemed appropriate because of the qualitative nature of the Study. The interview was done to reveal active cultural archiving initiatives, the intricacies of their practices, the challenges they face, and the successes they've achieved. It also allowed the exploration of lived experiences, indicating the motivations of both librarians and community members involved in preservation efforts. It also isolated collective perspectives on the value of cultural preservation, and the role of community participation. Data analysis utilized a thematic approach to identify patterns, divergences, and significant themes from the interviews. These themes centered on challenges faced, success factors enabling effective practice, best practices for libraries, community-library dynamics, and the role of technology in preservation.

This research reveals that Nigerian libraries play a complex and varied role in archiving the nation's untold stories. Libraries demonstrated a strong commitment to preserving the nation's cultural heritage, collecting various materials including oral histories, genealogies, traditional music and dance performances, and even photographs and historical artifacts. However, a central theme was resource scarcity: limited funding, inadequate technology, and a lack of specialized staff hindered the scope and sustainability of preservation initiatives. This highlights the impact of sociocultural change, where traditional knowledge is less valued, thus impacting the resources libraries receive. Also, smaller libraries demonstrated more ties to their communities thus preserving cultural elements. In contrast, larger university and national libraries were found to engage in broader digitization projects but experienced somewhat of a disconnect between their efforts and the priorities of the communities they serve.

Funding limitations were found to be a universal challenge, limiting libraries' ability to purchase essential technology, maintain digital archives, and hire trained specialists in oral history and cultural preservation. This lack of resources has led some libraries to prioritize the preservation of text-based artifacts over more ephemeral forms of cultural heritage. Technological barriers, including inconsistent internet access and limited technical expertise, further complicate efforts, particularly in nonurban libraries.

The study shed light on diverse perspectives on community collaboration. Some librarians expressed a genuine desire for partnership but lack established frameworks for building trust and addressing some questions of cultural ownership. In some areas with strong community organizations, there's evidence of successful initiatives where communities lead preservation efforts, with libraries offering technical or archival support. Respondents across all libraries emphasized the importance of ensuring that communities themselves benefit from the preservation of their heritage.

There were a range of approaches to technology. While librarians see digitization as essential, challenges with equipment, digital storage, and navigating ever-evolving technology platforms emerged as significant concerns. Interviews revealed the need for not only technical resources but community participation in the process to ensure that archiving aligns with local use patterns and doesn't worsen digital divides.

Access provision varied across libraries. Some created limited research-only archives due to concerns about cultural misrepresentation and potential commercial exploitation. Others, driven by a desire to widely disseminate knowledge, are exploring open-access models but struggle with balancing intellectual property concerns and equitable access within a digital environment.

Community collaboration arose as the pivotal factor for successful archiving. Libraries with established relationships based on trust and shared decision-making had more impactful outcomes. Communities expressed a strong desire to retain ownership of their cultural heritage while appreciating the potential for wider dissemination. Deep-seated concerns exist around intellectual property, misrepresentation, and the potential for cultural appropriation. This underscores the need for clear protocols developed *with* communities rather than imposed on them.

Importantly, the findings underscored concerns about the impact of rapid sociocultural change on libraries' ability to fulfill their mission. Urbanization and Western educational models are perceived as weakening intergenerational knowledge transfer, making libraries important sites for safeguarding heritage that is at risk of disappearing altogether.

Despite intentions, findings highlighted the persistent influence of external pressures on libraries' preservation efforts. National policies often neglect intangible heritage or prioritize physical artifacts and monuments. This leads to a lack of clear support structures and standardized practices for libraries engaged in this work. Librarians passionately advocated for their role as cultural custodians and educating policymakers. Additionally, the research highlighted a lack of national policy frameworks designed to support libraries in this important role. While librarians express a strong sense of responsibility for preserving cultural heritage, they consistently call for government recognition, targeted funding, and policy structures that empower them to collaborate effectively with communities to protect Nigeria's rich and varied cultural legacy.

Finally, the absence of a clear national policy framework hampers library initiatives. While librarians expressed a strong desire to safeguard cultural heritage, inconsistencies in support and a lack of targeted legislation created uncertainty about their long-term role in preservation efforts. This led to proactive efforts at advocacy, with librarians positioning themselves as educators to bridge the gap between policymakers and the cultural realities on the ground.

Conclusions

This research has shed light on the central role Nigerian libraries play in documenting and preserving the country's rich but vulnerable cultural heritage. The findings underscore that libraries are dedicated to this mission, actively archiving a wide range of cultural expressions, including oral traditions, music, knowledge systems, and material artifacts. However, their efforts are often constrained by limited financial and technical resources, lack of specialized expertise, and the complicated logistical challenges of community collaboration.

Despite these challenges, libraries embrace technology as a powerful tool for preservation and recognize the imperative of community-centered approaches that prioritize respect, dialogue, and shared ownership of cultural heritage. The absence of strong national policies advocating for cultural preservation within libraries remains a considerable barrier, requiring sustained advocacy efforts. Importantly, the study reinforces the transformative potential of these initiatives in fostering intergenerational knowledge sharing, strengthening community identity, and ultimately ensuring the accessibility of Nigeria's diverse cultural legacy for generations to come.

Recommendations

Based on this research, the following recommendations are proposed:

Policy Reform.

1. National policy recognizing libraries' role in preserving diverse cultural heritage must be institutionalized.
2. Dedicated funding streams for cultural archiving initiatives within libraries must be implemented.
3. National guidelines and ethical frameworks for community-library partnerships on cultural heritage preservation, addressing intellectual property and community rights should be developed.

Capacity Building.

1. Specialized training for librarians and archivists in cultural heritage preservation techniques, including oral history methods, digitization practices, and metadata management for diverse cultural materials should be provided.
2. Partnerships and knowledge exchange between libraries and cultural institutions for broader expertise sharing should be facilitated.

Technology.

1. There should be an investment in affordable and adaptable technological solutions for smaller libraries.
2. Long-term preservation and accessibility planning in tandem with the adoption of digital technologies should be prioritized.
3. Collaborative platforms allowing for controlled and equitable sharing of cultural heritage materials between libraries to maximize access while respecting community sensitivities should be explored.

Strengthening Community Collaboration.

1. Libraries should be encouraged to adopt principles from Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR), moving towards models of empowered co-creation of knowledge with communities.
2. Accessible protocols and agreements for fair use of cultural heritage materials, ensuring community input, and addressing potential instances of commercialization or misrepresentation should be developed.

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EMPOWERING LIBRARIANS WITH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES IN THE LIBRARIES OF THE FIFTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION (5IR)

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ABSTRACT

The paper advocates for an inclusive approach to integrating AI skills and competencies into library services and ensures that librarians are equipped to navigate the technological advancements of the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR). The objectives of the study aim to assess the current level of AI skills and competencies among librarians in libraries operating in the context of the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR); identify the specific AI skills and competencies necessary for librarians to utilize emerging technologies in libraries, and identify the key challenges faced by librarians in acquiring and applying AI skills and competencies in 5IR libraries. The paper employed a qualitative research approach of systematic literature review. The paper purposively harvested literature from the databases of Google Scholar, Springer, and Emerald. Articles published between 2019 and 2024 were considered for this exploration. The paper further emphasizes the importance of empowering librarians to adapt to the evolving landscape of information and technology, ultimately aiming to ensure that no one is left behind in this digital age. The paper recommends that Libraries should prioritize providing comprehensive and ongoing training programs to enhance librarians' AI skills and competencies, and libraries should encourage collaboration among librarians and AI experts to share best practices, experiences, and innovative approaches to integrating AI into library services.

Keywords: AI, digital literacy skills, diversity and inclusion, librarians, library services, 5IR.

1. Introduction

The Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR) is characterized by the convergence of digital, physical, and biological technologies which herald a new era of innovation and transformation across industries. As society transitions into this era, libraries play a crucial role in bridging the digital divide and ensuring access to information for all. However, to fulfill their mission effectively in the 5IR landscape, librarians are expected to possess the necessary AI skills and competencies. As noted by Eiriemiokhale and Sulyman (2023), libraries have long been regarded as bastions of knowledge and learning, serving as community hubs that provide access to information, resources, and services. In the 5IR, libraries are facing unprecedented challenges and opportunities. The rapid advancement of technology, particularly AI, is transforming the way information is generated, accessed, processed, and disseminated to diverse user communities. For this to happen, libraries are required to adapt to these changes in order to survive, remain relevant and continue to fulfill their role as information providers and educators.

The essence of empowering librarians with AI skills and competencies is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, AI has the potential to enhance library services and improve user experience. By leveraging AI technologies, libraries now streamline their operations, automate routine tasks, and provide personalized services to patrons. Secondly, AI helps librarians manage the vast amounts of data available in the digital age which makes it easier to organize and retrieve information. Lastly, AI enables librarians to engage with new technologies and stay abreast of emerging trends in information management and services. Given these analyses, the role of librarians in the 5IR is evolving. Traditionally, librarians have been responsible for curating and organizing information. However, in the 5IR, librarians are increasingly being called upon to act as mediators between AI technology and library patrons (Adjei, 2023). They must not only possess the technical skills to harness AI tools but also the critical thinking and problem-solving skills to evaluate and contextualize AI-generated information.

The implications of the 5IR on libraries and information services are profound. This is why Weijia (2022) submits that libraries are expected to adapt to the changing needs and expectations of patrons in the digital age. This requires investing in new technologies, such as AI, and providing training and support to librarians to ensure they are equipped to navigate the complexities of the 5IR landscape (Enakrire & Oladokun, 2023; Masenya & Chisita, 2022; Omame & Alex-Nmecha, 2020). Consequently, failure to do so risks leaving behind marginalized communities who may not have access to the resources and services offered by libraries.

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of empowering librarians with AI skills and competencies in the libraries of the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR), there is a noticeable gap in the existing literature. A comprehensive review of academic databases, journals, and publications reveals a scarcity of research specifically focused on this critical intersection of librarianship and emerging technologies. Several studies reveal that while some libraries have begun to incorporate AI into their services, many are still lagging (Adjei, 2023; Masenya & Chisita, 2022; Samah et al., 2020). While there is extensive literature on the role of libraries in the digital age and the impact of AI on various industries, there is a lack of in-depth exploration into the specific skills and competencies required by librarians to effectively utilize AI in 5IR libraries. Existing studies have only covered the awareness, readiness, and application of AI technologies in libraries but lack evidence or insights into the area of skills and competencies required for utilizing AI in the 5IR libraries. Furthermore, the few studies that do touch upon this topic often focus on the technical aspects of AI implementation in libraries, neglecting the broader implications for librarianship and information services. There is a notable absence of research that examines the dimensions of empowering librarians with AI skills in the context of 5IR libraries. Hence the need for the study to bridge the existing gap in knowledge.

Finally, this gap in the literature is a pointer to the need for further research to address this critical issue. The outcome of this paper would not only contribute to our understanding of the evolving role of librarians in the digital age but also provide valuable insights into the specific skills and competencies required to navigate the complexities of 5IR libraries. In so doing, this study harvests and analyzes relevant literature to fill this identified gap and provide a foundation for future research and practice in empowering librarians with AI skills and competencies in the libraries of 5IR.

1.1 Research objectives

1. To assess the current level of AI skills and competencies among librarians in libraries operating in the context of the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR).
2. Identify the specific AI skills and competencies necessary for librarians to utilize emerging technologies in library services
3. To identify the key challenges faced by librarians in acquiring and applying AI skills and competencies in 5IR libraries.

1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions served as a tool to refine the study's focus and guide the analysis of findings from the systematic literature review (SLR) conducted by Guyatt et al. (2008). These questions were instrumental in filtering the research results and drawing relevant conclusions from the selected literature. By formulating a general research question and breaking it down into four specific questions (Q1, Q2, and Q3), the study maintained a clear focus on various aspects. Table 1 outlines the proposed research questions for conducting the SLR and their respective purposes.

Table 1: Research Questions and Their Purpose

General research question		
How can librarians be empowered with AI skills and competencies to ensure inclusivity and address the challenges posed by the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR) in library settings, while ensuring that no one is left behind?	Q1: What is the current level of AI skills and competencies among librarians working in libraries operating within the context of the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR)?	To assess and understand the existing proficiency levels of AI skills and competencies among librarians who are operating in libraries within the context of the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR).
	Q2: What specific AI skills and competencies are required for librarians to effectively utilize emerging technologies in library services?	To identify and delineate the specific AI skills and competencies that librarians need in order to proficiently utilize emerging technologies within library services.

	Q3: What are the key challenges faced by librarians in acquiring and applying AI skills and competencies in libraries operating within the context of the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR)?	To identify and understand the primary obstacles and difficulties encountered by librarians as they strive to acquire and apply AI skills and competencies within libraries operating in the context of the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR).
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2. Methodology

2.1 Research Approach

The paper employed a qualitative research approach of systematic literature review. Articles published between 2019 and 2024 were considered for this exploration. Focusing on articles published within this five-year window ensures that the review captures the most current trends, methodologies, and findings in the field. A systematic literature review is a rigorous research approach that involves following a specific review protocol and quality procedures to select relevant studies, extract information, and analyze data to answer specific research questions (Tjebane et al., 2022). This method has been widely used in various fields to explore different topics, including competencies and skills related to librarianship (Aryanto, 2020; Vera-Rivera et al., 2021; Ali et al., 2022; Cox & Mazumdar, 2022; Khrushch, 2023).

For this research, the SLR was conducted by searching for literature sources through the journal databases of Google Scholar, Springer, and Emerald. The SLR opened up the possibility of synthesizing the findings on librarian competencies, AI applications in libraries, and strategic perspectives on AI for librarians. This becomes evident that a systematic approach is crucial for understanding and enhancing librarians' skills and competencies in the era of the Fifth Industrial Revolution.

2.2 Keywords and Criteria Used for Research

Having established the research questions, we looked through journal databases selected for this study with the use of series of keywords that helped to gather enough information while keeping the research within the same field (in this case, librarianship). For this research, the series of keywords used to filter the search results in each of the different journal databases selected were the following:

((“Librarians” AND (“AI skills” OR “AI competencies” OR “current AI skills” OR “challenges”) AND (“5IR” OR “fifth industrial revolution”))

The keywords facilitated the sorting of literature retrieved from databases and the review of articles relevant to the study subject. However, for a more comprehensive understanding, additional criteria were employed to exclude articles not aligned with the research's objectives. Table 2 outlines the criteria used to refine the selection process.

Table 2: Article inclusion and exclusion criteria

Criterion	Criterion description	Inclusion and exclusion status
Language	Articles written in English	Article is included
Year of publication	Articles published in the five years	Article is included
Field	Articles that are related to librarians' AI competencies	Article is included
	Articles that are related to librarians' current AI skills	Article is included
	Articles that are related to the 5IR	Article is included
Article content	Article does not mention Librarians AI skills	Article is not included

	The article does not mention librarian's AI competences	Article is not included
	Articles that have high similarities across databases	Article is not included
	Article data are inconclusive	Article is not included
Relevance of content	The article talks about current AI skills and competencies for librarians	Article is included
	The article talks about challenges of acquiring or applying AI skills in the 5IR	Article is included

After applying these criteria, a series of articles were collected. The number of articles found in each database searched is shown below

Table 3: Number of Articles Found in Each Journal Database Searched

Journal Database	Number Of Articles
Springer	3
Google Scholar	9
Emerald	6
Total	17

3. Results and discussion

The data collected for this SLR created a better understanding of the objectives of this study. Through a comprehensive analysis of existing studies, this SLR uncovered valuable insights into the current level of AI skills among librarians, the required AI skills and the challenges faced by librarians in acquiring and applying AI skills in the 5IR. To answer each of the research questions, the findings regarding the current level of AI skills and competencies among librarians, the specific AI skills and the challenges faced by librarians were organized into different categories. The categorization is found in Table

Table 4: Categorisation of Selected Articles

Research Question	Article Title	Author(S)	Category
Q1: What is the current level of AI skills and competencies among librarians working in libraries operating within the context of the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR)?	Top trends in academic libraries: A review of the trends and issues	Research Planning and Review Committee (2022)	Current level of AI skills and competencies among librarians
	Artificial intelligence tools and perspectives of university librarians: an overview	Ali et al. (2020)	
	Perceptions toward artificial intelligence among academic library employees and alignment with the diffusion of innovations' adopter categories.	Lund et al. (2020)	
	Malaysian research-support librarians' self-directed learning traits: examining demographic differences and their relationship with competencies.	Samah et al. (2020)	
	A study on the knowledge and perception of artificial intelligence.	Subaveerapandiyan(2023)	

Q2: What specific AI skills and competencies are required for librarians to effectively	Capabilities and apparent implications of artificial intelligence (AI) adoption in Nigerian academic libraries	Akinola(2023)	Required specific AI skills and competencies for librarians
	Artificial intelligence application in university libraries of Pakistan: SWOT analysis and implications	Ali (2022)	
	Metaverse-infused academic libraries: a glimpse into the future.	Amzat & Adewojo (2023)	
	Emerging technologies: leveraging digital literacy for self-sufficiency among library professionals	Diseiye (2023)	
	Leaders, practitioners and scientists' awareness of artificial intelligence in libraries: a pilot study	Harisanty (2022)	
Q2: What specific AI skills and competencies are required for librarians to effectively utilize emerging technologies in library services?	Artificial intelligence Capabilities and apparent implications of artificial intelligence (AI) adoption in Nigerian academic libraries	Intahchomphoo & Akinola(2023)	Required specific AI skills and competencies for librarians
	Artificial intelligence application in university libraries of Pakistan: SWOT analysis and implications	Ali (2022)	
	Metaverse-infused academic libraries: a glimpse into the future.	Amzat & Adewojo (2023)	
	Emerging technologies: leveraging digital literacy for self-sufficiency among library professionals	Diseiye (2023)	
	Leaders, practitioners and scientists' awareness of artificial intelligence in libraries: a pilot study	Harisanty (2022)	
	Artificial intelligence and race: a systematic review	Intahchomphoo & Gundersen (2020)	
	Digital environment in academic libraries: leveraging on advanced information communication technologies for better service delivery	Ngoaketsi (2021)	

	A study on the knowledge and perception of artificial intelligence.	Subaveerapandiyan (2023)	
	Comparative analysis of ai applications in libraries: a systematic literature review.	Tang (2023)	
	Artificial intelligence tools and perspectives of university librarians: an overview.	Ali et al.(2020)	
	Metaverse-infused academic libraries: a glimpse into the future	Amzat & Adewojo (2023)	
	Changing behavior of academic libraries and role of library professionals.	Aslam, M.	

Table 4 shows how librarians can be empowered with AI skills and competencies to ensure inclusivity and address the challenges posed by the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR) in library settings, while ensuring that no one is left behind. As shown in the table. Three categories were generated. The analysis of each article's content helped to answer the research questions of this study. The analysis and answers to these questions are presented in the following sections of this paper.

1.1 Current level of AI skills and competencies among librarians in libraries operating in the context of the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR).

Librarians in the context of the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR) are facing a transition where the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) skills and competencies is becoming increasingly important. Several studies shed light on the current level of AI skills among librarians and provide insights into their competencies in this evolving landscape.

A study by Samah et al. (2020) revealed that Malaysian research-support librarians exhibit competencies at a medium level, indicating a baseline understanding of AI technologies (Samah et al., 2020). Similarly, Ali et al. (2020) highlighted that librarians are aware of AI tools and technologies, suggesting a foundational knowledge of AI within the librarian community (Ali et al., 2020). However, a recent survey indicated that while nearly 80 percent of research librarians are exploring the use of AI and machine learning, only about 5 percent are currently leveraging the technology ("Research Planning and Review Committee", 2022).

Moreover, Lund et al. (2020) found that there is a growing interest and optimism among librarians towards AI, positioning them as early adopters of AI technologies (Lund et al., 2020). This aligns with the notion that academic libraries are ready to delve deeper into AI applications, potentially warranting further funding for AI initiatives (Lund et al., 2020). Furthermore, the study by Ali et al. (2022) on the application of artificial intelligence in university libraries in Pakistan emphasizes the potential benefits of AI for librarians supporting researchers with systematic reviews. This suggests that librarians can leverage AI tools to enhance their skills and competencies in providing efficient services, aligning with the theme of empowering librarians with AI skills.

While there is recognition of the importance of AI skills among librarians, there is a gap in studies focusing on librarians' soft skills and competencies in the age of AI (Subaveerapandiyan, 2023). This indicates a need for more research to understand the holistic skill set required for librarians to navigate the complexities of AI integration in libraries. In light of these findings, it is evident that librarians possess a foundational understanding of AI technologies, but there is room for growth and development in leveraging AI tools to their full potential. Libraries may benefit from targeted training programs and resources to enhance librarians' AI competencies and ensure they are well-equipped to navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by the 5IR.

1.2 Specific AI skills and competencies necessary for librarians to utilize emerging technologies in library services

Librarians today are increasingly required to possess specific AI skills and competencies to effectively utilize emerging technologies in library services. Several studies highlight the importance of librarians acquiring AI skills to enhance library operations and user experiences. The integration of AI in libraries

presents opportunities for personalized learning experiences, efficient resource management, and global collaboration (Amzat & Adewojo 2023; Ali et al., 2022). However, challenges such as funding, technical skills, and librarian attitudes hinder the full utilization of AI in library services (Ngoaketsi, 2021). To address these challenges, libraries develop plans, and policies, and provide training to librarians with the necessary AI skills (Akinola, 2023).

In the context of empowering librarians with AI skills and competencies in the libraries of the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR), systematic literature reviews have been conducted to analyze the current status of research related to librarians' competencies and skills. For instance, Aryanto (2020) focused on knowledge management systems related to librarian competencies and skills, while Khrushch (2023) analyzed the competencies of library specialists and their influence on the formation of innovative media space. These studies highlight the importance of understanding the competencies required for librarians to adapt to technological advancements like AI in library settings.

Additionally, the work by Cox & Mazumdar (2022) provides a conceptual exploration of artificial intelligence for librarians from a strategic perspective, which can be valuable in understanding how AI may impact librarianship as a profession. Moreover, the study by Vera-Rivera et al. (2021) on defining and measuring microservice granularity through a literature overview showcases the importance of research trends and gaps identification, which can be relevant when exploring AI competencies for librarians in the 5IR libraries.

Librarians need to be proficient in AI to guide users in utilizing library resources effectively (Intahchomphoo & Gundersen, 2020). AI technologies have the potential to enhance core library services such as acquisitions, cataloging, classification, information retrieval, and library systems (Harisanty et al., 2022). Librarians are encouraged to continuously learn and develop in-demand skills to function in the digital environment of academic libraries and provide efficient information services (Subaveerapandiyana, 2023). Additionally, librarians working on AI projects should be skilled in validating dataset quality and locating datasets for AI research teams (Diseiye, 2023).

Furthermore, the literature emphasizes that librarians should consider the implications of AI implementation, including technology and facilities, librarian proficiency in AI, and leadership roles in AI initiatives (Tang, 2023). Librarians are seen as information navigators in the digital age and must cultivate digital literacy skills to adapt to emerging technologies. The application of AI in libraries is not only a technological development but also a strategic choice to enhance library services.

It is safe to say that librarians must equip themselves with AI skills and competencies in order to leverage emerging technologies effectively in library services. By addressing challenges, providing training, and staying updated on AI advancements, librarians can enhance user experiences, improve operational efficiency, and stay relevant in the evolving digital landscape of libraries.

1.3 Key challenges faced by librarians in acquiring and applying AI skills and competencies in 5IR libraries.

Librarians in libraries transitioning to the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR) face several key challenges when acquiring and applying AI skills and competencies. These challenges stem from various factors such as the technical complexity of implementing AI, the need for significant resources, and the requirement for new skills and competencies (Amzat & Adewojo, 2023). Academic libraries, in particular, are confronted with challenges related to funding and the lack of technological skills necessary for successful AI implementation (Ali et al., 2020). Moreover, the application of AI in libraries, especially in developing countries, presents practical challenges that need to be addressed to ensure successful integration (Barsha & Munshi, 2023).

One significant challenge faced by librarians is the need to develop new competencies to navigate the changing landscape of libraries influenced by AI technologies (Aslam, 2021). Librarians must adapt to evolving sociotechnical challenges and update their core professional competencies to align with the demands of the digital age (Hu et al., 2022). Additionally, the implementation of AI in library services requires practical solutions to overcome challenges specific to developing countries (Barsha & Munshi, 2023).

Furthermore, the ethical implications of AI in libraries pose a challenge that librarians must address. Maintaining the quality of data, ensuring the intelligibility of decisions made by AI systems, and addressing ethical concerns are crucial aspects that librarians need to consider when integrating AI technologies (Borghain et al., 2022). The reliability and ethical use of AI systems present challenges that require careful consideration and competence in navigating these complex issues (Pflanzer et al., 2022).

2. Conclusion

The study explores the current level of AI skills and competencies among librarians in the context of the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR), revealing a foundational understanding of AI technologies but also highlighting significant gaps. Librarians exhibit a medium level of AI competency, indicating a basic grasp of AI tools and their potential applications. Despite widespread awareness and exploration of AI among librarians, actual implementation remains limited, with only a small percentage actively leveraging these technologies. This implies that while librarians are poised to adopt AI, there is a crucial need for enhanced training and resources to fully realize AI's potential in library services.

Specific AI skills and competencies necessary for librarians include proficiency in using AI for personalized learning experiences, efficient resource management, and global collaboration. Studies emphasize the importance of continuous learning and the development of in-demand skills to function effectively in the digital environment. Librarians must be adept at integrating AI into core library services such as acquisitions, cataloging, and information retrieval.

However, the challenges faced by librarians in acquiring and applying AI skills are multifaceted. Technical complexity, resource constraints, and the need for new competencies are significant barriers. Academic libraries, especially in developing countries, encounter additional hurdles related to funding and technological infrastructure. Furthermore, ethical considerations, such as maintaining data quality and ensuring the intelligibility and reliability of AI decisions, pose critical challenges. Addressing these issues requires a concerted effort to provide targeted training, develop strategic plans, and foster a culture of continuous professional development among librarians.

3. Recommendations

Based on the findings discussed in this paper, the following recommendations were proposed:

1. *Libraries and institutions should prioritize providing comprehensive and ongoing training programs to enhance librarians' AI skills and competencies. These programs should encompass both technical aspects of AI tools and technologies as well as soft skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and digital literacy.*
2. *Libraries should encourage collaboration among librarians and AI experts to share best practices, experiences, and innovative approaches to integrating AI into library services. Additionally, librarians should attend conferences, workshops, and webinars, and participate in online communities to remain informed and adaptive to changes in the field.*
3. *Management of libraries should advocate for increased funding and resources dedicated to AI initiatives in libraries. They should seek out grants, partnerships, and funding opportunities to support the implementation of AI technologies and training programs.*

4. Implications of the Study

The study has significant implications for both policy and practice. From a policy perspective, there's a need for strategic planning and resource allocation to support the development of AI skills among librarians. This could involve initiatives such as funding for training programs, partnerships with educational institutions or AI experts, and the establishment of standards or guidelines for AI integration in library services.

In terms of practice, librarians must actively engage in continuous learning and professional development to keep pace with evolving AI technologies. This could involve attending workshops, online courses, or conferences focused on AI in libraries. Additionally, librarians should collaborate with AI experts and other stakeholders to explore innovative ways of integrating AI into library services, such as implementing chatbots for user assistance, utilizing AI-driven cataloging systems, or developing personalized recommendation algorithms for patrons. Furthermore, there's a crucial role for library administrators and decision-makers to play in fostering a culture of innovation and experimentation within libraries. This might involve creating incentives for staff to explore and implement AI solutions, providing access to resources and technology infrastructure, and encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration between librarians, and technologists.

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ENHANCING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA AT SHAGARI QUARTERS & SABON GARI DISTRICT IN DAURA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KATSINA STATE

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Abstract

Social media platforms has emerged as one of the most significant and transformative technologies, it has become an integral part of the community engagement processes, with technological gadgets and software equipped with skills such as content creation, blogging, tripAdvisor and adapting to new situations, and interaction. The objective of this study is to explore the feelings, experiences and opinions of inhabitant of a community regarding their choices on social media usage for community engagement in Shagari Quarters and Sabon Gari all in the district area of Daura local government in Katsina State, Nigeria. Quantitative research methodology and survey design was adopted for the research. The questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. The population of the study comprised of the entire adult in the aforementioned district area in Daura local government in Katsina State. The subjects of the study were drawn using proportionate simple random sampling technique. The study discovered almost same opinions about the use and effectiveness of social media for community engagement. It was therefore recommended that digital literacy trainings for effective social media platforms used should be organized for the people in their various community bases. This will help enhance community engagement and facilitate developmental project.

Key words: *Community engagement, Social media, Outreach and Involvement.*

Introduction

Today it is a widespread notion that social media has revolutionized the way communities interact, engage, and collaborate. Social media can be broadly defined as the set of interactive internet applications that facilitate (collaborative or individual) creation, curation, and sharing of users-generated content. Examples of social media platforms are numerous and varied. They include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Whatsapp, Wikipedia etc. all share mostly same characteristics, but are unique from one another in many respects. In particular, the platforms often vary in their architectures, structures, norms, and users bases. However, all the social media platforms listed above have become essential tools for fostering community engagement, providing real-time communication channels that transcend geographical boundaries. They empower individuals, organizations, and governments to connect with their communities in dynamic and meaningful ways, facilitating the exchange of information, ideas, and support.

Furthermore, in today's digital age, more and more individuals are turning to social media platforms to connect with others, share their thoughts and experiences, and stay informed about the world around them. Social media platform also remain a powerful tools for engaging and bringing together communities by building relationships, promoting community engagement, and fostering meaning connections.

In an effort to differentiate between different kinds of social media platforms, scholars distinguish and label several subsets of social media, with a particular emphasis on social networks sites. Boyd and Ellison (2017) explicitly differentiate social networks sites from social networking sites. They argue that social networking implies meeting new people and making new connections, which contrasts with actual users practices. Specifically, social network site users tend to interact with existing-rather than new-social contacts. Examples of social network sites include Facebook, Myspace, YouTube, and LiveJournal.

A second subcategory of social media consists of microblogging sites. These allow users to distribute short messages to a broad audience, often through links and images. Such sites have explicit limits on the number of characters or amount of content allowed per message. Social media can be seen as a medium through which identities are “presumed” or simultaneously produced and consumed. Social actors come to know themselves by seeing what they do, and how others respond to them. By producing and consuming profiled content, social actors produce and consume selves and identities into being (Davis, 2022).

Social media has been referred to as “social media sites” (Diga & Kelleher, 2009), or a set of information technologies which facilitate interactions and networking (Kapoor et al. 2017; Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013).

Kane et al. (2014) extends this definition by adding that users should be able to create and access digital content. These definitions enhance the technical definition of Kaplan and Haenlein by adding the “connection” element (list of interconnected users) and a “human element (profiles).

Social media has greatly impacted the way individuals and communities engage with each other. With the widespread use of social media platforms, people are now able to connect and communicate in ways that were previously not possible. This has had a profound effect on community engagement, both positively and negatively.

Similarly, social media has affected community engagement by increasing accessibility and breaking down geographical barriers. With a click of a button, people can now connect with others from all over the world, allowing for a more diverse and global exchange of ideas and perspectives.

Statement of the Problem

At present the development of social media has brought about unprecedented reengineering in the way and manner communities engaged and connect to each other. In specific terms, social media platforms such as Facebook, twitter, instagram, linkedln, e-mail etc, have the potential to engage community through communication, assessment, and feedback thereby providing an opportunity to increase collaboration irrespective of their location (Mayank, & Zillur, 2018). The widespread use of social media through community engagement has resulted in a number of developments among communities. However, it yet not clear whether community engagement through social media appreciate and view the platforms as important resources in support of their engagement and communication, despite their numerous opportunities (Oyza & Agwu, 2016). One factor that contributes to this ambiguity is the constantly evolving nature of social media platforms. With new platforms emerging and existing ones constantly updating their features, there can be confusion or hesitation among community members about which platform is best suited for engaging with their preferred organization or cause. There was little literature to show the impact of social media platform for community engagements. This uncertain narrative created a gap which inspired the researcher to explore the community engagement through social media.

Research Question

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What types of social media platform does community use for effective outreach and involvement engagement?
2. How effective is the social media platform used by the community for outreach and involvement engagement?

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

1. To identify key social media platforms for community engagement
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of different types of social media content and strategies

Literature Review

Broadly, a community is a group of people who are united because they share a sense of belonging. For example, they can share histories, experiences, interests, values, beliefs, customs, religious, skills, identities and so on. Individuals may also be a part of a community based on where they live, work or socialize.

A community is a group of individuals who come together based on shared interests, values, or a common purpose. They interact, support each other, and often have a sense of belonging, fostering connections and relationships within the group. Building a strong community on social media can significantly boost the growth of your platform. Communities provide several advantages for social media growth.

On the other way, community engagement takes place when individuals and groups from the community collaboratively work together to address and solve issues that affects them (Tamarak, 2021). It is when people develop a sense of collective vision or collective ownership of the community and implements changes for the benefit of their community.

Community engagement is essential to building and improving vibrant communities because it encourages citizens to identify and address local ideas, concerns and opportunities. Community work is all about getting people on board to contribute to positive changes in communities by working together towards and advocating for change.

Furthermore, community engagement involves active participation and collaboration between community members and various stakeholders to address common issues, promote social cohesion, and enhance collective well-being. Social media has amplified the potential for such engagement by offering a versatile and accessible means for outreach and interaction. It allows for the dissemination of information, mobilization of resources, and coordination of activities in a manner that is both immediate and far-reaching.

Several scholars have explored how social media platforms enhance community engagement. Smith (2018) posits that social media facilitates real-time communication and provides a space for diverse voices, thereby enhancing inclusivity and participation. By allowing instant updates and feedback, social media bridges the gap between community members and organizations, fostering a sense of belonging and immediate involvement (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

According to Briones et al. (2011), social media platforms enable the creation of virtual communities where members can interact, share experiences, and mobilize around common causes. These virtual interactions often translate into real-world actions, thereby strengthening community bonds and collective efficacy. Similarly, Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) found that social media encourages both informational and dialogic communication, which are crucial for effective community engagement. Similarly, Walther & Parks, (2002) in their study affirmed that social media is a powerful tool for community engagement, offering numerous benefits such as enhanced reach, interactivity, and real-time communication. The use of interactive and visual content, authenticity, and responsiveness are effective strategies for effective community engagement. However, challenges such as the digital divide, misinformation, and online harassment must be addressed to fully harness the potential of social media for community engagement. Social media platforms represent personalized and participatory engagement in which community become contributors to content and creators of effective outreach and involvement in community engagement rather than just passive targets (Adnan & Ahmad, 2017).

The Role of Social Media in Community Engagement

The importance of social media in community engagement cannot be over emphasized, it extends beyond mere communication. It enables the creation of virtual communities where members can share experiences, express concerns, and provide feedback. This participatory approach not only strengthens the sense of belonging and trust within communities but also empowers individuals to contribute to decision-making processes. Through likes, shares, comments, and hash tags, community members can actively participate in discussions, advocate for causes, and initiate change.

According to Neiger et al. (2013), social media extends the reach of community engagement efforts, enabling organizations to connect with a broader audience. This wide reach is particularly beneficial for engaging with hard-to-reach or underrepresented groups. In the same vein, Houston, et al. (2015) was of the opinion that social media facilitates the rapid dissemination of information and the mobilization of resources. In emergency situations, social media has proven to be an invaluable tool for coordinating responses and providing real-time updates. It also enables grassroots movements to gain momentum quickly, as seen in various social and political movements around the world (Tufekci, 2017). The primary goals of social media platform are creating awareness, enhancing brand image, acquiring new friends, cultivating relationships, and increasing awareness (Ismail, 2017).

Furthermore, social media platforms provide a unique opportunity to reach diverse and often underrepresented groups. By leveraging targeted content and inclusive strategies, organizations can ensure that their messages resonate with a wide audience. This inclusivity is critical in addressing the needs and aspirations of all community members, thereby fostering a more equitable and engaged society.

However, the use of social media for community engagement is not without challenges. Issues such as digital divides, misinformation, and online harassment can undermine the effectiveness of these platforms, ensuring that engagement efforts are genuine, transparent, and respectful is paramount to building and maintaining trust within the community.

In summary, social media has emerged as a powerful tool for community engagement, offering unprecedented opportunities for interaction, collaboration, and participation. By understanding and harnessing the potential of these platforms, stakeholders can enhance their engagement strategies, leading to more vibrant, connected, and resilient communities.

Effective Use of Social Media Platform

In order to attract and engage people, community must effectively use social media platforms. Effective use is defined as planning objectives directed towards an aspired effect (Burches, & Burches, 2020). On social media platforms, interacting with community and engaging them is recommended to use these platforms effectively (Nimet, Gokhan, & Gokhan, et al. 2021) also understanding how these platforms work and what motivates an individual to use them (Burton-Jones and Grange, 2013).

From Clyne's (2019) view, community's activity on social media should not be limited to just posting and sharing but should involve users by asking them about their opinions, distributing surveys, contests, and prizes. Thus, a central element of using social media effectively is to attract engagement (Shell, 2020).

Effective social media engagement strategies have been a focal point of research. Waters et al. (2009) highlight the importance of interactivity in social media content. Interactive features such as live videos, polls, and Q&A sessions significantly increase user participation and engagement (Jones & Kim, 2019). Visual content, particularly images and videos, tends to attract higher engagement rates compared to text-based posts (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013).

Greenberg and MacAulay (2009) emphasize the need for authenticity and responsiveness in social media interactions. Authentic communication helps build trust, while timely responses to comments and queries show that the organization values community input. Bortree and Seltzer (2009) also underline the importance of transparency and openness in social media communication, as these qualities help establish credibility and trustworthiness.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative approach with descriptive survey design. According to Nworgu (2015) descriptive survey is concerned with systematic description of events, phenomenon and situations as they are, because it is aimed at collecting data on something and describing the characteristics and facts about the community of a given study. Social media as a strategy for community engagement for effective outreach and involvement, quantitative approach was appropriate because using it will facilitate gathering people's attitudes and behaviors. The researcher use quantitative method to solicit responses to closed-ended questions and to capture accurate data enabling the discovery of new thoughts and individual views (Yin, 2018).

The population of the study comprises of all people living in district of shagari quarters and sabon gari in Daura local government area of Katsina State respectively. A total of 1,450 people made up of the adult in the community.

A proportionate simple random technique was used to draw a sample size for this study. This is recognition of the fact that the population of the study is very large. It provides each individual of a population with an equal and fair probability of being chosen (Acharya, 2013). The simple random method is one of the most convenient and simple sample selection techniques, In all, the total of 311 people were selected as sample size using Krejcie & Morgan (1970) table.

Table 1: Population Distribution and Sample Size of the Study

S/N	District Areas	Population	Proportionate sample size
1	Shagari Quarters	800	160
2	Sabon Gari	650	130
	Total	1450	290

Findings and Discussion

Out of the 290 copies of the questionnaire distributed to the adults in the community drawn from shagari quarters and sabon gari district, a total of 270 copies were duly completed, returned and found usable for this study. At Shagari Quarters, 148 copies were retrieved; and 122 copies were retrieved from Sabon Gari respectively. This gave the response rate of (93.1%). The data collected for this research were presented and analyzed using frequency distribution tables and simple percentages. The analysis of the responses of the respondents was presented below:

Types of social media platform use by community for effective outreach and involvement engagement

To identify the types of social media platforms used for effective outreach and involvement in community engagement by the people in the study areas, a list of social media platform was provided to tick as many as possible that which the community used to engage one another. The table 2 shows their responses:

From the table 2 it can be clearly seen that people in the study areas, have a nearly uniform choices with regards to the type of social media used. It was discovered that majority of them with the highest frequency of over 70% response scores uses facebook, tik tok, twitter, google, snapchat, instagram, E-mail and youtube for effective community engagement, outreach and involvement. Other social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Flickr, Mybusiness and clubhouse were identify as not useful by the respondents. By these analyses, it is evident that majority of the people in the study areas have a common choice with regards to the type of social media platform used. In a similiary study, Mohammad, (2018); Mihai, et al. (2018); Ashley & Tuten, (2015); Lovett & Staelin, (2016); and Pham & Gammoh, (2015) found that the potential social media that can shape the future, inform, and entertain the community is basically facebook, whatsapp, instagram, e-mail, and snapchat as it has the vital role of strategic importance for remanding and engaging community for a better living.

Effectiveness of different types of social media content and strategies

This is aimed to analyzed the effectiveness of the social media platforms used in the study areas. In order to

achieve this, a list of social media platforms were provided for the respondents to indicate the agreement or otherwise on its effectiveness using a five Likert scale of measurement. However, for convenience, the 5 options were merged into 3 options for ease of analysis and comprehension. The options are Very Effective (VE), Rarely Effective (RE), and Not Effective (NE). The table 3 shows their responses:

The table 3 above shows that the majority of the people studied with the highest percentage of over 70% response scores indicated that Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter and TikTok were very effective and represent their position as social media platforms that undoubtedly engage the community for effective outreach and involvement in the study areas. However, e-mail, Snapchat, YouTube, Google and LinkedIn was found to be only recognized by the majority of the people in the study areas with the highest percentage of over 70% response scores respectively as not effective.

It is evident from the foregoing analyses that the effectiveness of the social media platform as indicated by the respondent in the study areas has been quite encouraging and positive. This finding is consistent with the study of Knoblich et al. (2017); Brooks & Simkin, (2017); Michopoulou, and Moisa (2019) in their separate study acknowledge that individuals/organizations interaction and brand communication is efficient and effective while using WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram. They believed that the platform enhances visibility through content sharing and community services.

Recommendations

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

- *That the district people in the study areas of Daura local government should facilitate on content creation like blogging as it will add value for the community base progress.*
- *That a training on social media platforms use should be enhanced regularly to update and equip people with the requisite digital literacy skills to compete with the ever-changing environment.*
- *Ensure that the social media pages of the people in the study areas are optimized to reach the best audience.*
- *The need for community-wide policy and integrity on the use of social media platforms is hereby advocated.*
- **Live Videos and Webinars:** Host live events where community members can participate in real-time discussions, ask questions, and provide feedback. This interactive format increases engagement and makes participants feel more connected.

Conclusion

As social media platforms have continued to proliferate and expand to the frontiers of community engagement as well as contributing to effective outreach and involvement of people in community participation and connectivity, people need to take the center stage to harness the emerging opportunities in the areas of information sharing strategies, relationship and data sharing capability. The use of social media platforms opens new possibilities and landmarks for community engagement in the nearest future. It has therefore become imperative to have a clear understanding of the capabilities of a variety of social media platforms and their applications in enhancing community engagement in the district study areas of Daura local government area. The findings of this study further point to the brighter future of community engagement as most society today have concurred that social media is a positive force. It is a fact that using these social media platforms, communities can save cost, time, and above all improve the quality of their engagement. It is therefore concluded that people and the community in which they belong should strive to ensure the realization of the intelligent and responsible integration of social media platforms by way of a policy framework in order to promote community engagement excellence.

The exploration of community engagement through social media has revealed the transformative power and significant potential of digital platforms to enhance civic participation, foster social cohesion, and build stronger community bonds. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn have emerged as essential tools for real-time communication, allowing organizations, governments, and individuals to connect with their communities in a dynamic and meaningful way.

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EXPLORING INCLUSIVITY IN MITIGATING JOB THREATS FOR LIBRARIANS IN THE ERA OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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Abstract

This paper examines the evolving landscape of job threats for librarians in the era of Artificial Intelligence (AI) implementation in libraries, with a particular focus on inclusivity. It begins by analysing existing practices and policies related to job threats stemming from AI technologies' integration into library services. Key challenges and concerns faced by librarians in adapting to the changing role of AI are explored, including issues of skill development, workforce displacement, and potential biases in AI algorithms. The study then investigates inclusive strategies and interventions aimed at mitigating job threats for librarians in the AI era, emphasizing the importance of workforce development, bias mitigation, and equitable access to information. Furthermore, the effectiveness of existing and proposed inclusive strategies in addressing job threats is assessed, highlighting the need for ongoing evaluation and refinement. Finally, evidence-based recommendations are provided for libraries, policymakers, and other stakeholders to promote inclusivity and mitigate job threats for librarians in the context of AI implementation. These recommendations underscore the importance of proactive measures to ensure that AI technologies enhance, rather than detract from, librarians' roles and inclusivity within library services.

Keywords: *Inclusivity; Artificial Intelligence; Job Threats; Librarians; Job Insecurity*

Introduction

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in libraries has ushered in a new era of innovation and transformation, offering opportunities to enhance services and streamline operations. However, this rapid evolution also presents challenges and uncertainties for librarians, as they navigate the changing landscape of their profession. According to Omame and Alex-Nmecha (2020), artificial intelligence systems have the potential to displace human workers, leading to higher unemployment rates. These devices, which can quickly retrieve information, respond to inquiries, and offer individualised services; have long worried librarians. AI could be a threat to librarians but not to libraries because it can read digital materials more quickly than librarians (Jasrotia, 2018). Despite the fact that librarians use AI to support their work, some still seem to see it as a threat they should be up against. However, Guion (2019) contends that since AI systems might not completely comprehend user needs or uphold fundamental library values like intellectual freedom, copyright, and privacy, librarians would still be necessary. Hodonu-Wusu (2023) explores the ethical implications of AI automation on employment, social dynamics, and political systems, particularly in libraries; emphasizing the need for libraries to adapt to these changes and provide lifelong learning opportunities for staff. Hodonu-Wusu highlighted the potential for AI to perpetuate existing inequalities within user communities, as AI algorithms may reflect societal biases. To address this, libraries should design AI systems that promote inclusivity, diversity, and equitable access to information. Hence the study looks at job threats librarians get from AI influx.

This paper embarks on an exploration of inclusivity in mitigating job threats for librarians in the era of artificial intelligence, delving into existing practices and policies related to job threats faced by librarians due to AI implementation. The paper examines key challenges and concerns that librarians encounter in adapting to the changing role of AI in libraries, shedding light on the complexities of this transition; and explores inclusive strategies and interventions aimed at mitigating job threats for librarians in the era of AI, highlighting initiatives designed to foster inclusivity and resilience in the face of technological advancements. Through an assessment of the effectiveness of existing and proposed inclusive strategies, the study aims at providing insights into the efficacy of various approaches in addressing job threats for librarians. Finally, evidence-based recommendations were presented for libraries, policymakers, and other stakeholders, offering actionable insights to promote inclusivity and mitigate job threats for librarians in the

context of AI implementation. This comprehensive examination seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the intersection between inclusivity, AI technology, and the future of librarianship, ultimately advocating for equitable and sustainable practices in library environments.

Concept of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a domain of computer science which deals with the development of intelligent computer systems, which are capable to perceive, analyse, and react accordingly to the inputs (Ghosh & Thirugnanam, 2023). Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the ability of a digital computer, computer-controlled machine or robot to perform tasks commonly associated with intelligent beings like humans (Robinson, 2018). According to Singh, Mishra, and Sagar (2013), John McCarthy coined the term Artificial Intelligence in 1956, focusing on the science and engineering of intelligent machines. AI involves studying and designing agents that perceive their environment, take actions that maximize success, and includes learning from past experiences, decision-making reasoning, inference power, and quick response (Singh, Mishra, & Sagar, 2013). Artificial intelligence is characterized as computer programs designed to solve complex problems by implementations of processes similar to human cognition. This is the area of computer science where intelligent machines and software are researched and created (Singh, 2019).

Problem Statement

The advent of artificial intelligence (AI) poses significant job threats to librarians, necessitating a re-evaluation of their roles and responsibilities to ensure continued relevance and job security. While AI technologies can automate various tasks traditionally performed by librarians, such as cataloguing and information retrieval, they also create opportunities for enhanced services and new roles within libraries. The problem lies in the potential displacement of librarians due to automation, coupled with the lack of comprehensive strategies to integrate inclusivity in addressing these job threats. AI's automation of library tasks raises concerns about job displacement and redundancy, especially for those lacking advanced technical skills or professional development opportunities. The digital divide disproportionately affects under-resourced librarians, limiting their ability to keep up with technological advancements. Rapid integration of AI in libraries risks creating an exclusive environment, marginalizing those less technologically adept. Inclusivity is crucial for all librarians to adapt to AI-driven changes. The gap in current research and practice is the insufficient focus on inclusive approaches that ensure all librarians, regardless of their background or skill level, are equipped and supported in adapting to these technological changes. Addressing this gap requires exploring: existing practices and policies related to job threats faced by librarians due to the implementation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies in libraries; key challenges and concerns that librarians face in adapting to the changing role of AI in libraries; inclusive strategies and interventions aimed at mitigating job threats for librarians in the era of AI; assessing effectiveness of existing and proposed inclusive strategies in addressing job threats for librarians; and evidence-based recommendations for libraries, policymakers, and other stakeholders to promote inclusivity and mitigate job threats for librarians in the context of AI implementation. These will hopefully leverage AI to augment the librarians' roles in innovative ways, fostering an environment where technology and human expertise coexist beneficially.

Existing Practices and Policies Related to Job Threats faced by Librarians Due to the Implementation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Technologies in Libraries

The implementation of artificial intelligence (AI) in libraries has led to varying policies and practices regarding job threats faced by librarians. Some libraries have implemented policies to retrain librarians, providing professional development opportunities and workshops on AI literacy and skills enhancement. Others have policies to monitor the impact of AI on job roles and responsibilities. Effective policies and practices must balance embracing technological advancements with supporting the professional development and well-being of library staff.

As libraries integrate artificial intelligence (AI) technologies to enhance user experiences, it's imperative to prioritize ethical and equitable practices (Miao, 2019). Upholding user privacy and data protection is paramount, necessitating transparent policies regarding data collection and usage (Hodonu-Wusu, 2024). Obtaining user consent before deploying personalized recommendations is essential to maintain trust and respect user autonomy. Moreover, it's crucial to establish accountability mechanisms to address concerns surrounding data privacy, algorithmic bias, and potential misuse of AI technologies. By prioritizing the protection of user data and mitigating unintended consequences or discriminatory outcomes, libraries can ensure that AI implementations align with ethical principles and serve the best interests of their users.

Nigerian academic libraries are increasingly leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) technologies to enhance their services in the modern era of information (Tella, 2020). These technologies include expert systems deployed in various aspects of library operations, such as reference services, cataloguing, classification, collection development, and the use of chatbots (Isiaka, 2023). Expert systems assist patrons in locating materials and information, while also serving as valuable tools for teaching reference skills to

users and providing automated support to librarians and information specialists (Atayero, 2020). However, challenges persist in classification processes due to the complex and sometimes ambiguous relationships between objects and classes. Ongoing research efforts aim to address these challenges and improve systems for assigning subject headings and class numbers. Additionally, AI-driven tools aid in collection development by assisting in the decision-making process regarding the acquisition or removal of materials.

AI technologies are revolutionizing libraries by automating repetitive tasks, allowing librarians to focus on value-added activities, and enhancing customer satisfaction through personalized recommendations (Akinola, 2023). AI-powered virtual agents ensure 24/7 information availability, making library services more accessible. These technologies facilitate collaboration and information sharing among users, fostering a sense of community within the library ecosystem. AI contributes to operational efficiency and cost reduction, ensuring the long-term sustainability of libraries. Virtual assistants and chatbots driven by AI offer direct assistance to users; enhancing their overall library experience. As libraries continue to embrace AI, it is crucial to develop policies and practices that effectively leverage these technologies while addressing potential job threats faced by librarians.

Balasubramanian and Tamilselvan (2023) underscored AI's capacity to bolster efficiency, personalize services, and enhance access to resources, thereby elevating the overall user experience. They emphasized the imperative for libraries to develop robust policies and guidelines governing the ethical deployment of AI, with particular attention to issues such as data privacy, bias mitigation, and accountability. By navigating these complexities thoughtfully, libraries can harness the transformative potential of AI while safeguarding against potential risks, ensuring that AI integration aligns with principles of equity, transparency, and user-centeredness.

Key Challenges and Concerns that Librarians Face in Adapting to the Changing Role of AI in Libraries

Several key challenges and concerns in adapting to the changing role of artificial intelligence (AI) in libraries:

Job Displacement: One of the primary concerns for librarians is the potential displacement of traditional job roles by AI technologies. As AI systems automate tasks such as cataloguing, data analysis, and information retrieval, librarians may fear that their skills and expertise will become obsolete, leading to job loss or reassignment. In the evolving landscape of libraries, librarians confront various challenges and concerns as they navigate the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies (Europa Science Ltd, 2024). One notable challenge pertains to the potential biases inherent in AI systems, which can inadvertently perpetuate biases present in the datasets used for training. Librarians must remain vigilant in identifying and mitigating these biases to ensure fair and equitable access to information.

Skills Gap: Many librarians may lack the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively utilize AI technologies in their work. This skills gap can make it challenging for librarians to integrate AI tools into library services and workflows, hindering their ability to leverage AI for improved efficiency and effectiveness. Furthermore, the digital divide presents a pressing challenge, potentially widening existing disparities in access to AI-enhanced services (Europa Science Ltd, 2024). Librarians must proactively work towards inclusivity and equitable access, advocating for diverse and representative datasets, transparent AI algorithms, and community engagement initiatives. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of AI services are indispensable for identifying and addressing emerging issues, particularly those related to racial bias, thus ensuring that AI technologies serve the collective welfare of library patrons.

Ethical and Privacy Concerns: Librarians must navigate ethical and privacy considerations when implementing AI technologies in libraries. Concerns may arise regarding data privacy, algorithm bias, and the responsible use of patron information collected by AI systems. Librarians may struggle to ensure that AI applications adhere to ethical standards and respect patron confidentiality. Saha, Joyshree, & Elfarkane, (2024) stated that AI systems can have biases, errors, or hidden agendas that can affect the quality, accuracy, and fairness of information and services. Librarians must ensure transparency, accountability, and alignment with library values and goals. Ethical challenges include biasing, privacy, transparency effect, and security. AI models rely on sensitive data, which can be biased. Complex algorithms and security concerns can also hinder transparency. Ethical guidelines and regulations can mitigate risks and ensure responsible AI technology development and deployment. As AI evolves, libraries must navigate copyright issues, data protection regulations, and social concerns. Clear guidelines are essential for responsible user data handling. Privacy emerges as another critical concern, as AI tools often rely on extensive user data for optimization, necessitating strict adherence to privacy regulations and robust data protection measures. Moreover, the ethical use of AI is paramount, requiring librarians to assess the accuracy and reliability of AI-generated information and educate users about the limitations and capabilities of AI services (Europa Science Ltd, 2024).

Resistance to Change: Some librarians may resist adopting AI technologies due to fear of change or uncertainty about how AI will impact their roles and responsibilities. This resistance can hinder the successful integration of AI systems in libraries, hindering efforts to modernize services and meet evolving user needs (Saha, et al, 2024). AI systems may have technical limitations, such as complexity, uncertainty, or vulnerability, which librarians need to understand and ensure are reliable, robust, and secure. Librarians may feel anxious and afraid of replacing them with robots and smart technologies due to their high efficiency and quick task completion. This calls for supporting policies to solve job security for library workers (Farag, Mahfouz, & Alhajri, 2021). Although some librarians are attracted to AI technologies, others feel anxious about using them and reject the policy of change and development, especially concerning the use of modern technologies (Abdullah, in Faraq, et al, 2021). AI systems may also have social impacts, such as displacing human workers, creating digital divides, or influencing user behaviour and preferences. Librarians need to assess the social implications of AI systems and ensure they support human dignity, diversity, and inclusion.

Lack of Resources: Limited resources, including funding, training opportunities, and technical support, can pose significant challenges for librarians seeking to incorporate AI into library operations. Without adequate resources, librarians may struggle to acquire and implement AI technologies effectively, limiting their ability to innovate and adapt to technological advancements. Resource constraints may pose additional hurdles, necessitating adequate resources for implementation, maintenance, and user education initiatives.

Legal challenges: AI systems may raise legal issues such as privacy, copyright, data protection, and liability. For example, an AI-based facial recognition system may violate users' privacy rights, or an AI-based content creation system may infringe on the intellectual property rights of others (Saha, et al, 2024). Librarians need to comply with the relevant laws and regulations that govern the use and development of AI, and respect the rights and interests of the stakeholders involved.

Future trends: As AI becomes more advanced, pervasive, and autonomous, librarians must stay abreast of the latest trends and developments in order to leverage AI to enhance their services and operations, while also addressing the potential risks and impacts (Saha, et al 2024). Explainable AI seeks to make AI systems more transparent and understandable to humans, Responsible AI endeavours to make them more ethical and accountable, Human-centered AI focuses on making them compatible and complementary to humans, and Creative AI attempts to make AI systems capable of generating and expressing novel ideas. Akinola (2023) Despite the possibilities of AI, inadequate ICT skills and technical expertise of librarians, which prevents effective application and use of AI technologies, inadequate financial support for libraries, backwardness in content digitization, fear of librarians losing the job, privacy and ethical issues, bad maintenance culture, irregular power supply, lack of essential infrastructure and technology, poor internet connectivity, and resistance to change among librarians are noticeable hindrances.

Librarians in Nigeria face challenges in maintaining an accurate knowledge base for AI assistants due to lack of infrastructure, funding, and awareness. Limited power supply, budget for technology procurement, and inadequate experts, also pose challenges. The integration of AI systems into library operations may raise concerns about job roles and human errors. Some librarians argue that implementing AI in library operations faces specific challenges, including financial constraints, inadequate infrastructure, resistance to change, and a negative perception of librarians' IT skills (Hussain, 2023; Vijayakumar & Sheshadri, 2019). Other challenges include poor networking, erratic power supply, lack of trained personnel, outdated technologies, and high costs of technological tools (Echedom & Okuonghae, 2022). These factors can hinder the successful implementation of AI in library services.

Inclusive Strategies and Interventions aimed at Mitigating Job Threats for Librarians in the Era of AI

Implementing inclusive strategies and interventions is essential for mitigating job threats for librarians in the era of artificial intelligence (AI). On continuous learning and professional development librarians should receive ongoing training and development to improve their skills in AI technologies. This can be achieved through workshops, seminars, and online courses on topics like AI fundamentals, data analysis, and machine learning (Kamalov, 2023). Online AI-driven platforms and chatbots can bridge the gap between students and quality education, reducing inequalities and creating an inclusive learning environment. ChatGPT can help overcome English presentation barriers and provide an equal playing field for participants from all backgrounds. By adapting educational content and pedagogical approaches, AI-powered adaptive learning systems can improve student engagement, motivation, and academic achievement, making education more effective and accessible globally.

On fostering collaboration and co-creation, librarians work alongside AI systems as partners rather than competitors. Librarians are encouraged to collaborate with AI developers, data scientists, and other experts to co-design AI-driven solutions that address specific library needs and challenges. While AI holds immense potential for driving economic growth, its development must prioritize equity and inclusivity, necessitating concerted efforts from both private and public sectors (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2021). Regrettably, existing AI policies and strategies often overlook the importance of human-centered approaches. Moreover, the lack of diversity in AI research and development poses a significant challenge, with women researchers underrepresented and facing disparities in compensation compared to their male counterparts. This disparity extends to the realm of entrepreneurship, where female entrepreneurs encounter obstacles in accessing finance, contributing to the perpetuation of gender inequities in AI innovation. Embracing diversity within AI teams is paramount, as diverse perspectives foster innovation and provide a more effective lens for addressing biases inherent in AI algorithms. The prevalence of biases in datasets used to train algorithms underscores the urgent need for greater scrutiny and accountability in AI development, particularly in domains such as predictive policing where biases can have far-reaching implications for marginalized communities. To mitigate job threats for librarians in the AI era, inclusive interventions must prioritize human-centred AI development, promote diversity in AI research and development, and address biases inherent in AI algorithms and datasets, ensuring equitable outcomes for all stakeholders.

For skill enhancement and upskilling, librarians are expected to enhance their existing skills and acquiring new competencies that are relevant to AI-driven library environments. Offer training programs and resources that focus on developing skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, data literacy, and digital literacy, which are essential for working effectively with AI technologies. The Mobile Learning Week 2020 (MLW2020) compendium according to (UNESCO, 2020), highlights four key themes for librarians in the era of AI: international cooperation for equitable access to AI technologies, enhancing learning experiences for diverse learners, innovative AI applications like personalized learning and adaptive assessment tools, and non-discriminatory and gender-equitable AI use. These themes aim to promote inclusivity, equity, and accessibility in learning environments, thereby mitigating job threats and fostering positive educational outcomes. By embracing these themes and leveraging AI technologies in education, librarians can play a vital role in promoting inclusivity, equity, and accessibility, ultimately mitigating job threats and fostering positive educational outcomes for all.

Prioritizing diversity and inclusion initiatives ensures equal access to opportunities and resources for all librarians, regardless of background or identity. Promote diversity in AI development teams and decision-making processes to ensure that AI systems reflect the diverse needs and perspectives of library users and staff. AI tools can potentially bias performance evaluations and perpetuate achievement gaps by favouring students with similar learning patterns (Kamalov, 2023). This can widen disparities and exacerbate inequalities in education. To address this, collaboration between software engineers, educators, and policymakers is crucial. AI systems should prioritize fairness, equity, and diversity, catering to all students regardless of their linguistic, cultural, or learning backgrounds in libraries.

Furthermore, establishing clear ethical guidelines and policies for the responsible use of AI technologies in libraries ensures that AI systems adhere to principles of fairness, transparency, accountability, and privacy protection, and provide librarians with training and support to uphold these ethical standards in their work. To foster trust in AI systems, there is a growing call for the development of "fairness-aware" algorithms that prioritize demographic diversity and enhance transparency in decision-making processes (Shams, Zowghi, & Bano, 2023). Integrating principles of diversity and inclusion into AI development processes can help mitigate these challenges. Research indicates that diverse teams are better equipped to recognize and address biases in AI systems, while involving marginalized communities in AI development can enhance the fairness and trustworthiness of AI technologies. Ethical considerations for AI must extend beyond issues of privacy and transparency to encompass diversity and inclusion. By embedding these principles into the design, development, and deployment of AI systems, stakeholders can harness AI as a force for positive change, advancing understanding and practices of diversity and inclusion across various facets of society, including library services and beyond.

The rise of AI in libraries requires supportive leadership that values and empowers librarians to navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by these technologies. Leaders should champion inclusivity, advocate for librarians' well-being, and provide guidance and mentorship to help them thrive in AI-driven library environments. Addressing the widening gap between AI capabilities and existing biases is crucial to prevent systemic inequalities and marginalize vulnerable populations (Veras, 2023). Governments must implement updated safeguards and redistribution mechanisms to ensure AI advancements benefit all segments of society. Better policies and inclusive governance structures are essential to address inequality comprehensively and distribute AI innovations equitably. AI technologies have immense potential for societal transformation, including intelligent tutoring systems, virtual assistants, automated monitoring, and robotic automation in the workplace. However, realizing this vision requires fostering economic foresight, moral fortitude, and political advocacy.

Assessing Effectiveness of Existing and Proposed Inclusive Strategies in Addressing Job Threats for Librarians

The effectiveness of inclusive strategies in addressing job threats for librarians is evaluated by assessing their impact on their roles, well-being, and job security. Key factors to consider include skill enhancement and adaptation, job satisfaction and engagement, retention and turnover rates, diversity and inclusion outcomes, performance and productivity, and organizational culture and leadership support. Skill enhancement and adaptation involve measuring the extent to which librarians can enhance their skills and adapt to the changing demands of AI technologies through training programs, workshops, and professional development opportunities. Job satisfaction and engagement are assessed using surveys, interviews, and focus groups to gather feedback from librarians about their perceptions of AI technologies, their job roles, and overall satisfaction with their work environment.

Retention and turnover rates are monitored to determine the effectiveness of inclusive strategies in retaining talent and reducing attrition. Diversity and inclusion outcomes are evaluated by assessing whether initiatives such as diversity training, mentorship programs, and inclusive hiring practices result in a more diverse and inclusive workforce. Performance and productivity are measured using metrics such as project completion rates, service delivery outcomes, and user satisfaction scores. Organizational culture and leadership support are also examined to ensure librarians feel valued and empowered in their roles.

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into organizational development (OD) practices poses both challenges and opportunities for promoting inclusivity in the workplace (Miller, Katz, Gans, 2018). While AI has the potential to exacerbate human biases by incorporating them into machine learning algorithms, it also offers a chance to embed inclusive practices into fundamental organizational processes. Developers of AI technology must prioritize awareness of bias and inclusion when designing machine learning algorithms, aiming to eliminate discrimination and foster diversity. However, this effort requires a broader cultural shift within organizations, where employees must also be vigilant about potential biases in processes and software to prevent further entrenchment of existing biases. By addressing bias in AI processes and software, organizations can ensure that their workplaces remain inclusive and equitable, promoting democracy, participation, and diversity in the era of AI.

A successful Diversity and Inclusion (DEI) strategy requires a robust strategy that aligns with a company's aims and objectives (Clear Company, nd). DEI strategies offer a holistic approach to improving diversity and inclusivity, setting companies up for success. Many core industries are creating a dedicated 'C-Suite' position for DEI, ensuring alignment with the overarching corporate strategy. To prioritize diversity and inclusion, businesses should focus on making their workplace more inclusive. Inclusive leadership is essential for creating a diverse and inclusive workplace, and all leaders should embody the values the strategy is built on. Training in diversity and inclusivity is imperative for all leaders, and inclusive leadership coaching is a key part of Clear Company's offerings. Tracking progress is another essential part of implementing an DEI strategy in the long term. Regularly speaking to employees about their experiences of inclusivity and perception of business practices can help keep inclusivity at the forefront. Working with Clear Company can help identify any biases within the organization and offer guidance on tracking diversity and inclusion in the long term.

University of Virginia Library (2024) has undertaken several strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing equity and fostering job opportunities for its staff. Firstly, a systematic equity review of staff salaries has been conducted to ensure fair compensation that reflects the value of each role and rewards contributions accordingly. This adjustment serves to rectify any disparities in pay and promote a more equitable work environment. Secondly, a new career ladder has been implemented specifically for professional librarians, addressing concerns about the lack of differentiation in the previous structure. This new framework provides clear pathways for career advancement, recognizing and rewarding expertise and accomplishments within the profession. Lastly, the establishment of a Library track within the Academic General Faculty signifies a significant step towards acknowledging the scholarly and instructional contributions of library staff. By formalizing research and teaching responsibilities within the library, this initiative enhances the library's competitiveness in attracting and retaining diverse talent, thereby enriching the overall workforce and promoting inclusivity within the organization.

Solutions to Challenges and Concerns in Adapting to the Changing Role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Libraries:

Contingency plans for Job Displacement: These plans should include retraining programs, career counselling, partnerships with educational institutions, and technology providers. They should also create a flexible workforce structure that allows librarians to adapt to hybrid roles combining traditional and technological tasks. These contingency plans ensure librarians are not left behind in the AI-driven transformation of libraries, promoting a resilient workforce capable of leveraging AI to enhance their professional relevance and job security.

Bridging Skills Gap: To adapt; librarians need to acquire new competencies such as digital literacy, data management, AI ethics, and user-centred service design. Training programs, continuous professional development opportunities, and fostering a culture of learning and adaptability are essential. Partnerships

with academic institutions and tech companies can provide access to cutting-edge resources. This proactive approach equips librarians with the necessary skills to navigate and leverage AI, enhancing service delivery, empowering staff, and maintaining human touch in information management and community engagement.

Mitigating Ethical and Privacy Concerns: The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in libraries presents challenges in addressing user privacy and data security. To address these issues, libraries must implement robust data governance policies, obtain informed consent from users, and provide clear explanations of AI's role. Establishing ethical guidelines, conducting regular audits, and engaging in ongoing dialogue with stakeholders can help identify and rectify any ethical or privacy issues. By prioritizing ethical standards and privacy protections, libraries can harness AI's benefits while safeguarding community rights and interests.

Upturning Resistance to Change: Fears of job loss, uncertainty, and discomfort with changing workflows; can lead to resistance. To overcome these, a culture of open communication, comprehensive training, and success stories can help. Leadership should model adaptability and encourage a growth mindset, emphasizing the importance of evolving to meet modern library needs.

Provision of Resources: To effectively implement AI-driven solutions in libraries, adequate funding, access to advanced technology, and comprehensive training programs are crucial. Libraries should invest in hardware and software, ensure robust internet connectivity, and provide access to AI platforms. Partnerships with educational institutions and tech companies can offer specialized workshops, certifications, and professional development opportunities. Creating a supportive infrastructure, such as dedicated IT support and knowledge-sharing networks, can help staff troubleshoot issues and share best practices.

Legal challenges: Legal challenges are essential for libraries to adapt to the changing role of AI in their operations. They must navigate data privacy, intellectual property, and algorithmic transparency issues. Clear legal frameworks, such as GDPR or CCPA, are needed to ensure compliance with national and international laws. Transparent policies about AI algorithms can mitigate bias and discrimination, fostering trust among users. By proactively addressing these challenges, libraries can create a secure, legally compliant environment for AI implementation, protecting both institutions and patrons.

Proper infrastructure, funding, and awareness; as well as power supply, budget for technology procurement, and adequate experts, can also be arranged for.

Conclusion

The exploration of inclusivity in mitigating job threats for librarians in the era of artificial intelligence reveals both challenges and opportunities in navigating this transformative landscape. Through an examination of existing practices and policies, it is evident that AI technologies have the potential to revolutionize library services but also pose significant challenges, including biases in algorithms and privacy concerns. Librarians face key challenges in adapting to the changing role of AI, including addressing biases, ensuring privacy, and educating users about AI capabilities. However, inclusive strategies and interventions offer promising avenues for mitigating these threats, including diversity in AI development, transparent policies, and community engagement. Assessing the effectiveness of these strategies is crucial for refining approaches and ensuring equitable outcomes. Moving forward, evidence-based recommendations for libraries, policymakers, and stakeholders emphasize the importance of promoting inclusivity, addressing biases, and fostering collaboration across diverse stakeholders to harness the full potential of AI while safeguarding the interests and well-being of librarians and library users alike. By embracing inclusivity and proactive measures, libraries can navigate the challenges of AI implementation while advancing their mission of providing equitable access to information and knowledge in the digital age.

Way Foreword for Libraries, Policymakers, and Other Stakeholders to Promote Inclusivity and Mitigate Job Threats for Librarians in the Context of AI Implementation

Promoting inclusivity and mitigating job threats for librarians in the context of AI implementation requires a multifaceted approach involving libraries, policymakers, and other stakeholders.

- I. Libraries should invest in continuous training and professional development for librarians to enhance their skills in AI technologies, data management, and digital literacy. This can be achieved through workshops, webinars, and certification programs. A supportive work environment should be created, encouraging collaboration and learning from each other. Libraries should prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion, implementing inclusive hiring practices and providing resources for underrepresented groups to thrive and advance within the organization. This will help librarians remain competitive and adaptable in the evolving landscape of library services.

- II. Policymakers should develop policies to safeguard job security for librarians, involve them in decision-making processes, and provide avenues for their voice in policy development. Invest in workforce development programs to upskill librarians for AI-related roles and support initiatives promoting lifelong learning. Advocate for ethical AI practices, prioritizing fairness, transparency, and accountability in AI-driven library services. Work with industry stakeholders, academic institutions, and civil society organizations to develop standards and frameworks for responsible AI use in libraries. This will ensure librarians are involved in decision-making and contribute to policy development.
- III. Other stakeholders should collaborate with libraries and policy makers to support the implementation of AI technologies and services. This can be achieved by providing funding, technical assistance, and expertise to integrate AI solutions into library operations. Additionally, it suggests engaging with the community to address concerns and misconceptions about AI implementation, fostering open dialogue and transparency. Finally, it recommends supporting research and evaluation efforts to assess the impact of AI implementation on librarians and library services. This collaboration can promote inclusivity, support librarians, and mitigate job threats in the context of AI implementation in libraries.

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EXPLORING INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF INFORMATION DISSEMINATION BY ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS IN NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

The study aimed at exploring innovative technologies for the enhancement of information dissemination by academic and research librarians' section of Nigerian Library Association. Three research objectives on the type of innovative technologies, extent of their used, challenges and strategies for exploring innovation technologies for enhancing information dissemination guided the study. Survey research method was adopted for the study, with a population of 534 Academic and Research Librarians who are members of Academic and Research Libraries Section of Nigerian Library Association (ARLSNLA) WhatsApp group., random sampling technique of 107 respondents were used. Questionnaire was used for data collection using google form through WhatsApp group within 3 weeks. Data collected from this study were analysed using frequency, percentages, and mean score. The findings shows that open access repositories and library automation software such as Koha, Greenstone, D-Space 72(67.6%) was the major type of innovative technologies used by the respondents; the integrated collaborative tools like Google workspace or Microsoft 365 to facilitate real-time collaboration among students and researchers in the library can enhance information sharing and group projects with a highest mean score of 4.9 was the extent of use and the major challenge was limited financial resources such as budget constraints and cost of implementation and maintenance of innovation technology 94 (88.7%). The indicated that continuous learning, training, and professional development of librarians 124(90.5%) will help solve the challenge. The study concluded that despite the availability of various technologies, the majority of which are freely available online, the application of emerging technologies is moving at a slower pace, indicating the need for strategic intervention from all stakeholders. The study recommendate that Academic librarians should continue with learning, training, collaborate and partner with technology companies to maximize the potentials of theses library innovative technologies for information disseminations.

Keywords: Innovative Technologies; Information Dissemination; Academic Librarians, Nigeria

Introduction

Academic libraries play a critical role in information transmission by connecting people to rich knowledge resources. Advances in novel technologies have changed the way libraries organise, store, retrieve, and distribute information. Social media, library websites, mobile applications, online catalogues, Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETD) platforms such as databases, and digital repositories have all improved accessibility, efficiency, and user pleasure in the use of information and knowledge. Exploring Innovative Technologies also helps libraries overcome physical limitations by allowing people to access information remotely and at their leisure. It also enables faster resource search and discovery, as well as greater user interaction and information exchange. Understanding innovative technologies is crucial for academic libraries, requiring staff training and user support (Owolabi *et al.* 2022).

Exploring new technology in academic libraries has gained popularity, notably in the provision of research support services. The modern academic library is no longer intended to be an information store, but rather to facilitate knowledge development, dissemination, and application. According to Moruf and Dangani(2020), academic librarians prioritise research-centered services such as information organisation and retrieval, data management, and other services that might improve the quality of research output in academic institutions. The capacity of academic libraries to meet their goal of supporting researchers in properly using available information resources to create new knowledge is now dependent on librarians' overall competence.

The exploration of new technologies, as well as remote access to information resources and other research tools, has generated questions regarding library services' role in the research process. Academic librarians can help enhance research productivity in Nigeria by providing adequate library and information services.

Libraries must adapt to satisfy the evolving information needs of the digital age. Users demand easy and convenient access to a wide range of digital resources, such as e-books, databases, and multimedia items. Libraries must invest in digital resources and platforms to meet these demands. They should also provide online resources that are compatible with a wide range of devices (Saibakumo, 2021).

Moruf and Dangani (2020) found that the current state of technologies for improving information dissemination in libraries includes bibliographic citation management software such as Mendeley and library automation software such as Koha, among others. They also acknowledged breakthrough technologies like QR (quick response) and AI. Furthermore, Owolabi *et al.* (2022) recognised ambient intelligence and data mining as new novel technologies implemented in libraries to improve librarian efficiency and suit user needs. This research found that numerous developing technologies are relevant to librarians' needs. He also emphasised that technologies are rapidly evolving, and libraries can decide which ones to use. As a result, it is vital to align accessible technology with the relevant services that libraries may provide for academics in the twenty-first century. Academic libraries can benefit from adopting cutting-edge technologies to enhance research and information management.

Statement to the Problem

Exploring Innovative Technologies for the Enhancement of Information Dissemination by Academic Librarians in Nigeria highlights a crucial need in research on the most effective technologies for information dissemination in academic libraries. This gap underscores the critical need to explore and discover appropriate novel technologies to improve information distribution methods in Nigerian academic libraries. When researching innovative technologies for information transmission in Nigeria, a variety of problems may develop, including a lack of financing to acquire or maintain new technologies, as well as a lack of staff training on new technologies (Moruf and Dangani, 2020).

Despite the potential benefits of modern technologies, academic libraries in Nigeria confront barriers to properly adopting and integrating these technologies to improve information dissemination. Librarians and users may be unaware of the present condition of information management and distribution. The disparity between conventional library procedures and new technological breakthroughs creates barriers to efficient information organisation and sharing. Furthermore, challenges with infrastructure and the requirement for extensive technological deployment techniques exacerbate the problem. Addressing these difficulties is critical for academic libraries in Nigeria to play a more dynamic role in information dissemination in the digital era. As a result, the researchers focus on how Academic Librarians in Nigeria use contemporary technology to promote information distribution.

Research Objectives

1. *To identify the type of innovative technologies used for the enhancement of information dissemination by academic librarians in Nigeria.*
2. *To identify the extent of exploring innovative technologies for enhancement of information dissemination by academic librarian in Nigeria.*
3. *To identify technological challenges faced by academic librarians encounter in adopting and implementing innovative technologies for enhancement of information dissemination in Nigerian libraries.*
4. *To identify Strategies used by academic librarians in exploring innovative technologies for the enhancement of information dissemination.*

Review of literature

Technological innovations generally improve library patrons' access to information. Professionals have expressed a strong interest in exploring emerging technology for application in academic libraries. It facilitates users' access to information, hence improving the dissemination of information to respective customers at their places with little or no delays. According to the results of Omeluzor, Ugochi, and Iuakolam (2020), there is a need to pave the path for library professionals to utilise innovative technology for fast service delivery for the benefit of their patrons. The current practice in libraries, which includes the use of novel technologies, has significantly revolutionised libraries, information resources, and service delivery.

Types of innovative technologies used for the enhancement of information dissemination by academic librarians.

Different technologies have specific assignments and operations that they tend to perform, such as assisting in information diffusion, Owolabi *et al.* (2022) asserted that allowing users to access and retrieve important

information. Being innovative implies identifying new methods to add value to existing operations. Platforms for innovation include collaboration tools, library websites, online webinars and training, online catalogues, blockchain technology, and teleconferencing, among other things.

Bhoi (2017) discovered that social media and online communities such as Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, WhatsApp, and Telegram have been and continue to be the primary focus for rapid information transmission in most libraries, particularly for the promotion or marketing of their e-resources. All these technologies according to Ugochi, and Iuakolam (2020) have a great impact on information dissemination, access, and retrieval for the benefit of customers. Technology-driven services in libraries have made remarkable changes to improve various library operations and activities by facilitating remote access, increasing access from diverse sources, collaborating tools, connecting experts from diverse fields of research, and generally improving information dissemination to patrons through electronic theses and dissertations (Otolu, 2020).

Okeke and Asifor (2023) found that there are various types of social media tools that can be used for knowledge sharing in academic libraries; these tools improve collaboration, information dissemination, and interaction among library users and library professionals. Negi and Sani (2023) concluded that innovative tools such as library websites, online catalogues, databases, and digital repositories have improved accessibility, efficiency, and user experience, allowing for more effective resource search and discovery while also encouraging user engagement and knowledge sharing. Otolu (2020) explained that innovative technologies help libraries to improve information dissemination by librarians include, but are not limited to, integrated library systems, open access repositories, library automation software, learning management systems, classroom management software such as Google Classroom, Canvas, and Moodle, social media and online communities, cloud computing and digital libraries, collaborative tools, and artificial intelligence, among others. The researchers will investigate how academic librarians use these tools to improve information dissemination.

The extent of exploring innovative technologies for enhancement of information dissemination by academic librarian

In the context of digital libraries, the use of technologies for information transmission is critical. It improves patrons' access, retrieval, and utilisation of information. More specifically, librarians regard it as a tool/means of improving their operations and, of course, adding value to their professional responsibilities. In the studies of Amuda and Onanuga (2023) discovered that exploring breakthrough technologies that can benefit both professionals and customers will be a rewarding endeavour for improving information dissemination, retrieval, and use. There are technologies that improve the overall operations of library activities in current digital age, when such things are required to support professionals in their jobs, such as robots, 3D technology, library, and virtual reality applications, among others. According to Amuda and Onanuga's (2023) findings, current integrated library system software that aids in the management of library resources, cataloguing, circulation, and acquisitions has streamlined library operations and increased information transmission efficiency. Creating open access repositories in libraries makes research outputs, theses, and dissertations more accessible to a larger audience, while integrating library resources into popular Learning Management Systems (LMS) platforms such as Moodle or Canvas ensures that students and faculty can access library materials directly from their course environments (Amuda & Onanuga, 2023).

Technology, particularly professional coaching provided by libraries, aids in the development of information skills in patrons, allowing them to retrieve needed information resources. It is worth noting that (Moruf & Dangani, 2020) suggest exploring the use of some technologies to create immersive learning experiences within the library, as well as organising online webinars and training programmes to educate librarians and users on the effective use of these technologies by ensuring that everyone is well-equipped to leverage the available resources. This could include virtual tours, interactive exhibits, or augmented reality overlays on physical books. They also stated that virtual reality is a new technology that is used in a variety of areas, such as libraries, where users can use such applications to search for books with the virtual reality dialogue and can also be used to enhance educational programmes (El-Kalash Samaila, Mohammed & Abba, 2022).

Ezinwanyi and Kikelomo's (2023) findings emphasised that innovations in libraries introduce sustainably new ideas, devices, technologies, products, and new methods of rendering services to improve performance in bringing value to users, resulting in a better way of satisfying users' needs through improved strategies, processes, and learning, such as exploring technology for enhancing authentication and security of digital resources. Furthermore, a number of research have adequately addressed the use of innovative technologies for information distribution. Amuda and Yusuf (2021) also investigated the use of innovative technologies in the context of library service delivery, with a particular emphasis on the use of digital libraries, learning management systems, collaborative tools, and mobile applications, among others, in the context of information dissemination in Nigerian libraries. Creating mobile apps in the library has enabled the diffusion of library materials.

It is critical to emphasize the importance of novel technologies for information distribution, such as the implementation of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology for effective library management.

Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV), fax, digital library, data analysis, and blockchain for security. It is not an exaggeration to suggest that the use of these technologies has improved librarians' abilities to operate in a hybrid mode and how libraries deliver services in an online learning environment to serve their clients more easily (Amuda and Onanuga, 2023). The extent to which novel techniques are used yields significant results, both for patrons and librarians. This means that it has been very successful in terms of information dissemination and service delivery.

The use of ICT in library services is expanding all of the library's activities that require the use of innovative technologies in the delivery of library services. As a result, the library serves as a knowledge and support centre for learning, teaching, and research for its parent institution. They also stated that library services are one of the core activities in which academic libraries engage library users, assisting them in understanding the rules and regulations, as well as how to access, locate, retrieve, and use information sources, all of which contribute to students' success in learning and research (Omeluzor, Ugochi, and Izuakolam, 2020).

Challenges that Academic Librarians encountered in Adopting and Implementing Innovative Technologies for Enhancement of Information Dissemination

There are numerous obstacles that librarians have while adopting modern technology to provide information to clients; these challenges tend to cause a lot of disparities, delay, and, at times, disintegrate the professional duties of librarians if not handled properly. Shehu (2020) concluded that library professionals, particularly in Nigerian libraries, lack basic computer skills, the ability to use innovative technologies, a lack of training and skill gaps for academic librarians, insufficient technical support, and security and privacy concerns, which impedes their application to library services and dissemination. Furthermore, Bichi (2021) claimed that librarians require new abilities that would allow them to fully leverage modern technologies in the spread of library and information services. It appears to be a difficulty, but it will allow them to add value to their profession and better serve their clients.

According to Awuor, Rabah, and Maake (2013), libraries face numerous challenges to the implementation of ICT-related new technologies, which can impede the distribution of knowledge to a larger scenario and local customers. This is due to a variety of variables, the most significant of which are restricted financial resources such as budget limits and the expense of installation and maintenance. Librarians' hesitation to adopting new technology, limited Internet access, and old gear and software in libraries all provide a challenge to their professional obligations. According to Sahabi and Otodo (2021), some professional librarians' inabilities can be a barrier to effective service delivery and dissemination, such as a lack of basic skills un the use of information technology. Others include lack of training and skills shortages for academic librarians, librarian opposition to adopting new technology, insufficient Internet connectivity, and old gear and software in the library. Insufficient technological support, including a lack of competent IT personnel and technical support, among others.

Strategies used by Academic Librarians in Exploring Innovative Technologies for the Enhancement of Information Dissemination

The growth in effective communication, acquisition, and knowledge sharing will have an impact on academic library activities, as will the increased everyday usage of social media technologies. Furthermore, pupils have turned to electronic sources that are easily accessible online. Aina, Ogundipe, and Adebawale (2010) concluded that staff training and retraining would go a long way towards equipping librarians with knowledge of all round services, requiring all library staff to be web technology skilled and adopt these new skills to assist library users in an ICT environment. Librarians must also be more confident in their professional duties. Those library patrons will need to access information to satisfy their information needs during the lockdown period, which has prompted some libraries to come up with innovative ways to provide information services to patrons at home or wherever they may be located by providing some specific information services.

According to Nworie, Ubochi, Iwuchukwu, and Njoku (2023), adequate provision of required innovative technologies such as open access repositories, digital libraries, RFID technology, mobile applications, and other facilities is a major prospect in the activities of librarians and information professionals in order to discharge their duties. More training and skill gaps, updates to library gear and software, and the installation of CCTV to improve security risks in the library can all help to improve. Shehu (2020) identified some of the strategies libraries could use to improve their use of technology, such as continuous learning and professional development, in which librarians stay up to date on emerging technologies by attending library science and information technology workshops, conferences, or webinars.

Methodology

This study employed survey research methodology, targeting the population of 534 Academic and Research Librarians Section of Nigeria Library Association (ARLSNLA) WhatsApp group members as of February 2024. Following Adams' (2020) guideline, a sample size of 137 was selected, which is appropriate for a population of 500-549 at a 90% confidence level for continuous data. Although only 107 members responded to the questionnaire, representing a 78.1% response rate, the researchers deemed the sample size

acceptable and proceeded with the analysis. A structured questionnaire was administered via Google Forms shared through a WhatsApp group over a period of three weeks, serving as the data collection tool for this study. The findings and discussion of the collected data are presented in a clear and organized manner using tables, frequency distributions, percentages, and mean scores, providing a comprehensive overview of the results.

Findings and Discussions

Response rate Number of Academic and research librarians on the WhatsApp group as at the time of study

Population	Expected number of response (sample Size)	Number of librarians responded	%
534	137	107	78.1%

The response rate table above shows that on the WhatsApp group at the time of researcher had a population of 534, using a sample size table of Adams 2020, 137 was used, only 107(78.1%) responded to the survey.

To determine the type of innovative technologies used to improve information dissemination in libraries, respondents were asked to choose from a list of possible options for the type of innovative technologies available and used in their libraries. Their responses are shown in table 1.

Innovative technologies	F	%
Integrated Library Systems (ILS)	60	56.6
Open Access Repositories & Library automation software's	72	67.9
Learning Management Systems (LMS) and classroom management software such as Moodle, Google Classroom, Canva	39	36.8
Digital Libraries and cloud computing	69	65.1
RFID Technology	15	14.2
Mobile Applications like Quick Response (QR) barcode technology	47	44.3
Data Analytics	16	15.1
Virtual Reality (VR) & Augmented Reality (AR)	6	5.7
Collaborative Tools	23	21.7
Social Media and Online Communities	64	60.4
Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Recommender Systems and Robotics	14	13.2
Blockchain for Authentication and Security	7	6.6
Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETD) Platforms	42	39.6
Online Webinars and Training Programs	39	36.8
Accessibility Features	23	21.7

Table 1 shows that the greatest results are for open access repositories and library automation software such as Koha, Greenstone, and D-Space 72(67.6%), digital libraries and cloud computing 69(65.1%), social media and online communities 64(60.4%), and integrated library systems 60(56.6%). Virtual reality, augmented reality, and block chain had the lowest authentication security scores of 6 (5.7%) and 7 (6.6%), respectively. This is because many Nigerian academic libraries have one type of digital repository, and many uses social media and online communities to enhance information dissemination. Despite the challenges of insecurity in libraries, academic librarians used the least amount of virtual reality and augmented reality for authentication security. This is consistent with Okeke and Asifor's (2023) study, which found that there are several types of innovative technologies, such as open access repositories, library automation software, and social media tools, that can be used for knowledge sharing in academic libraries; these tools provide efficiency in collaboration, information dissemination, and interaction among library users and library professionals.

Extent of Exploring Innovative Technologies Usage for Enhancement of Information Dissemination by Academic Librarians

Innovative technologies are crucial to the access and use in libraries, to ascertain the extent of exploring innovative technologies for enhancement of information dissemination by academic librarians in Nigeria studied, the respondents were first provided with a list of hypothetical statements for the respondents to choose using five likert scale of measurement, high extent, extent, low extent, very low extent and undecided. Table 2 present the result of the findings.

Table 2: Extent of exploring innovative technologies for enhancing information dissemination by academic librarians

Items	high extent	Extent	low extent	Very extent	Low	Undecided	Mean score
Modern Integrated Library Systems (ILS) software that helps in managing library resources, cataloging, circulation, and acquisitions has streamline library operations and make information dissemination more efficient	36(33.6%)	49(45.8%)	14(13.1%)	4(3.7%)	4(3.7%)	4(3.7%)	4.3
Establishing open access repositories in libraries make research outputs, theses, and dissertations accessible to a wider audience	36(33.6%)	56(52.3%)	10(9.3%)	3(2.8%)	3(2.8%)	2(1.9%)	4.5
Integrate library resources into popular Learning Management Systems (LMS) platforms like Moodle or Canvas ensures that students and faculty can access library materials directly from their course environments.	26(24.3%)	58(54.2%)	15(14.0%)	5(4.7%)	5(4.7%)	3(2.8%)	4.1
Developing digital libraries that provide access to e-books, academic journals, and multimedia resources. Platforms like LibGuides or Greenstone can be customized to create digital libraries.	37(34.6%)	52(48.6%)	13(12.1%)	2(1.9%)	2(1.9%)	3(2.8%)	4.4
Implementing Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology for efficient library management. Such as RFID tags on books can simplify the check-in and check-out processes, while also helping with inventory management in the library	20(18.7%)	42(39.3%)	31(29.0%)	8(7.5%)	8(7.5%)	6(5.6%)	3.9
Creating mobile apps in the library has allow dissemination of library resources, search catalogs, and even check the availability of books in real-time	20(18.7%)	47(43.9%)	16(15.0%)	7(6.5%)	7(6.5%)	17(15.9%)	3.8
Using data analytics tools to analyze user behavior, popular resources, and other patterns in the library is guiding the collection development, resource allocation, and service improvements	25(23.4%)	42(39.9%)	27(25.2%)	7(6.5%)	7(6.5%)	6(0.0%)	3.9
Exploring the use of Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies to create immersive learning experiences within the library. This could include virtual tours, interactive exhibits, or augmented reality overlays on physical books	22(20.6%)	44(41.1%)	27(25.2%)	10(9.3%)	10(9.3%)	4(3.7%)	3.8
Integrate collaborative tools like Google Workspace or Microsoft 365 to facilitate real-time collaboration among students and researchers in the library can enhance information sharing and group projects	30(28.0%)	49(45.8%)	14(13.1%)	7(6.5%)	7(6.5%)	7(6.5%)	4.9
Utilizing social media platforms and online communities to engage with library users, Share updates, host virtual events, and create discussion forums to foster a sense of community among users	39(36.4%)	44(41.1%)	15(14.0%)	4(3.7%)	4(3.7%)	5(4.7%)	4.1
Implementing Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Recommender Systems to suggest relevant resources based on user	26(24.3%)	39(36.4%)	24(22.4%)	10(9.3%)	10(9.3%)	8(7.5%)	3.7

preferences and past interactions significantly improve the user experience									
Exploring blockchain technology for enhancing authentication and security of digital resources help in ensuring the integrity of academic materials and preventing unauthorized access in libraries	17(15.9%)	41(38.3%)	29(27.1%)	12(11.2%)	8(7.5%)	3.6			
Implement Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETD) Platforms in libraries to manage and disseminate electronic theses and dissertations can simplify the submission process and increase the visibility of academic research	33(30.8%)	41(38.3%)	21(19.6%)	4(3.7%)	8(7.5%)	3.9			
Organizing online webinars and training programs to educate librarians and library users on the effective use of these technologies by ensuring that everyone is well-equipped to leverage the available resources	38(35.5%)	41(38.3%)	20(18.7%)	2(1.9%)	6(5.6%)	4.1			
Accessibility Features Ensure that all technologies implemented have built-in accessibility features to cater to users with different abilities	28(26.2%)	46(43.0%)	18(16.8%)	10(9.3%)	5(4.6%)	3.8			

Table 2 demonstrates the extent to which academic librarians examined the use of novel technologies to improve information dissemination in their libraries. Integrating collaborative tools like Google workspace or Microsoft 365 to facilitate real-time collaboration among students and researchers in the library can enhance information sharing and group projects with a highest mean score of 4.9; followed by establishing open access repositories in libraries to make research outputs, Theses, and Dissertations accessible to a wider audience with a mean score of 4.5 and developing digital libraries that provide access to e-books, academic Platforms such as LibGuides and Greenstone can be tailored to provide digital libraries with an average score of 4.4. While exploring blockchain technology for enhancing authentication and security of digital resources helps in ensuring the integrity of academic materials and preventing unauthorised access in libraries received the lowest mean score of 3.6, implementing Artificial Intelligence (AI) for recommender systems to suggest relevant resources based on user preferences and previous interactions significantly improved the user experience with a mean score of 3.7. This means that academic librarians use novel technologies extensively in their libraries for information distribution. This finding was consistent with the findings of Amuda and Yusuf (2021), who explored how the employment of innovative technologies in the context of library service delivery has significantly increased the dissemination of information in libraries.

Challenges Encountered by Academic Librarians in the Usage of Innovative Technologies for Enhancing Information Dissemination

Academic librarians faced various challenges when implementing innovative technologies to enhance information dissemination. To identify the technological challenges face by academic librarians encountered in exploring innovative technologies for enhancing information dissemination. The researchers provided a list of possible challenges for the respondents to tick as many as possible, table 3 summaries their responses.

Table 3: Challenges encountered by academic librarians in the usage of innovative technologies for enhancing information dissemination.

Challenges of innovative technologies in libraries	f	%
Limited financial resources such as budget constraints and cost of implementation and maintenance of innovative technologies	94	88.7
Lack of training and skill gaps for academic librarians	85	80.2
Librarian resistance in adopting new technologies	56	52.8
Inadequate Internet connectivity in my library	67	63.2
Outdated hardware and software in the library	62	58.5
Insufficient technical support such as lack of qualified IT personnel and technical support	70	66
Digital divide (inequality in access and inequitable access for users)	52	49.1
Security and privacy concerns such as cybersecurity threats and privacy issues	63	59.4
Interoperability issues like integration challenges within the library ecosystem	62	58.5

Table 3 revealed that insufficient financial resources, such as budget limits and the expense of implementing and maintaining novel technology, scored 94 (88.7%), as did a lack of training and skill shortages for academic librarians in the use of innovative technologies, which scored 85 (80.2%). The least common obstacles reported by academic librarians investigated were security and privacy concerns, such as cybersecurity threats and privacy issues 52 (49.1%), and insufficient Internet connectivity to successfully use innovative technology in their libraries 56 (52.8%). This is consistent with the findings of Sahabi and Otodo (2021), who discovered that a lack of fundamental skills in the use of information technology has become a block for improved library services, as has a lack of skilled IT professionals and technical assistance. On the other hand, the study found that security and privacy concerns, such as cybersecurity threats and privacy issues, as well as insufficient Internet connectivity to effectively use innovative technologies in their libraries, were the least challenging factors affecting the exploration of innovative technologies for the enhancement of information dissemination in Nigerian libraries. This could imply that academic libraries' internet connectivity has increased over time, along with improved security measures such as CCTV and door scanners, among others.

Table 3: Strategies used by academic librarians in exploring innovative technologies for the enhancement of information dissemination

Strategies	F	%
Adequate funding	103	75.2
Alternative power supply	94	68.6
Continuous Learning, training and professional development of librarians	124	90.5
Collaboration and partnerships	107	78.1
Integration of digital tools and platforms	61	44.5
Experimentation and pilot projects	40	29.2
Monitoring trends and best practices	48	35.0
Strategic Planning	69	50.4
Robust Infrastructure	99	72.3
Change management	20	14.6
Privacy and Security Protocols	78	56.9
Accessibility Compliance	87	63.5
Sustainability Planning	37	27.0
Continuous Evaluation and Improvement	91	66.4

Table 3 shows that continuous learning, training, and professional development of librarians 124(90.5%) and collaboration and partnerships 107(78.1%) were the most common tactics employed in researching innovative technologies for information dissemination. Change management accounted for 20(14.6%) of the strategies, while sustainability planning accounted for 37(27.0%). This requires that librarians stay up to date on developing technologies by attending workshops, conferences, and seminars to better grasp their potential for information dissemination. This is consistent with the findings of Aina, Ogundipe, and Adebowale (2010) and Shehu (2020), who concluded that staff training and retraining will go a long way towards equipping librarians with contemporary and new library technologies.

Conclusion

The current level of research production in Nigerian tertiary institutions suggests that the academic library is an important factor in enhancing research productivity. However, offering assistance to researchers in the twenty-first century has evolved beyond just storing a big collection; the current tendency is to provide access to material that is as specific to the researcher's needs as feasible. To address this need, emerging technologies must be used. These are new digital inventions that allow for the creation, synthesis, organisation, and transmission of information. This study, however, discovered that, despite the availability of many technologies, the majority of which are freely available online, the adoption of emerging technologies is slowing, emphasising the need for strategic intervention from all stakeholders. The various recommendations given in this study and other relevant studies are likely to lead to a higher rate of technology adoption in Nigerian academic libraries.

Recommendations

1. Academy libraries should explore virtual reality, augmented reality, blockchain for authentication and securing type of innovative technologies to enhance their information dissemination.
2. Academic librarians should keep up with exploring innovative technologies to enhance their information dissemination to users irrespective of the time, location and format.
3. Tertiary institutions in Nigerian- should invest and allocate more on financial resources to innovative technologies to enhance library information dissemination to the users
4. Academic librarians should continue with learning, training, collaborate and partner with technology companies to maximize the potentials of theses library innovative technologies for information disseminations.

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EXPLORING THE DYNAMICS OF THE 5TH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND SERVICE DELIVERY IN INSTITUTIONAL LIBRARIES IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

This study investigated the dynamics of the 5th Industrial Revolution and library service delivery in institutional libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria. Descriptive research design was adopted while the population of the study comprised of 44 librarians across 4 institutions in Rivers State. Census enumeration was used as the sampling technique. Four research objectives and questions guided the study. Instrument for collection of data was a self-structured questionnaire. Mean and Standard Deviation was utilized for data analysis. The findings of the study revealed that resistance to change, technophobia, digital divide, ethical considerations, skill gap, inadequate finance and inadequate infrastructure are the challenges associated with the adoption of 5IR for service delivery in institutional libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria. Based on the findings, the study recommends that libraries and librarians should leverage on these transformational technologies to ease the daily responsibilities of librarians which in turn will greatly impact on current day service demands in line with global practice, libraries and librarians in institutions in Rivers State should encourage and maintain a synergy and collaborate with the opportunity presented with the industry 5.0. amongst others.

Keywords: 5th Industrial Revolution, Service Delivery, Institution Libraries, Technology Integration, Rivers State.

Introduction

The development and advancement in innovation, science and technology has undergone series of evolution, through the agrarian age to the latest industry 5.0. The 21st century is witnessing a rapid advancement in technology. This has strengthened the structural landscape for smooth transitioning into the 5th Industrial Revolution (5IR). The 5IR also known as Industry 5.0 refers to the shift towards hyper-automation and increased integration of technology in all aspects of human endeavor.

Libraries like other facets of the society have been significantly influenced by the evolution of 5IR. In the context of librarianship, the 5IR represents the incorporation and use of emerging technologies in provision and delivery of library and information services, ranging from human-machine collaboration in acquiring library materials in all formats, to processing, shelving and use of robots to deliver library materials to users. Apriliyanti and Ilham (2022) opined that one of the selling unique features of Industry 5.0 is the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) which has a strong impact on the world of libraries. Hussain (2019) in his view comment that the 5IR is primarily focused on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and how it empowers librarians to value the things they use, hence, fostering proficient library service delivery. However, institutional libraries can leverage on the effective utilization of this transformation technological trend to provide effective and efficient alternative service delivery to library users (Okunlaya, Syed Abdullah & Alias, 2022). This transformation, energized by the integration of recent technologies, has redefined the traditional concept of library operations, hence, focusing their role as dynamic hubs of information services and knowledge dissemination.

Libraries are striving to key into the current trend of the 5IR in order to maintain relevance and stay in vogue, thus the need to embrace technological change. The industry 5.0 is characterized by human-machine collaboration, harmonizing a mutually beneficial relationship between libraries, librarians and machines. This has sparked a systematic two-way shift in librarianship, from collection awareness to user-centric service delivery.

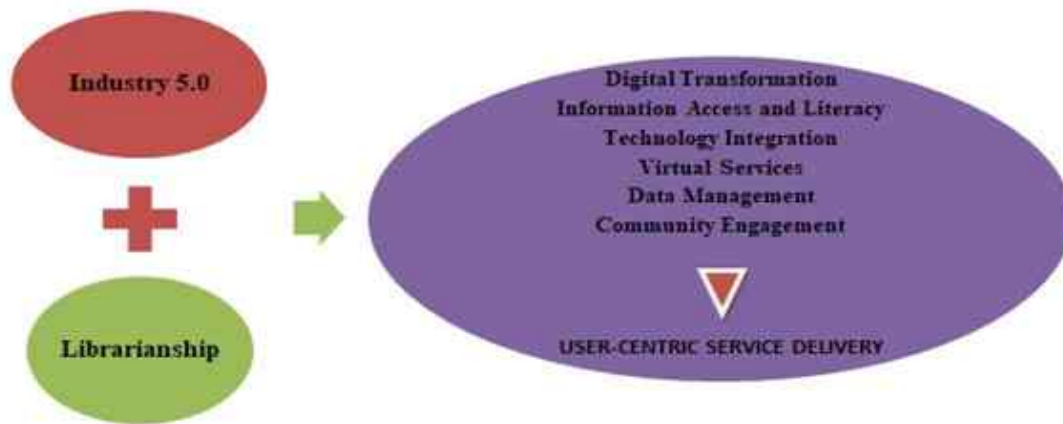


Fig 1 Information Renaissance Collaboration

This new revolution is changing the role of librarians from knowledge of collections to the users. It has made the work of librarians easier by leveraging the unique strengths of librarians and technology to improve overall performance and increase human capacity.

Changing Role of Librarians in Industry 5.0

It is a known fact that the job of librarians has evolved over the years with technology. The current industrial age is changing and will continue to greatly affected the way library and librarians conduct their daily activities in ensuring that the dynamic and diverse needs of users are met, (Chigwada & Chisita, 2021). It has simplified their job roles, eliminating repetitions and manual labour which is symbolic to traditional libraries, drastically changing the way librarians work and will work. Robots can now assist the librarian in shelf reading, and acquisition of library materials can be done electronically by placing orders online to publishers and vendors. Similarly, AI tools such as ChatGPT, GPT (Generative Pre-trained Transformer), BERT and so on can be used by research librarians to aid in creative writings and Python libraries, SAS, IBM SPSS, MATLAB, Codeium, Amazon Code Whisperer, and Replit can also be used for data analysis and programming. This age presents lots of opportunities for librarians to work hybrid, collaborate with professional colleagues and have an exciting career. The services of the reference librarian is enhanced, as drones and CCTV will be used to monitors users, robots will answer reference questions, do literature search and optimize users experience. The services of the library become fully automated fostering proficiency in library service delivery. From the acquisition librarian to the reference librarians experience will experience ease in discharge of their primary duty.

Irrespective of these fantastic opportunities and benefits offered by these cutting-edge technologies, there remains this belief and fear by some librarians that their jobs will be taken and 5IR technologies' will perform the duties of a librarian. This is not true! Omagbemi (2022) rightly stated that librarians remain the key to the library, not technology, nor the OPAC. In like manner, Ariyo (2023) maintained that technology is not here to replace humans but rather serve their interest. The industry 5.0 aims to make job of librarians' easy and efficient in order to improve service delivery. He further maintained that we see diverse cases of human-systems collaboration in leading the way to a plethora of job creation and economic growth (Ariyo, 2023). Other studies have also revealed that 5IR has created a platform that enable librarians to collaborate with machine (robot) in order to revive human efforts for effective library services to its clientele. Thus, transforming the workplace culture and as well facilitate human well-being, (Ziatdinov, Atteraya & Nabiyevev, 2024). Therefore, facilitating the integration of robots into unstructured library environments would requires librarians to acquire new skills or knowledge through various forms of capacity development for optimal institutional library operations, (Ziatdinov, Atteraya & Nabiyevev, 2024). To buttress this, the study of Apriliyanti and Ilham (2022) reveal that librarians must be skillful and more innovative by utilizing information technology in the era of the industrial 5.0 to provide excellent service. In order to achieve this, the study also identified that funding and facilities/infrastructure issues needs to be addressed in libraries, (Apriliyanti & Ilham, 2022).

An institutional library, also known as academic libraries are essentially an integral part higher education where they are regarded as the hub of learning, teaching and research. It remains the backbone which circulates the lifeblood through the acquisition, processing, preserving and dissemination of required knowledge and information through its resources and personnel, (Omagbemi, 2022). They have an array of collections available in various formats and offer specialized services tailored to satisfying users need.

Service Delivery in Institutional Libraries

The proliferation of technologies has significantly influenced methods of service in institutional libraries. The term service refers to the process of providing a service to library users according to their needs and expectations. Oden and Owolabi (2021), defines it as the ability of the university library to provide information needs of patrons at the time of request in order to satisfy the expectation of users and improve their experience. Libraries have strong online presence, offering unrestricted access to her collection and service through the use of technology. The 5IR has made it possible for users to find, access and retrieve information online, using various search engines. Solomon and Nyemezu (2023), identified the following as the services offered by institutional libraries; instructional services, Current Awareness Service (CAS), Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), library networking, and Electronic Document Delivery Service (EDDS). Similarly, Oni in Olorunfemi (2018) identified the following as services provided by institutional libraries as; lending service, reprographic services, bindery service, translation services, consultancy services, online instruction, technical services, computerized interactive search and alert services. In the vein, Panda, Hasan and Kaur (2024) averred that within the landscape of Library 5.0, the convergence of cloud computing and fog computing has emerged as a pivotal force in reshaping library services. Currently, in the Library and Information Science domain, librarians and information professionals can apply the 5IR wireless communications to enhance service provisions for their clients, (Ibinaiye & Jiyane, 2021).



Fig 2 FIR-TB-LSD (Fifth Industrial Revolution Tech-based Library Service Delivery)

Fig 2 illustrates the resultant effect of the synergy between industry 5.0 and service delivery. The industry 5.0 presents a world of limitless possibilities for world class delivery of library and information services. Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall, (2008), listed the following as the impact of the 5IR on institutional repositories; enhanced access to information, improved service, increased patronage, efficiency and automation, global connectivity, innovation and life-long learning, access to varieties of information resources, equitable access to information, advancement of science, etc.

Librarians are change agents, thus must evolve and eliminate all forms of bias and embrace technology. The 5IR is a friendly revolution that aims to improve methods of service delivery in institutional libraries. This revolution is characterized by breakthrough technologies such as; artificial intelligence, Internet of Things (IoT), real time virtual libraries, robots and robotics, augmented reality, data analytics, big data, blockchain technology, drones, automated doors, chatbots, 3D printing and more, (Ibinaiye & Jiyane, 2021).

The 5IR presents a transformative force that permeates all facets of human endeavor, reshaping method of service delivery. It presents unprecedented opportunities for innovation, growth and development while also posing complex issues and ethical dilemmas such as misuse, abuse, privacy concerns and more that require careful collaboration. Understanding the complexities of 5IR is imperative for emerging librarians to embrace its potential, address challenges and ensure sustainable service delivery. It is on this premise that this study aims to unravel the intricacies in exploring the dynamics of 5th Industrial Revolution and service delivery in institutional libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The 5th Industrial Revolution has made service delivery efficient and effective, fostering inter-library collaboration and eliminated all forms of geographical barrier. The integration and use of 5IR tools for service delivery is an essential requirement for librarians irrespective of the libraries. However, this is subject to the ability of librarians to evolve with trend, acquire the necessary training and skills to facilitate smooth integration and use of 5IR technologies.

Preliminary observation by the researchers reveals a high level of apathy among librarians towards the use of technologies. Sadly, almost everything related to technology in institutional libraries are not fully embraced and practiced by institutional librarians in Rivers State. Therefore, there is need to underscore and explore the dynamics of 5th Industrial Revolution and service delivery in institutional libraries in Rivers State in order to ascertain the current situation, identify challenges and make recommendations. Hence, the need for a study of this nature.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore the dynamics of the 5th Industrial Revolution and library service delivery in institutional libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to;

1. *Identify the services available in institutional libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria.*
2. *Investigate the current impact of the 5th industrial revolution services in institutional libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria*
3. *Examine the extent institutional libraries have integrated 5IR technologies into their service delivery*
4. *Identify the challenges associated with the adoption of 5IR in service delivery in institutional libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria.*

Research Questions

1. *What are the services available in institutional libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria.?*
2. *What is the current impact of the 5th Industrial Revolution services in institutional libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria*
3. *To what extent has 5IR technologies been integrated into service?*
4. *What are the challenges associated with the adoption of 5IR in service delivery in institutional libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria?*

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive survey design, to investigate the dynamics of 5th industrial revolution and service delivery in institutional libraries in Rivers State. The population of the study was 62 librarians across the 4 institutions namely; Rivers State university (RSU), Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE), University of Port Harcourt and Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic (CEAP) in Rivers State as below.

Population Distribution

S/N	Institutions	Population	Returned rate %
1	Rivers State university (RSU)	22	13(59%)
2	Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE)	10	8(80%)
3	University of Port Harcourt	21	14(66%)
4	Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic (CEAP)	9	9(100%)
	Total	62	44(71%)

Census enumeration was used as the sampling technique. Four research objectives and questions guided the study. Instrument for collection for data was a self-structured questionnaire. A four-point rating scale of 'Agreed, Strongly Agreed, Disagree, Strongly Disagreed for research question 1, 2 and 4 while 'Very High Extent, High Extent, Low Extent, Very Low Extent' respectively, was used to elicit information for research question 3. Out of the 62 instruments distributed, only 44(71%) were retrieved and found valid. Mean and Standard Deviation was utilized for data analysis with a decision rule of 2.50. All items below 2.50 were disagree, while items above 2.50 were accepted, as the scored above the decision rule of 2.50.

The findings of the study revealed that resistance to change, technophobia, digital divide, ethical considerations, skill gap, inadequate finance and inadequate infrastructure are the challenges associated with the adoption of 5IR for service delivery in institutional libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria. Based on the findings, the study recommends that libraries and librarians should leverage on these transformational technologies to ease the daily responsibilities of librarians which in turn will greatly impact on current day service demands in line with global practice, libraries and librarians in institutions in Rivers State should encourage and maintain a synergy and collaborate with the opportunity presented with the industry 5.0. amongst others.

Results

Research Question 1

What are the services available for institutional libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria?

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	X	σ	Decision
1	Current Awareness Services (CAS)	29	15	0	0	3.65	0.54	Agreed
2	Reference services	31	14	0	0	3.77	0.51	Agreed
3	Instructional services	22	14	8	0	3.31	0.72	Agreed
4	Interlibrary loan	20	17	6	1	3.27	0.31	Agreed
5	Technology support services	18	21	5	0	3.29	0.79	Agreed
6	Document delivery services	14	21	9	0	3.11	0.87	Agreed
7	Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI)	32	9	2	0	3.61	0.41	Agreed
8	Research assistance services	26	17	1	0	3.56	0.91	Agreed
	Grand Mean							
	3.44							

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation responses from professional librarians on services available for institutional libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria. Based on the decision rule and expected criterion mean score of 2.50, the results indicates that all items on the table were accepted with grand mean of 3.44. This shows that all items listed are available in institutional libraries in Rivers State.

Research Question 2

What is the current impact of the 5th Industrial Revolution on services in institutional libraries in Rivers State?

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	x	σ	Decision
1	5IR has fostered expanded collaboration in libraries	18	25	1	0	3.33	0.48	Agreed
2	It has provided broader access to library collection and services	23	21	0	0	3.52	0.61	Agreed
3	It promotes improved integration of multiple data sources that allows CAS provide unified experience for users	16	25	3	0	3.29	0.31	Agreed
4	Improved service delivery	15	24	1	4	3.13	1.11	Agreed
5	Fosters provision of personalized services	17	26	1	0	3.36	0.69	Agreed
6	Transformed libraries into dynamic hubs of knowledge	16	27	1	0	3.34	0.78	

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 2 reveals the mean and standard deviation responses from professional librarians on the current impact of the 5th industrial revolution on services in institutional libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria. Result of data analysis presented on the table 2 indicates that all items on the table were accepted, as they scored above the criterion mean of 2.50 with grand mean of 3.32.

Research Question 3

To what extent has 5IR technologies been integrated into services of institutional libraries?

S/N	Statement	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	X	σ	Decision
1	Digitized collections	19	16	5	4	3.13	1.11	Agreed
2	online catalogs and databases	20	13	9	2	3.15	1.13	Agreed
3	Library collaboration and consortia	16	11	10	7	2.81	0.51	Agreed
4	Artificial intelligence	7	15	9	13	2.56	0.39	Agreed
5	Internet of Things (IoT)	11	13	3	7	2.16	0.27	Disagreed
6	Big data	6	19	13	6	2.56	0.39	Agreed
7	Robotics	4	17	7	16	2.20	0.20	Disagreed
8	Virtual reality	9	18	8	9	2.61	0.70	Agreed
9	Automated systems	15	18	6	5	2.97	0.91	Agreed
Grand Mean		2.68						

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation responses from professional librarians on extent the 5IR technologies has been integrated into services of institutional libraries, Nigeria. Based on the decision rule and expected criterion mean score of 2.50, the results indicate that items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 table were accepted, while item 5 and 7 were rejected as they scored below the expected mean criterion of 2.50 with grand mean of 2.68.

Research Question 4

What are the challenges associated with the adoption of 5IR in service delivery in institutional libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria?

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	X	Σ	Decision
1	Resistance to change	24	13	6	1	3.36	1.12	Agreed
2	Technophobia	20	20	4	0	3.36	1.12	Agreed
3	Digital divide	15	26	3	0	3.27	0.93	Agreed
4	Ethical considerations	15	18	10	1	3.06	0.71	Agreed
5	Skill gap	24	9	3	8	3.11	0.85	Agreed
6	Inadequate finance	33	8	2	1	3.65	1.41	Agreed
7	Inadequate infrastructure	24	11	4	5	3.22	0.91	Agreed
Grand Mean		3.29						

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 4 shows the mean and standard deviation responses from professional librarians on the challenges associated with the adoption of 5IR in service delivery in institutional libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria. Based on the decision rule and expected criterion mean score of 2.50, the results indicate that all items on the table were accepted with grand mean of 3.29.

Discussions of Findings

The study reveals that Current Awareness Services (CAS), reference services, instructional services, interlibrary loan, technology support services, document delivery services, Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) and research assistance services are the services available for institutional libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria. The findings of this study align with the findings of study by Solomon and Nyemezu (2023), which revealed that Current Awareness Services, Selective Dissemination of Information, library networking, bindery service, reprographic service and, technical service showed a high level of availability in university libraries in Rivers State.

Table 2 underscores the current impact of the 5th Industrial Revolution on services in institutional libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study reveals that 5IR has fostered expanded collaboration in libraries, provided broader access to library collection and services, promotes improved integration of multiple data sources that allows CAS provide unified experience for users, improves service delivery, fosters provision of personalized services and transforms libraries into dynamic hubs of knowledge. This corroborates the findings of Ibinaiye and Jiyane (2021), which revealed that 5IR provides broader access, increases bandwidth, improves service delivery and fosters innovation in academic libraries.

This study reveals that digitized collections, online catalogs and databases, library collaboration and consortia, Artificial intelligence, Big data, Virtual reality and automated systems have been integrated

into the services of institutional libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria to a high extent. This is in agreement with the findings of Masenya and Chistia (2022), which revealed that academic libraries have repositioned themselves in current digital age, thus integrating 5IR technologies such as IoT, blockchain technology, cloud computing, big data and virtual realities to improve their services.

Table 4 revealed the challenges associated with the adoption of 5IR in service delivery in institutional libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria. The findings of the study indicates that resistance to change, technophobia, digital divide, ethical considerations, skill gap, inadequate finance and inadequate infrastructure are the challenges associated with the adoption of 5IR for service delivery in institutional libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria. This is in consonance with the findings of Ibinaiye and Jiyane (2021), who opine that finance, lack of skilled manpower and some ethical consideration mitigate the adoption of technology in academic libraries. The implication of our findings is that librarians should be willing to adapt to change and not be afraid of utilizing technology in performing their job responsibilities. There is also a need for the library to be adequately funded for improved service delivery.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concluded that the integration of 5IR technologies such as online catalogs and databases, library collaboration and consortia, artificial intelligence, Internet of Things (IoT), Big data, etc, into services of institutional libraries are very crucial. This can assist to provide broader access to library collection and services, promote improved integration of multiple data sources that allows CAS provide unified experience for users, and transform libraries into dynamic hubs of knowledge. The achievement of these implies that librarians should be open to technological changes that can build their skills and confidence for enhanced provision of effective library services to meet the user's demand.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The high level of the availability of the various services should be sustained while effort should be made to adequately integrate the 5IR technology for enhanced services to users in institution libraries in Rivers State.
2. Libraries and librarians should leverage on these transformational technologies to ease the daily responsibilities of librarians which in turn will greatly impact on current day service demands in line with global practice.
3. Libraries and librarians in institutions in Rivers State should encourage and maintain a synergy and collaborate with the opportunity presented with the industry 5.0. This will foster the desired innovation necessary for improved quality service delivery to meet the users' needs in this era of technology.
4. Institution libraries as a matter of urgency should consciously and intentionally provide the required facilities and infrastructures as well as expose librarians to the relevant skills needed to bridge the service delivery gap as a result of digital divide in this technological age.

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EXPLORING THE LITERATURE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVENESS IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper explored the literature of diversity and inclusiveness in library and information services (LIS) in Nigeria, as it relates to the process of improving the terms of participation in society for people who are disadvantaged based on age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status, through enhanced opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights. Since information is the most vital resource for human development, it is essential to ensure that every individual is accommodated with fair access to information. While drawing on evidence-based literature, diversity and inclusion are gaining relevance and the needed attention in the northern part of the globe but the case is different in developing countries like Nigeria. Nigerian libraries are rarely designed for inclusive services, especially for the aged and physically challenged as reviewed literature showed gaps related to the underserved. Amid these concerns, there is a growing interest in diversity and inclusiveness among Nigerian LIS authors. Given the foregoing, the authors recommend that LIS educators and practitioners should develop more interest in research and practice related to diversity and inclusion, especially for the underserved in the society, strengthening inclusive library framework and benchmark by the National Library of Nigeria in conjunction with the Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria and Nigerian Library Association (NLA), encouraging and enabling all sections of NLA to be proactive in issues associated with inclusive and diverse library and information services, incorporation of inclusivity into all core LIS service-oriented courses being taught in higher education institutions, among others.

Keywords

Inclusiveness, Diversity, Library and Information Services, Nigeria

Introduction

At seven billion and still growing, the global population is not only expanding exponentially in number but also in cultural and social diversity. Yet, the interconnectedness of the new global information order is bringing societies together than ever recorded in history. This has improved communications across geographical and social borders. With the fast-rising complexities of the modern world, only an even development can guarantee social justice. A lopsided development creates imbalances and social fissures. These are the main causes of ideological, cultural, regional and geopolitical agitations and conflicts within and among the different strata and groups in the society.

All areas of human endeavour have been caught in the web of social imbalances occasioned by individual or group differences, natural or artificial. And service providers across the different professions are beginning to adapt to the complexities created by these diversities. The field of Library and Information Science is not an exception to this. At the forefront of the delivery of information services, Librarians, as managers of human recorded knowledge have central roles to play in ensuring that the heterogeneity of the global village does not hinder its position as a humanitarian discipline with the philosophy of ensuring that human access to information is guaranteed with little or no physical or ideological barriers. If information is the principal resource or commodity in an information society, then equitable access to information technologies, information infrastructure, information resources and services is crucial if that society is to be a fair and just one that will attain its developmental goals (Encyclopedia of Communication and Information, 2019). As a result of the central role information plays in the sustainability of the knowledge economy in the digital era, information services is expected to be given proper attention in meeting the demands of all the members of the society (Okechukwu, & Ayandokun, 2022).

Marwiyah (2019) states that the library has an important role in promoting the social inclusion with its function as an institution to implement education for all. With adequate information, members of a society will have opportunity to participate in community activities and enable them to be more well-informed people. However, the discourse of diversity and inclusivity is gaining more momentum in the

global North, but it remains to be seen how such a very vital topic is receiving interests among Nigerian librarians. For a country of such level of diversity and population as Nigeria, it is only appropriate that this work seeks to access and explore the literature of diversity and inclusiveness in library and information services in Nigeria, to examine from current literature, how Nigerian library and information science researchers are keeping pace with global trends in inclusive information services delivery.

Understanding Diversity and Inclusiveness

The Department of Economics and Social Affairs of the United Nations (2016) defines inclusion or social inclusion as the process of improving the terms of participation in society for people who are disadvantaged on the basis of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status, through enhanced opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights. It is as much a process as it is a goal, the objective of which is to erase its direct opposite, social exclusion.

According to the Commission for European Communities (as cited in Adhikary, Karak, & Adhikary, 2019) social inclusion is a process which ensures that those individuals and communities at the risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in the economic, social, political and cultural lives, and to enjoy a standard of living that is considered normal in the society in which they live (and even work). It includes the conditions that allow them to partake and participate in decision making activities that affect their access to fundamental human rights. This definition lays emphasis on poverty but social inclusion and exclusion cover issues that have to do with more than that. It exceeds inadequate financial capabilities but also includes the protection of individuals that are disadvantaged based on their identities and other demographic factors.

Contemporary Diversity and Inclusive Library and Information Services

In the Indonesian case, while trying to achieve an inclusion-targeted series of library services, Pratiwi and Heriyanto (2022) found out that the programme strategies embarked on by the Indonesian National Library included policies implementation preparations, regional and other agencies stakeholder's socialization for long-term synergy, and legal support and collaborations with libraries and other agencies. The strategies also involved facilitators training on programme implementation, facilities, and infrastructure through library materials, IT equipment, and other collections supporting service quality and effective programme implementation.

While reviewing the evidence-based cases of several libraries in different regions of the world that have undertaken specific measures and initiatives towards having an inclusive society and protect the marginalised, with major emphasis on empirical data from South Africa, Stilwell (2016) discovered that the areas public libraries offer inclusive and expanded information services beyond the realm of the known conventional services include health information, service to immigrants, service to people with visual impairments, rural library services, food security.

Jaegar, Gorham, Taylor, Kettlich, Sarin and Peterson (2014) explain that modern public libraries now have an expanded sphere of service such as digital literacy and digital inclusion classes, supporting e-government, emergency response, and are increasingly involved in the provision of social services and education. Others include providing homework help services, access to community health information and nurses, immigration centers and immigration information, and bring the delivery of fresh foods to food deserts. Example include the collaborative effort between a private, not-for-profit health information delivery organization, and the state library organization, offered public library health information programmes in Delaware (Flaherty & Grier, 2014). This was done by embedding health librarians in the health information services programme to assist users in evaluating health information for its authenticity.

Rationale for Diversity and Inclusiveness in Library and Information Services in Nigeria

The very existence of the “digital divide”—or lack of access to information and communication technology (ICT) for certain segments of the population—exacerbates inequalities (Servon, 2002). Libraries based on social inclusion are libraries that facilitate communities to develop their potential by viewing cultural diversity, willingness to accept change, and offering opportunities to strive for, protect and advocate culture and human rights (Wiyono, 2021). Marwiah (2019) indicates that shared public information and increased accessibility of the community's activities will remove a feeling of exclusion and with adequate information, members of a society will have opportunity to participate in community activities thereby contributing to societal development. Rural library and information centres could play a significant role in the socio-economic development of rural areas by providing information and communication services to the rural people (Hoq, 2014).

Inequality in access to information is a dent on societal structure. It creates an imbalance that places certain members of the society ahead of the other. This further creates feelings of disaffection among society members, and reduces social and human capital development. Yusuf, Adeyemi and Ademodi (2022) argue that *though there are many literature on discrimination of the right of certain categories of persons to education, not many exist on tackling the problem from pedagogical approaches and the place of the library. Hence, the library needs to explore and harness its role in creating a socially balanced global community.*

The Literature of Diversity and Inclusiveness in Library and Information Services in Nigeria

Scholarly works associated with diversity and inclusiveness exist in the literature. Inazu, Itsekor, Omonori, Olalere, and Sulaiman (2021) embarked on a study titled “Managing Workforce Diversity in Nigerian Libraries”. The purpose of this paper was to emphasize the need for workforce diversity in Nigerian libraries considering the events in the current global workplace. This study was viewed from the dimensions of gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, culture, and education backgrounds for tolerance, equality and cohesiveness to enhance library service delivery to diverse users. The paper revealed that the consequences of not managing library diversity workforce properly could lead to conflict, poor performance, staff turnover and ineffective service delivery. In order to promote an atmosphere of inclusiveness in Nigeria, different suggestions were given as a way forward, which will enable the library manager to create awareness, educate, build teamwork, and develop policies and standards. It also revealed that managers face challenges dealing with the peculiarity of human behaviour, discrimination, prejudices, and even their personal beliefs and value systems. It is one of the novel study on diversity as most other studies have focused on user services diversity rather than the diversity of the service providers. It is argued that workplace diversity helps to harness the different ideas, experiences, skills and knowledge of multicultural and cross cultural, intergenerational age, gender and educational background of workforce to gain competitive advantages in the globalized economy.

Ezeabasili and Umeji (2021) examined inclusive library services: an imperative for academic libraries in Nigeria. Relying on literature, the paper explored the need for inclusive library services in the academic library in Nigeria. The study reported that students with disability attend institutions of higher learning and as such need library services just like other students. It also reported that although these library services are available to other students, students living with disability cannot easily access them. The study focused on students with physical challenges.

In a paper titled, “Re-inventing a Model for an Inclusive and Sustainable Information Society in Nigeria: The Roles of Public Libraries and Information Centres in Rural Areas”, Onyemachi and Ayandokun (2022) designed a model for the delivery of information services to influence the attainment of an inclusive information society using rural and community libraries. It outlines the important roles of the rural and community libraries and information centres in achieving sustainable development through inclusivity under the areas of bridging the digital divide and having direct interaction with the rural populace in a two-way framework involving action and feedbacks. An 8-point model information services for an inclusive information society is drafted to include information for political inclusion, financial/economic inclusion, educational/literacy inclusion, socio-cultural inclusion, medic—health inclusion, occupational inclusion, agro-food inclusion, and digital inclusion. The challenges of implementing rural information services for an inclusive information society include poor information infrastructure and architecture, inadequate policies on rural information services, government negligence of the rural communities, etc. The paper recommends creation of policies on rural information services delivery, training of librarians on contemporary rural information services delivery, provision of adequate modern rural information infrastructure and architecture and other means of addressing the challenges identified. This particular study, compared to earlier reviewed ones was more encompassing as it is not limited to any particular group of user, as inclusion actually targets.

Igiamoh and Ogunwemimo (2013) examined a study related to that of Onyemachi and Ayandokun (2022) above, albeit from an empirical perspective instead. This study investigated services provided by public libraries in Nigeria to promote social inclusion in their communities. The research method adopted for the study was a social survey and the research instrument used was a questionnaire. The population of the study was the heads of the various community and public libraries in each of the thirty-three LGAs of Oyo State. The findings of the study revealed that 84% of the librarians had not received any specific training on inclusive library services. The findings also revealed lack of specific budgeting and training, and few services geared towards social inclusion in public libraries. Related services such as employment information and generation; information for farmers, the elderly, and artisans; literacy; and creative writing sessions, among others, are not being regularly provided in the libraries. What these challenges imply is that the 8-point model information services for an inclusive information society for political inclusion, financial/economic inclusion, educational/literacy inclusion, socio-cultural inclusion, medic—health inclusion, occupational inclusion, agro-food inclusion, and digital inclusion (Onyemachi & Ayandokun, 2022) will not be achievable if the challenges identified remain unmanaged.

Okechukwu and Ayandokun (2022) assessed public libraries as agents of social inclusion: The case study of the Ebonyi State Public Library Abakaliki. This paper examines the roles public libraries can play as agents of social inclusion using the Ebonyi State Public Library, Abakaliki as a case. With specific objectives such as identifying the inclusive information services offered, strategies deployed, and challenges of delivery, the research adopted documentary sources from literature for secondary data, and then descriptive survey research design which includes the use of structured questionnaire and observation for primary data collection from a combined population of 119 staff, registered users and the library itself. The findings indicate that the library offers conventional services such as user education, serials services, inter-library loan, reprography, readership advocacy, but does not offer specific inclusive information services such as adult education, financial literacy, mass literacy, information literacy, rural information

services, indigenous knowledge services, information services for the physically challenged, translational services, and mobile library services. The library also lacks workable strategic policy and programmes for inclusive information services. Therefore the perceived importance of inclusive information services such as social integration, social cohesion, equitable opportunities are threatened due to challenges such as difficulty in staffing for inclusive services, absence of policies on inclusive library services, lack of librarians motivation, inadequate financial support, inadequate librarians' skills on inclusive information services, and absence of physically-challenged friendly infrastructure. The paper recommends enactment of library policy on inclusion, training of librarians, redesigning of the library structure for inclusive services, staff motivation, and improved funding to address the challenges. The study advocates for the provision of policy on inclusive library services, stakeholders' forum and socialization for long-term synergy, legal support and collaborations with libraries and other agencies, interaction with library patrons and members of the society on inclusive services, advocacy for inclusive information services, outreach programmes for inclusive information services, and periodic evaluation of inclusion programmes as strategies to be used in delivering inclusive library services to users in Nigeria. One observed major limitation in the scope of this study is that it did not consider inclusive gender information services.

Contrary to the study of Okechukwu and Ayandokun above, (2022), Adakawa and Al-Hassan (2020) studied “inclusive library and information services for gender equality: towards achieving national development in Nigeria”. This paper explores inclusive library and information services for national development. In the paper, several issues bordering gender equality and women's ways of knowing have been highlighted. The theory of women's knowing was used as a lens to guide the study. Several programmes are designed in libraries but the information service provision does not take into account the differences in gender a consequence of expending huge sums of money with little or no appreciation by the gender concerned. Public libraries are shouldered with responsibility of reaching out to people but the programmes that can empower women sieve their sights and public library services are not entertained. It is shown in the review that it is not the gender differences that affect women to compete in their IT-related careers or limit them from participating in political or positional attainment. Recommendations were made for policy makers or programme on how to augment information service provision using women's ways of knowing for their empowerment.

Aragbaye, John and Akande (2023) assessed a study titled “promoting national unity in Nigeria: the roles of library and information professionals”. This study explores the importance of national unity in Nigeria and how it can be attained by Library professionals who play a key role in promoting diversity and inclusivity, which are essential for peaceful coexistence. This study reveals that adequate access to relevant information promotes transparency and equal representation across all facets of society - ultimately leading towards inclusivity which is a necessary component for any country's success regardless of its size or population demographics. This research identifies strategies that promote social cohesion amidst religious or tribal differences towards a common goal beneficial for all parties involved while cultivating values like respectfulness towards diversity that foster peaceful coexistence among fellow Nigerians ultimately leading to National Unity- a positive outcome for the country.

Zaid and Nduka (2023) studied “evidence-based strategies for promoting diversity and inclusion of library services for students with visual impairment in Nigeria: University of Lagos experience”. The paper notes that universities world over are increasingly admitting students living with different disabilities including those with visual impairment. Having realized the research gap that exists in the area of diversity and inclusiveness of library services in Nigeria, the study discussed the strategies the University of Lagos Library deployed to promote diversity and inclusion to support learning and research activities of students with visual impairment.

Part of the strategy adopted includes the appointment of one staff that is visually impaired, assisted by one sighted staff. While on the infrastructural level, creation of innovation hub within the library (Visually Impaired Resource Center), Provision of computer hardware and software, Provision of assistive tools, and Activation of artificial intelligence (Robotics) (*RoboScholar*) to aid voice interaction and navigation. The services used include regular meetings with service staff, Retrieval of reading materials from stacks Conversion of reading materials to braille, Research assistance, Document delivery, Reader's assistance (mobility orientation/academics) and Integrating special needs in the LMS (Library Management System).

Zaid (2017) also assessed “the Exclusion of Persons with Visual Impairment in Nigerian Academic Libraries' Websites”. The study examined the extent of inclusion or exclusion of persons with visual impairments in the websites of leading university libraries in Nigeria. Zaid further notes that persons with visual impairment experience marginalization as information resources in the university libraries are designed to suit a generic population due to challenges such as inadequate budget, poor information and telecommunication infrastructure, limited access to high-speed internet, low take-off of open access repositories and digital libraries, non-availability of adaptive technology and specialized software packages, and some cultural misconceptions that visually impaired are incapable of any intellectual activities. The libraries of the first ten universities (University of Ibadan, University of Lagos, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ahmadu bellow University, University of Ilorin, Covenant Univeristy Ota, University of Nigeria, University of Benin, University of Abuja, and University of Port Harcourt) in the

webometric ranking of universities in Nigeria were selected for data collection with the IFLA library disability checklist serving as the context for determining items for collection and analysis of data. The study found out that Majority of the university library websites has no webpage on disability services. Only two universities had cross connections between library and disability services. However, the link to disability services in one out of the two universities was inactive. The author recommends organizational commitment to accessibility and purchase of assistive technology to enable access for persons with disabilities use library services. The availability of such technologies should be well publicized on the libraries' website. Adequate training for such staff in understanding the needs of and interacting with people with visual impairment was also recommended.

In her Inaugural Lecture titled “*What is Good for the Goose is Good for the Gander*”, Professor Yetunde Zaid of the University of Lagos explained that the University of Lagos library has taken some bold steps in incorporating inclusive services for its physically challenged users by institution of programmes such as:

- *organising a special library orientation programme for newly admitted students with the Students' Affairs Unit for students with vision impairment,*
- *Scanning of course materials for conversion to braille or audio*
- *Conversion of soft copy materials into braille or audio*
- *Transcription and conversion of resources to an accessible format*
- *Editing of materials in accessible formats*
- *Providing research assistance (In-person, email and zoom)*
- *Reader Assistance (reading citations, abstracts, and other materials)*
- *Continuous library orientation and information literacy programme*
- *Extended loan periods*
- *Provision of document delivery service*
- *Eliminating unnecessary complexity (such as keeping directional information simple and*
- *Straightforward. (Zaid, 2024).*

These services were highly successful as they increased the enrollment of physically challenged students from 31 in the 2017/2018 academic session to 66 in the 2023/2024 session. The scholar further noted that most libraries in Nigerian universities still lacked policies for inclusive services for the physically challenges, much more can be achieved through the creation of policies on inclusive services, getting familiar with the information needs of the physically challenges users, building a supportive library environment, staff training and capacity building on inclusive services, enhanced access to facilities and equipment such as assistive technologies, and building and sharing on-demand information resources (Zaid, 2024).

Similarly, Idiodi and Urhiewhu (2023) explain that the academic library should cater for its special needs users by undertaking the use of web pages adapted with interactive interfaces for persons with disabilities, training of staff on special users services delivery, employment of study support partner, personal computers with JAWS and NVDA (Text-to-speech software), and OCR software, adaptive technologies (hearing aids, GoodMaps Explore, The Manti), rollators, Seats and PC Workstations, Washrooms, Text-to-Speech devices, CapTel (Speech to Text Device), among others.

Perceived Gaps in the Literature of Diversity and Inclusiveness in library and Information Services in Nigeria

The literature of inclusiveness in Nigeria is gaining a rapid momentum. Several professionals and professional bodies are targeting inclusiveness in their scholarly works, conferences and projects. However, in the Nigerian Library and Information Science context, the attention has tilted towards inclusive services for the physically challenged and inclusive services in academic libraries. This bias is based on the fact that the society has massively viewed exclusion from the prism of physical challenges. This implies that information services for other excluded members of the society, such as the aged/senior citizens, the digitally excluded members of the society in rural communities, the socially challenges such as those in correctional facilities, those having psychological challenges, those who are underserved due to the nature of their occupation, socially deprived people, the economically challenged, and those battling societal pressure in one way or the other are not having adequate literature to explore how libraries and information centres can address their needs through inclusive library services.

Interestingly, this is not a challenge peculiar to just Nigeria. The fact that it is a global challenge offers Nigerian librarians an opportunity to learn simultaneously from libraries across the globe. According to Muddiman, Durrani, Dutch, Linley, Pateman, and Vincent (2000), it is said that although public libraries are currently modernising their services, this modernisation is unlikely to refocus the public library on excluded communities and social groups. The project concludes that to do this, and to become more than superficially “open to all”, the public library will need to transform itself into a far more proactive, educative and interventionist public institution, with a concern for social justice at its core.

Another area that has received less attention is staff diversity. Most research work on diversity, say a few, have focused on user diversity and inclusion. Meanwhile, staff diversity offers a unique approach to address exclusion in a culturally diverse society. Hoyer (2013) notes that human resources are an integral part of a library's interaction with socially excluded groups. Culturally diverse staff members can open doors to interaction with equally diverse users (Birdi, Wilson, & Cocker, 2008). This will be a huge potential for a largely heterogeneous nation like Nigeria in addressing social exclusion emanating from physical, regional/geographical, ethnic, religious, or cultural perspectives.

Challenges of Diversity and Inclusiveness in Library and Information Services Delivery in Nigeria

Advancing the course of diversity and inclusiveness in library and information services are not without challenges. 70% of academic libraries buildings in Nigeria are not built specifically as libraries, therefore, the issue of planning for users with special needs during construction is not in place (Urhiewhu, Nzewi & Prisa, 2019). Inadequate funding was the major challenge facing the promotion of diversity and inclusive library service. This is due to the fact that the provision of assistive tools requires a whole lot of funds (Zaid, & Nduka, 2023). Ekwelem (2013) studied the use of electronic media by disabled library users in South-east Nigeria. It was revealed that the participants of this study perceived that the libraries were established to cater to the needs of non-disabled users. The findings have also revealed that there is limited knowledge of the needs of persons with disabilities. Momodu (2013), who sought to explore the relevant facilities for physically challenged persons in Nigerian libraries also found out that library facilities for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) were insufficient. For instance, a survey of 20 university libraries in Nigeria, conducted by Lawal-Solarin (2013), revealed that although the majority of the libraries were in high-rise buildings, they lacked elevators and wheelchair ramps. Amongst some of the problems observed about these library buildings in this study is the fact that the door ways in some of them were not even large enough to facilitate entrance by people using wheelchairs, while others also had high shelves and narrow passages between the book shelves.

Idiodi and Urhiewhu (2022) noted that difficulties to the provision of inclusive services occur because of the unavailability of required library materials in convenient formats, lack of modern assistive technologies or equipment to support access to library resources and services, unsatisfactory assistance by trained library staff and inadequate library use training or orientation to users with special needs in how to use library resources and services.

Igiamoh and Ogunwemimo (2013) conducted a study titled “re-positioning public libraries in Nigeria for social inclusion services”. The research method adopted for the study was a social survey and the research instrument used was a questionnaire. The study revealed a lack of specific budgeting and training, and few services geared towards social inclusion in public libraries.

Echezona, Osadebe, and Asogwa (2011) assessed library services to the physically challenged: nature, challenges and strategies. The findings revealed that among the challenges faced by physically challenged people in using the library are architectural barriers, funds to procure equipment, lack of skilled manpower to produce materials needed by the physically challenged etc. The challenge of architectural design in inclusive services was emphasised by Ezebasili and Umeji (2021) who iterate that most of the older libraries, especially University libraries were constructed prior to the era of inclusive education and inclusive library services. These challenges are threats to the realization of inclusion through library services.

Conclusion

Inclusion is gaining rapid momentum among all professions, and the field of Library and Information Science cannot afford to be left out as it is at the centre and core of human capital and social capital development. Despite the fact that inclusive library and information services have not gained the necessary attention in practice due to numerous challenges identified outlined in this paper, there is a huge prospect as library and information scientists are beginning to develop research interest on diversity and inclusion. However, a cursory look at the literature of inclusiveness and diversity in LIS shows that there is a bias towards inclusiveness in academic libraries and towards the physically-challenged users. It must be pointed out that inclusiveness and diversity do not only target the integration of services for the physically challenged, the old, the aged, the socially vulnerable, the economically deprived, the digitally excluded, the psychologically challenged, and even those whose high social status deprives them of ample time to use the library are to be included in general library and information services. Thus, the afore-stated underserved groups point to the obvious gaps in the literature of diversity and inclusion in LIS in Nigeria, thereby requiring the attention of LIS researchers and service providers. To provide sustainable inclusive and diverse library and information services to all classes of information users, it is expected that strategic stems are taken by stakeholders in library and information services in Nigeria. Examples include:

- i. *LIS educators, researchers and practitioners should develop more interest in research and practice related to diversity and inclusion, especially for the underserved in the society.*

- ii. *Strengthening inclusive library framework and benchmark by the National Library of Nigeria in conjunction with the Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria and Nigerian Library Association.*
- iii. *Encouraging and enabling all sections of NLA to be proactive in issues associated with inclusive and diverse library services.*
- iv. *Incorporation of inclusivity into all core LIS service-oriented courses being taught in higher institutions of learning*
- v. *Regulatory bodies like the National Universities Commission, National Board for Technical Education, and National Commission for Colleges of Education to project strong commitment towards promoting diversity and inclusiveness in the operations and services of academic libraries.*
- vi. *Inclusion of diversity and inclusivity into library policies, employment of library staff, as well as design of library buildings.*

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FOSTERING TECHNOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE (LIS): THE ROLE OF TRAINING AND RETRAINING OF LIS EDUCATORS IN RIVERS STATE

By

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Abstract

The study investigated fostering technological diversity and inclusion in library and information science (LIS): the role of training and retraining of LIS educators in Rivers State. Four objectives and four research questions guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive research survey design. The population of the study was 49 library educators in the various library schools in Rivers State. Census sampling technique was used to select all the respondents. Online Questionnaire was used for data collection. A total of 35 responses were recorded and found valid for analysis. The data was analyzed using mean. The study revealed that trainings on the use of Artificial Intelligence, on information retrieval, Augmented Reality amongst others were the specific training needs of library educators in Rivers State; the challenges faced by library educators were Digital literacy gap, Rapidly evolving technology, Limited access to devices or technology amongst others; provision of alternative sources of energy, equipping educators with basic troubleshooting skills, Initiate device lending programs and Train educators in grant writing to secure funding for technology acquisition were recommended as strategies for overcoming the challenges faced by library and information science educators in the inclusion of technological diversity.

Keywords: Technological Diversity, Technological Inclusion, Library Educators

Introduction

Entities ranging from businesses to schools and to nonprofit organizations such as the library are striving to build and support efforts towards better diversity and inclusion. These organizations not only seek to offer more opportunities for people with varied backgrounds, experiences and abilities to participate, but also to ensure the services they offer meet the needs of everyone in the community with the aid of technology.

The Library and Information Science (LIS) field is undergoing a rapid transformation driven by the constant influx of diverse technologies. Information professionals are no longer solely concerned with traditional library resources like books and databases. They must now navigate a whole lot of technological tools and resources. As information professionals navigate an increasingly digital landscape, the ability to leverage diverse technological tools and foster inclusive information access becomes paramount (Library & Information Science Education Network, 2023). To ensure LIS education reflects this changing landscape, educators themselves need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to foster technological diversity and inclusion.

In essence, technological diversity in LIS education equips future librarians to become tech-savvy information professionals who can bridge the digital divide and create inclusive information environments for all. According to Gilliland and Rogers (2017), technological diversity is a term that covers a broad range of digital tools and resources that is being employed in the LIS field. These tools and resources range from traditional library management systems to cutting edge data analysis tools, digital curation platform and social media applications that depicts the dynamic nature of accessing information. From the perspective of various authors, the benefits of technological diversity and inclusion in LIS Education and in extension future LIS professionals are numerous. Fidalgo and Thorman (2024) asserted that students are able to critically evaluate new technologies to ascertain their effectiveness, accessibility and potential bias. Technological diversity also provides the avenue to navigate and integrate diverse technologies that are peculiar to library and information centres in a bid to enhance user experience and services. By promoting technological diversity in LIS education, future LIS professionals are prepared to serve a wider audience with varying information needs irrespective of their technological fluency and also promote information equity by ensuring that everyone has equal access to information irrespective of their technological background (Al-Qallaf & Mika, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

Technological advancements are driving a continuous and rapid transformation of the information landscape. However, maintaining fair access to information in a world that is becoming more and more digital is a challenge brought on by the rapid advancement of technology. This difficulty is made worse by the fact that many educators in the field of library and information science (LIS) lack a critical technological competency (Alex-Nmecha & Nsirim, 2023). The benefits of technological diversity and inclusion to the students are numerous such that it promotes innovation, improves the curriculum and produces competent graduates who are better prepared to face the challenges of diverse work environment. It is imperative to attend to the issue of LIS educators' need for ongoing training and retraining regarding technological

innovations and their inclusive implementation. LIS programs can produce information professionals who are ready to close the digital divide by giving LIS educators the information and skills they need. In addition to encouraging creativity in libraries and enabling librarians to better meet the varied needs of their communities, this guarantees fair access to information for all locals. Although studies have shown the various aspects of diversity and inclusion in LIS, there is no known study to the researchers' knowledge with empirical evidence on fostering technological diversity and inclusion: the role of training and retraining LIS Educators in Rivers State, thus, the need for the study.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to investigate the “Role of training and retraining of LIS educators in fostering technological diversity and inclusion in library and information science (LIS) in Rivers State. The specific objectives are to:

1. Identify the current state of technological diversity and inclusion in LIS Education in Rivers State
2. Explore the specific training needs of LIS Educators in fostering technological diversity and inclusion
3. Identify the challenges LIS Educators encounter in implementing technological diversity and inclusion
4. develop recommendations for overcoming the challenges faced by LIS educators in fostering technological diversity and inclusion in Rivers State

Research Questions

1. what is the current state of technological diversity and inclusion in LIS Education in Rivers State?
2. what are the specific training needs of LIS Educators in fostering technological diversity and inclusion?
3. what are the challenges LIS Educators encounter in implementing technological diversity and inclusion?
4. what are the recommendations for overcoming the challenges faced by LIS educators in fostering technological diversity and inclusion in Rivers State?

Literature Review

Literarily, diversity denotes a collective concept which means variety. Diversity however refers to the variety of human experiences, backgrounds and identities within a group of people (Wikipedia, 2024). This covers areas like race, ethnicity, gender, religion, socioeconomic status, age and more recently, technology. In the LIS profession, diversity is all about respecting and valuing different backgrounds and perspectives, and recognizing the benefits it brings to the profession (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, 2007). According to Jaeger, Franklin and Bertot (2010), diversity and inclusion has been recognized as foundational elements of LIS profession but also sad to know that the contents of courses and development of curriculum have still not reflected these two elements.

These scholars further pointed out that LIS literature has been limited to other areas of diversity such as race and ethnicity with little or nothing about other aspects of diversity.

Technological diversity therefore takes the concept of diversity and applies it to the technological landscape. It refers to the existence and utilization of a wide range of technologies, tools, and approaches to achieve a particular goal. Technological diversity ensures that people with varying abilities are able to use technology to meet their needs. It also involves using diverse platforms such as desktop, mobile and web to reach different students. Furthermore, Lepkowsky (2017) defines technological diversity as the proficiency and wide range of IT-fluency in using diverse IT applications among various groups and individuals within the general population.

In LIS education, technological diversity is not all about teaching the students about different types of technology, it goes a step further to equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to be able to navigate the evolving technological arena and ensure access to information and other services are inclusive for all users (Ocholla 2000). Technological diversity exposes students to emerging technologies with potential ability to make them relevant in various libraries and information centres. According to Aytac, Kipp, Neal, Rubin, Pattuelli and Hsieh-Yee (2011) include these technologies include big data analytics for user research and, Artificial intelligence and machine learning for information retrieval, digital preservation tools for safeguarding digital collections, assistive technologies like screen readers and text-to-speech software for users with disability and finally augmented reality and virtual reality for creating interactive learning experiences. Aytac et al. (2011) further stressed that these emerging technologies should not only be taught at the basic level, but should also look at the strengths and weaknesses of these technologies and how they can be used effectively in information services and research.

Integrating technological diversity into LIS programs has potential benefits for both the students and the future of the LIS profession. According to Tripplet (2023), these benefits include;

- *Exposes students to various technological tools: students can become active users of various technological tools used in information services. This includes learning programming language of different nature, content management systems. By gaining proper understanding of these technologies graduates of LIS can fit into diverse work environment and climate.*
- *Promotes critical thinking about how information is accessed: technological diversity encourages students to understand how different technologies can influence how information is discovered and accessed. The impact of the digital divide equips graduates to create inclusive and equitable information services.*
- *Develops lifelong learning skills: The rapid pace of technological change is a call for continuous learning for LIS professionals. As such, LIS graduates are prepared to delve into their career haven been taught different technologies needed to stay afloat in the profession.*
- *Prepares students for a diverse workforce: by exposing students to technological diversity, they are equipped to interact and work effectively with colleagues and users irrespective of their varying technological fluency.*

Diversity both in human experience and technologically is an imperative for creating inclusion and effective solutions. Technological diversity therefore is the driving force for technological inclusion.

Inclusion can be simply described as acts or practices that supports equitable and fair distribution of resources ranging from job, income, and most importantly access to information. Such acts or practices encourages the integration of all members of an organization regardless of their status and ability (Garr & Mercer, 2019). Inclusion involves a situation where people are given fair treatment, respected and valued for the various skills they possess which ultimately leads to the success of an organization. Inclusive education therefore means giving students an equal sense of belonging irrespective of their varied abilities and background. According to Fountain (2023) technological inclusion is a concept that ensures that individuals have the ability to effectively utilize various technology and also possess the confidence to navigate the digital landscape. Technological inclusion paves the way for equitable distribution of information for all individuals. Despite the benefits accrued to technological inclusion, research have shown that library and information science professionals in Rivers State are still faced with the challenges of diversifying and including these technologies into teaching and learning. Wiche (2021) investigated library and information science education in the 21st century: the challenges of LIS educators in library schools in Rivers State. Using a population of 45 LIS educators in library schools in Rivers State. The findings of the result showed that lack of state-of-the-art infrastructure, lack of instructional aids, nonchalant attitude of educators towards the use of ICT tools in teaching and learning were identified as some of the challenges the library educators encounters.

In light of the foregoing, it behooves on LIS educators to engage in continuous learning through training and retraining programs in order to meet up with the current trends in the profession. This is because the current traditional teaching methods and curriculum may no longer suffice in inculcating in the student's technological fluency and inclusivity practices. Training and retraining programs provides LIS educators with the required skills and knowledge for promoting technological diversity. The training programs for LIS educators includes; training on relevant technologies such as big data, artificial intelligence, assistive technologies, etc. that are relevant to the LIS profession. These technologies can be further infused into the various courses, thereby teaching students how to utilize them for information, organization, retrieval and analysis. Other benefits of training and retraining as highlighted by Corral, Kennan and Afzal (2013) are; improved curriculum, enhanced learning ability of students, promotes innovation and produces competent future professionals

Methodology

This study adopted the use of a descriptive survey design, to investigate the role of training and retraining LIS Educators in fostering technological diversity and inclusion in Rivers State. The descriptive research is defined as those studies which aim at collecting data and describing it in a systematic manner, the characteristics, features or facts about a given population (Nworgu, 2015). This design was adopted because it will provide information about the variables in the study. The population of the study comprised of all the LIS Educators in Library Schools in Rivers State, which are eleven (11) staff from Rivers state university, nineteen (19) staff from University of Port Harcourt, ten (10) staff from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, and nine (9) from Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic. This comprises a total number of forty-

nine (49) LIS Educators in Port Harcourt as at time of the research. Census sampling was used since the population is manageable. A well-structured questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. A total of 35 responses were recorded and found valid for analysis. Mean scores were used to analyze data collected in line with the research questions designed for this study on a 4-point Likert scale (ranging from 4-1). Decision for acceptance was made based on the scores obtained from the results. Any mean score from 2.50 and above were accepted and any mean score below 2.50 were rejected.

Table 1: Population Distribution Table

<i>S/N</i>	<i>University</i>	<i>Number of Respondents</i>
1	Rivers State University	9
2	University of Port Harcourt	11
3	Ignatius Ajuru University of Education	10
4	Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic	5
Total		35

Results

Research Question One: What is the current state of technological diversity and inclusion in LIS Education?

Table 2: Current state of technological diversity and inclusion in LIS Education

S/N	Search Items	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	TOTAL	MEAN	DECISION
1	I leverage Artificial Intelligence (AI) for information retrieval	2	10	14	9	35	2.1	Rejected
2	I utilize machine learning for information personalization	2	8	14	11	35	2.0	Rejected
3	I use digital preservation tools for safeguarding digital collections	6	10	18	1	35	2.6	Accepted
4	I employ the features of Assistive technologies for students with disability	2	8	6	19	35	1.8	Rejected
5	I use Augmented Reality (AR) for creating interactive learning experiences	2	4	16	13	35	1.9	Rejected
6	I use Virtual Reality (VR) for creating interactive learning experiences	2	10	8	15	35	2.0	Rejected

In table 2, mean response of the current state of technological diversity and inclusion in LIS Education in Rivers State was presented. From the table, it revealed that the use of digital preservation tools for safeguarding digital collections was the only item accepted with mean score of 2.6 while other technological inclusion were rejected. This implies that if LIS Educators are not familiar with the latest technological advancements or how they impact diverse communities, the curriculum may become outdated. This can leave graduates unprepared for the realities of the modern information landscape.

Research Question Two: What are the specific training needs of LIS educators in fostering technological diversity and inclusion?

Table 3: Specific training needs of LIS educators in fostering technological diversity and inclusion

S/N	Search Item	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	MEAN	DECISION
1	Training on the use of Artificial Intelligence	24	7	3	1	35	3.5	Accepted
2	Training on information retrieval	19	13	3	0	35	3.5	Accepted
3	Training on Augmented Reality	25	9	1	0	35	3.7	Accepted
4	Training on System Analysis	17	16	1	1	35	3.4	Accepted
5	Training on information literacy skills for diverse learners	16	14	3	2	35	3.3	Accepted
6	Virtual Reality Training	20	12	3	0	35	3.5	Accepted

In table 3, mean response of specific training needs of LIS educators in fostering technological diversity and inclusion was revealed. From the table, it shows that all the training in the item search were all accepted. However, training on Augmented Reality was highly accepted with the mean score of 3.7

Research Question Three: What are the challenges LIS Educators encounter in implementing technological diversity and inclusion?

Table 4: Challenges LIS Educators encounter in implementing technological diversity and inclusion

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	MEAN	DECISION
1	Limitation in resources	22	11	0	2	35	3.5	Accepted
2	Unequal access to electricity	19	15	0	1	35	3.5	Accepted
3	Digital literacy gap	14	15	5	1	35	3.2	Accepted
4	Rapidly evolving technology	14	14	4	3	35	3.1	Accepted
5	Lack of awareness on the importance of technological diversity and inclusion	13	5	13	4	35	2.8	Accepted
6	Limited access to devices or technology	15	16	3	1	35	3.3	Accepted
7	Lack of technical support	20	13	1	1	35	3.5	Accepted

In table 4, mean response of challenges LIS Educators encounter in implementing technological diversity and inclusion was presented. From the table, all the items identified as challenges were all accepted. However, Lack of awareness on the importance of technological diversity and inclusion had the least level of acceptance with the mean score of 2.8.

Research Question Four: What are the recommendations for overcoming the challenges faced by LIS educators in fostering technological diversity and inclusion?

Table 5: Recommendations for overcoming the challenges faced by LIS educators in fostering technological diversity and inclusion

S/N	Item Statement	VA	A	LA	NA	TOTAL	MEAN	DECISION
1	Train educators in grant writing to secure funding for technology acquisition	24	10	1	0	35	3.7	Accepted
2	Provision of alternative sources of energy	24	11	0	0	35	3.7	Accepted
3	Implement targeted training programs to bridge the digital literacy gap	23	12	0	0	35	3.7	Accepted
4	Training LIS educators to keep abreast with the evolving technology	22	13	0	0	35	3.6	Accepted
5	Organize seminars to create awareness on the importance of technological diversity and inclusion	25	10	0	0	35	3.7	Accepted
6	Initiate device lending programs	23	12	0	0	35	3.7	Accepted
7	Equip educators with basic troubleshooting skills	20	15	0	0	35	3.6	Accepted

In table 4, mean response of recommendations for overcoming the challenges faced by LIS educators in fostering technological diversity and inclusion was presented. From the table, it shows that all the item listed as solutions to the challenges were all highly accepted.

Discussion of the Findings

The finding from research question one indicates that the current state of technological diversity and inclusion in LIS Education in Rivers State is majorly the use of digital preservation tools for safeguarding digital collections. This indicates that the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for information retrieval, Assistive technologies for students with disability, Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) for creating interactive learning experiences are still at its infant stage, as most library educators in Rivers State are yet to deploy these technologies in their teaching and learning experience. This supports the view of Alex-Nmecha&Nsirim, (2023)that many educators in the field of library and information science (LIS) lack a critical technological competency.

The findings from research question two indicates that library and information science educators in Rivers State agrees to trainings on the use of Artificial Intelligence, training on information retrieval, Augmented Reality, System Analysis, information literacy skills for diverse learners and Virtual Reality as their specific training needs that will enable them foster technological inclusion in their teaching and learning process of library and information science. By engaging in these several trainings, LIS educators will have a better understanding of the technological needs of diverse population and as such will be adequately equipped to inculcate and train future librarians to serve the information needs of their community and also promote equal access to information. This corroborates with Aytac, Kipp, Neal, Rubin, Pattuelli and Hsieh-Yee (2011), they stated that trainings on technologies such as big data analytics for user research and, Artificial intelligence and machine learning for information retrieval, digital preservation tools for safeguarding digital collections are needed by library educators.

The findings from research question three indicates the challenges LIS Educators encounter in implementing technological diversity and inclusion to include Limitation in resources, Unequal access to electricity, Digital literacy gap, Rapidly evolving technology, Limited access to devices or technology and lack of technical support as the challenges militating their technological diversity and inclusion as library educators. This supports Wiche (2021), which states that lack of state-of-the-art infrastructure, lack of instructional aids, nonchalant attitude of educators towards the use of ICT tools in teaching and learning were identified as some of the challenges the library educators encounters.

The findings from research question four states that Provision of alternative sources of energy, Equipping educators with basic troubleshooting skills, Initiate device lending programs and Train educators in grant writing to secure funding for technology acquisition as strategies for overcoming the challenges faced by library and information science educators.

Conclusion

Technological diversity and inclusion is fast becoming an essential element of contemporary LIS education. Through training and retraining programs, LIS educators are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills needed to produce future information professionals to serve diverse communities effectively in an ever-changing technological world.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, some recommendations were made:

- The management of the various library schools in Rivers State should implement the inclusion technological diversity for library teaching and learning process
- The various library school in Rivers State should make training and retraining of library educators a policy
- There should be provision of access to these devices and technologies used for teaching and learning.
- Library educators should avail themselves for training and retraining on the various technologies as it evolves.

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FROM AGRARIAN AGE TO 5TH INDUSTRIAL AGE: ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES OF NIGERIA ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS

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Abstract

The advent of computers and other components of information and communication technology and their effect on processing, storage and dissemination of information have challenged academic librarians in Nigeria to up their games or become irrelevant in today's world of Generation Z (Gen Z) information seekers. This paper, a qualitative review of literature, looks at the history of librarianship in Nigeria with emphasis on academic libraries. The paper examines the various efforts by Nigerian academic libraries at automation. The rapidly changing upgrades of information and communication technology tools and the challenges these changes pose to the Nigeria academic librarian are discussed. A model for addressing the various challenges faced by academic librarians in Nigeria is suggested.

Keywords: Academic library, Library automation, Library 5.0, Library schools, Industrial revolutions

Introduction

Most academic institutions across the world have three core areas of responsibilities. The three areas are education (teaching and learning), research and community service. Academic libraries play a critical role in underpinning the success of these three crucial areas through the adequate and timely provision of information resources. The ever-changing nature of information and communication technology is contributing to the actualization of this role by academic libraries. Academic librarians, the key players in the business of information resources management in academic institutions, are continuously adjusting to changes brought to managing information resources in academic libraries by information and communication technology (ICT).

The act of information acquisition, processing, storage and dissemination is as old as man himself/ The rate of change of times implies that academic librarians cannot rest on their laurels if they want to continue to be relevant in their service to customers. The evolution of man, as a result of civilizations, from the agrarian age to first industrial revolution through various other ages to what is today known as fifth industrial age, results to continuous adjustments by academic librarians to the effects of technologies and other variables on librarianship.

For decades, the norm was that librarians would wait to be consulted in the library for their services (Cummings, 2007). Library service was much easier as the basic education and training that librarians received in schools was probably more than enough to offer adequate services to users. Today, the tide has changed, academic librarians now go to their clientele in offices and classrooms to teach information literacy skills and market their services to them.

The advent of a new generation of information seekers, often referred to as Gen Z seems to present more challenges for librarians. This is the group that Prensky (2001) defines as 'digital natives' – a well-recognized younger generation who have grown up with new information and communication technologies as an integral component of their everyday lives, and who have wholly new ways of thinking when it comes to sourcing for needed information. The rapidity of development among information seekers from 'Millennials' to the present Gen Z, which Twenge (2017) describes as the 'iGen' – a cohort she categorizes as being born between 1995 and 2012. The Gen Z is said to be people who were not only born in a period of smart devices but grew up to be ardent users of smartphones and social media; they spend their entire adolescence with smartphones, and, in this environment, social media and texting frequently replace traditional activities, leading users to change their attitudes and behaviours. For this group, there is little inclination to go to a library or seek librarians for help. Cummings (2007) believes that this group has alternative resources at their fingertips. Libraries are therefore compelled to prove, more than ever, that this generation's research needs can be better met through the library, whether online or in person.

Academic librarians in Nigeria are trained in different library schools to carry out their responsibilities as professional librarians, the reality is that the training received barely meets all the challenges that confront them at work. Cooke et al (2011) acknowledge that the knowledge, skills and services that appear to be most highly valued by users may not reflect those on which the greatest emphasis is placed by those who are managing library services – or who are educating future library and information science (LIS) professionals.

Strong institutional policies to guide the information environment in which academic librarians in Nigeria operate is needed to lessen the burdens of academic librarians. Oladokun et al (2021), assert that the new paradigm in the information environment seems to work to keep academic librarians on their toes, even as some may find it hard to cope with the ever-changing developments. However, as many academic librarians are constantly adjusting in order to cope with these ever-changing developments, it is important to examine if their wages and work environment as professionals are what can make them do so effectively. This paper sets out to address some of the challenges faced by academic librarians as a result of the effect of ever-changing effect of technology and civilization on librarianship.

Development of Academic Librarianship in Nigeria

Librarianship in Nigeria, like in other parts of the world, started with the early men. Information was stored in wood carvings, engraving on stones, bronze sculptures and in other media. What could be called modern librarianship – one which involves printed information started in the 1920s with the formation of the Lagos Book Club by some expatriate Europeans and few literate Nigerians. The Lagos Book Club metamorphosed into the Lagos Library in 1929 (Okusaga, Akalumbe & Sulaiman, 2019).

Academic librarianship started in Nigeria with the establishment of Yaba Higher College Library, a library whose collections were skewed to meet vocational information needs of students and staff of Yaba Higher College (Iwe, 2007). The collections of Yaba Higher College Library were transferred to University College Ibadan Library in 1948 to form the nucleus of what is today known as Kenneth Dike Library. University of Nigeria, Nsukka Library was established in 1960. Three other university libraries, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-ife and University of Lagos were established in 1962.

According to the National University Commission (2024), there are 53 federal university libraries, 63 state university libraries and 149 private university libraries in Nigeria. As at year 2024, there are 41 federal polytechnics libraries, 54 state polytechnics libraries and 84 private polytechnics libraries in Nigeria (Olusegun, 2024). For colleges of education libraries, there are 29 federal college of education libraries, 62 state college of education libraries and 114 private college of education libraries. The implication of these figures is that the need for professionally qualified academic librarians in Nigeria is huge. When the number of academic librarians needed in Nigerian academic institutions is juxtaposed with the number of library schools available to train these professionals, there is definitely a gap. The training of librarians started at the University College Ibadan Library in 1950. The pioneer university librarian, John Hary organized the Native Authority Libraries, the first organized Library Training course (Gambo, 2012).

The need for library schools in Nigeria led to the establishment of two library schools. The first was the Institute of Librarianship, now Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies which was opened in 1960 at the University College Ibadan, now Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan and the second was at the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, in 1968. These institutions were built on different philosophical and professional orientations. While the Ibadan library school began with one year basic professional program leading to the award of the post-graduate diploma in accordance with the main objective of the Institute which has been "to educate the leadership for the library profession", the Zaria library school mounted an under-graduate program leading to the award of the Bachelor of Library Science (BLS) degree based on the objective "to train professional librarians at all levels with well-rounded education up to international standard while placing emphasis on the problems facing libraries in Africa."

It apparently became clear in the mid-1970s that the two existing library schools despite their parallel philosophical orientation, cannot meet the nation's library needs. Thus, in 1977 and 1978 two additional library schools were established at Bayero University Kano and University of Maiduguri respectively (Abubakar, 2021). Presently, there are over fifty institutions including Universities (Federal, States and Private) Polytechnics and Colleges across the country that offer Library and Information Science programs at Certificate; Ordinary, National and Higher Diploma; Degree and Higher Degree levels.

The proliferation of library programs in different types of institutions can be seen as a good development for the profession, on the other hand however, it has given rise to divergent opinions on the education of librarians especially from the perspectives of curriculum, resources, and faculty.

Automation of Nigerian academic libraries

According to Haliso and Ogungbeni (2014), academic libraries in Nigeria started computerization and application of information and communication technology during the "Desktop Era"- a period dominated by desktop computers, 1980 to 1990. This was a period of web 1.0 and consequently Library 1.0, when the web existed in static form and activities of academic libraries shifted from being purely paper

based. Information on the web was read-only, articles could only be read on computer screens. The “Read-Only Web” which was also known as “The Information Web” led to increase in the number of web browsers and websites. There were 3million websites in 1999 (Noh, 2022). According to Alabi (1986), individual efforts by academic libraries such as Kenneth Dike (University of Ibadan), University of Lagos and Kashim Ibrahim (Ahmadu Bello University) libraries in 1980s failed largely because there was lack of technical know-how to drive library automation.

The support of World Bank for library automation in Nigeria in 1992 led to application of a library management software known as TIN-LIB (The Information Navigator). This intervention by the World Bank, coordinated by National University Commission (NUC), one microcomputer and a four-user local area network version of the TINLIB software were presented to each of the 20 participating academic libraries (Adegbore, 2010). In the year 2000, Web 1.0 transformed to Web 2.0. Web 2.0, known as “reading and writing web”, allowed users to read websites as well as interact and connect with other users, which is why it was called the “social web.” Social media such as blogs, Facebook, and YouTube appeared with Web 2.0, and companies realized the strength of community interaction with business websites. Libraries across the world, Nigerian academic libraries inclusive, adjusted to the changes in information processing and communication, hence the birth of Library 2.0 (Islam & Al-madabber, 2012). It should be pointed out that these adjustments by academic libraries in Nigeria required a lot of human capacity building which was unfortunately on short supply. The Graphical Library Automation Software (GLAS) replaced TINLIB in many of the academic libraries that adopted TINLIB. Some academic libraries also adopted ALICE for Windows, a window-based library management software.

From 1992 to 2010, some of the academic libraries in Nigeria have adopted three different library management software. For example, University of Lagos Library within this period, changed from TINLIB to GLAS and finally to Millennium (Ogungbeni, et al, 2014). These software were all phased out because of lack of workable policy agreement between academic library managements and software vendors, high cost of annual maintenance fees, not internet enabled, and lack of adequate maintenance skills by library staff. The coming of Web 3.0 with Library 3.0 brought subscription to online databases. Nigerian academic libraries, at this period, were not only grappling with how to sustain a functional library management software, but also dealing with subscription to online academic databases. Online academic databases such as ERIC, Sage, Ebscohost, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, ProQuest and Taylor & Francis became available at costs not easily affordable by academic libraries in Nigeria. It was found that “the awareness of Library 3.0 services did not act as a competitive edge of the library, but only as a personal competitive edge” (Noh, 2022). The argument therefore, is that research is needed on ways to increase individual competitiveness to organizational competitiveness in the future. Hence the shift from Library 3.0 to Library 4.0.

Noh (2015) stated that Library 4.0 is a library with intelligence, makerspace, context-aware technology, open contents, big data, cloud service, augmented reality, and state-of-art display. The era of Library 4.0 gave birth to the open-source movement. A movement started by some computer programmers that favour decentralization, transparency and unrestricted sharing of information, in rejection of secrecy and centralized control of creative work (Britannica, 2024). It was a period of relief to academic libraries that were struggling to meet the information needs of patrons, majority of whom are “digital natives”.

Academic Librarian in the 5th Industrial Revolution

The continuous changes in the information ecosystem environment is causing a form of uneasiness for the Nigerian academic librarians. This uneasiness is not because of lack of intelligence by the librarians, but as a result of not too conducive environment in which he carries out his professional duties. Changes that academic librarians are adjusting to, started from little ones such as continuous birth of different versions of application software such as Microsoft Word. The third industrial age came with academic librarians grappling with different versions of library management software.

In the fourth industrial age, the decision of which institutional digital repository to adopt was part of the concerns of academic librarians in Nigeria. According to WET (2016), the fourth Industrial Revolution is a convergence technology revolution that breaks down all boundaries between digital, bio, and physics based on the Third Industrial Revolution. Noh (2015) was of the opinion that an academic library that is 21st century compliant is a library with intelligence, makerspace, context-aware technology, open contents, big data, cloud service, augmented reality, and state-of-art display. The fourth industrial age has the characteristic that everything changes into an interconnected and more intelligent society based on “super-connectivity,” “super-intelligence,” and “convergence.”

The fifth industrial age emerged as a result of new discoveries in the field of information processing and communication. According to Noh (2022), the key elements that make up operations of the library can be viewed in conjunction with developments that are associated with the fifth industrial revolution. These changes include customized data and machine learning services, artificial intelligence-based services and reference services, smart library environment-based services, Internet of Things-based services, virtual reality/augmented reality based smart services, autonomous object-based smart services, blockchain-based information sharing platforms, 5G-based high-speed services, virtual space and Metaverse-based services. Based on the radical development and spread of information and communication technologies such as the

Internet of Things and the cloud, the “hyper-connectivity” between humans and humans, humans and objects, objects and objects is being strengthened. Through the connection and convergence of artificial intelligence and big data, technology and industrial structures are entering a “super-intelligent” society (Kim, 2016).

Policy, Curriculum, IT Infrastructure, Emolument and Training

Various factors such as institutional policy guiding information space, relevant curriculum in library schools, IT infrastructure in academic libraries environment, emolument of librarians and trainings received on-the-job, are instrumental to making academic librarians in Nigeria comfortable in carrying out their duties. Competence of an academic librarian represents various terms to explain the skill and ability such as professional skill, occupational skill, administrative skill, ICT skill, technology skill, 21st-century skill, informational literacy, media education, computer science, and literacy (Ilomaki et al, 2011). Nwaniki (2018) affirms that today's academic librarians' skills should be shaped by user needs. The competence of an academic librarian could be influenced or determined by information technology infrastructure, professional trainings received in library schools, institutional policy, on-the-job training and their emoluments. Figure 1.

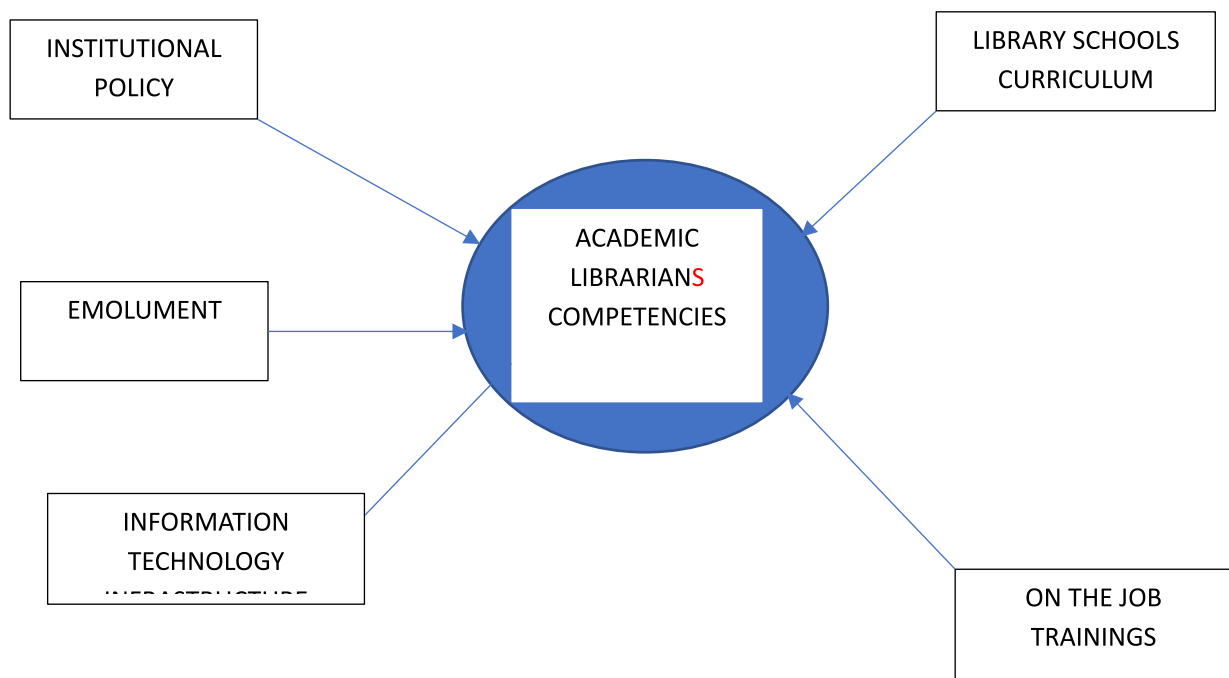


Figure 1. Factors that affect academic librarians' competenciie

Effective and efficient working conditions and environment are needed for a Nigerian academic librarian to continue to fit into the information ecosystem in this age of Gen Z information seekers. Interventions should be in the areas of formulating appropriate policy guidelines, redesigning of curriculum of library schools to meet present realities, upgrading of information technology infrastructure around academic libraries, continuous training of academic librarians and above all, upscaling the emoluments of academic librarians.

According to Ogunbeni et al (2014), a comprehensive information policy is important in any society that wants to maximize the benefits of the information age. A national information policy includes guidelines from government on management of information and information technology infrastructures. Sub-zoomed under a national information policy are policies by academic institutions to guide their information environment. These policies should include plans to expand the digital scale of the different academic institutions based on information and communications technology (ICT), and it also details data dam/infrastructure construction, convergence diffusion of 5G (The Fifth Generation), AI (artificial intelligence), 5G-AI-based intelligent information, and development and application of data in close relation to operations of the academic institution. Institutional policy on information infrastructure should take care of digital repositories by academic libraries. According to Farid, Warraich and Iftikhar (2023), policies by academic libraries should cover data protection, data backup, information security (IS) systems, the development of hardware and software, the training of library staff, data protection from malware and social engineering, and data security and privacy.

The curriculum of library schools in Nigeria needs to be overhauled to meet the demand of the present reality of what is expected of library and information science (LIS) professionals. According to Abubakar (2021) the pattern of change of LIS education in response to change in information and communication technology is very slow in the developing nations where LIS schools still largely remain traditional in both their curricula and pedagogical approach compared to developed nations. This very slow change could largely be due to their low level of infrastructural development as well as inappropriate manpower compared to what is happening in the developed countries.

Recent developments in the academic world have demonstrated that libraries cannot be static, and neither can the librarians who offer services in them. Changes are being witnessed in academic library practice, and librarians are expected to adapt to these changes. Various studies (Oladokun et al, 2021; Moonasar & Underwood, 2018; and Adomi & Nwalo, 2003) pointed to the fact that librarians, through continuous professional development, need to regularly update their knowledge to ensure promptness and efficiency in meeting the information needs of their clientele.

Conclusion

Discussions in this paper, based on qualitative review of literature, has shown that an academic librarian in Nigeria needs help. Msauki (2021) argued that libraries should embrace changes in information acquisition, processing, storage and dissemination while maintaining their role in achieving sustainable development goals, given the pace at which technologies reorganize the economy and society. In addition, it was emphasized how libraries can accept the continuous and destructive technologies brought about by the fourth and fifth Industrial Revolutions for the role of libraries in promoting sustainable development. Academic librarians should learn how to leverage on the tools of the fifth industrial age to utilize maker space, blockchain technology, augmented reality, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence, which are technologies, to strengthen their roles in meeting the information needs of their clientele. In addition, issues including chronic financial constraints, inadequate infrastructure, resistance to change, and lack of technology affecting libraries 5.0 are to be continuously addressed.

The future thinking of academic librarians should be directed towards the notion that academic libraries are part of a larger ecosystem, and librarians should be consistently scanning the environment to look for signs of the changes that may come with a view to responding to those changes.

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HAPTIC AND MOBILITY ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES AS CORRELATE TO UTILIZATION OF INFORMATION RESOURCES BY PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEED IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN SOUTH-SOUTH, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated assistive haptic and mobility technologies as correlate to utilization of information resources by people with special needs in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. Two (2) objectives, two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Relevant literatures were reviewed based on the specific objectives of the study. The population of the study consisted of 94 people with special needs in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. Accidental sampling technique was used to select the respondents. Questionnaire was used for data collection. The findings of the study revealed that: There is a positive and strong relationship between haptic assistive technologies on utilization of information resources by people with special needs with a correlation coefficient value of ($r=.842$), and is statistically significant at 0.05 alpha level [$(p=.000)$ ($p<0.05$)]. There is a positive and high relationship between mobility assistive technology on utilization of information resources by people with special needs with a correlation coefficient value of ($r=.710$) and is statistically significant at 0.05 alpha level [$(p=.000)$ ($p<0.05$)]. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended amongst others; university libraries should embrace assistive technologies so as to enhance effective and prompt utilization of information resources.

Key words: Haptic, Mobility, Utilization, Information Resources

INTRODUCTION

The university library regardless of its size remains a veritable institution charged with the sole responsibility of information generation, organization, dissemination, preservation conservation and use. However, the library performs these multi-tasking roles through the deployment of technological and non-technological tools and machineries. As custodian of information, it is charged with the responsibilities of articulating, promoting, and developing the community's information literacy through the provision of information resources and services. (Opuku, 2011). Today, University libraries are being redefined as places to get unrestricted access to information in many formats and from any source irrespective of the person involved or located where the information is sorted out from.

Utilization entails the ability to put to use or effective use of something. It is the process of making use of something that is available. Information resources utilization is the actual putting into appropriate use of acquired information (Igwe, Echem & Owate, 2021). The utilization of information resources differs from person to person and from corporate organization to the other according to their information needs, socio-economic and political considerations, and educational level, extent of possession or relevant skills, and likes.

Special need persons are those who are disabled physically, intellectually, sensory impairments, medical conditions or mental illness, and these impairments being permanent or transitory. The common disabilities include blindness, deafness, deformity, loss of limbs, mental illness, and mental retardation, muscular, nervous and sensory disorders. However, those with special; needs are broadly categorized into four namely physical disability, visual impairment, hearing impairment and mental retardation. Visually impaired are people with vision defects. Those included in this category are people who had never had visual function, those who had normal vision for some years before becoming gradually or suddenly partially or totally blind, those with disabilities in addition to visual loss. The hearing impaired are people whose auditory capacity is limited. The degrees of hearing impairment, include hard-of-hearing, congenitally deaf, adventitiously deaf, pre-lingual deafness and post-lingual deafness. Mentally retarded are those whose ability and adaptation in the society are below average.

Assistive technologies can have a remarkable effect on empowering persons with special needs accompanied with the internet that provides great opportunity for connections to a range of people regardless of their location. Also, they enable students with special needs to become more efficient and independent in completing their tasks and their overall performance. Arguably, Ennis-Cole & Smith (2011) believe that assistive technology (AT) can supplement compliance to 'level the playing field' and bridge the digital divide for students with special needs. It can also aid students with disabilities, remarkably in overcoming or bypassing their learning challenges in libraries. Friend (2009) exposed that less than 5% of the information materials available to these persons are accessible to them. These technologies can be in several forms, of which it could be classified according to its aid mechanism. For instance, haptic, mobility aids, cognitive aids, tactile tools, auditory tools, and web-based resources, amongst others (Islim & Cagiltay, 2012).

In contrast, haptic technology leads to active participation and interaction with course material – thus more directly involving a student in the learning process. For these and other reasons discussed as follows, the use of haptic display technology may be particularly beneficial in education and service delivery institutions (libraries). The human haptic system is defined to include the entire sensory, motor and cognitive components of the body-brain system. For instance, when we touch an object with our hand the entire haptic system, the nerves attached to our muscles (kinesthetic contribution) and the nerves lying just below the skin layering the hand (cutaneous contribution), and cognition work in unison to provide the motor control system pertinent feedback in order to acquire fine motor skills. There are two types of haptics, cutaneous (skin sensations) and kinesthetic (nerve feedback system in muscles and joints allowing for coordinated motion of, e.g., in the hand and arm).

University libraries desire is to achieve optimal productivity and render effective services. This could only be achieved only when the library management is conversant with the various assistive technologies for people with special needs. These technologies could be necessary in the utilization of information resources by people with special needs. The study therefore sought to survey haptic and mobility assistive technologies on utilization of information resources by people with special needs in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Academic institutions admit students with special needs, but little is done to meet their information needs as far as their course work and other research activities are concerned (Abdulraham, 2016). The scenario appears more worrisome when viewed against the background that university libraries once served as the knowledge hub of information for different categories of users, but now is in a selective state. This development revolves round a lot of factors ranging from the university libraries not having any policy on access and use for students with special needs, library personnel not having the requisite training to assist people with special needs, the physical structure of libraries are manifestations that much emphasis is placed on the able-bodied persons rather than the physically challenged persons (Igwe, Echem & Owate, 2021). However, ensuring equal access and use to information resources by different category of users relies on adoption of haptic and mobility technologies in university libraries and awareness among the special needs students about the information resources which are useful for them. This is because technologies have emerged as a powerful platform in education field which when lacked limits those with special needs from utilizing information resources in university.

More importantly, in order to leverage the new opportunities that assistive technologies are presenting in many areas; it offers independence by enabling people with special needs to perform tasks which they were formerly unable to accomplish. These technologies are necessary for the utilization by people with special needs to become proficient enough to help them participate in educational and employment opportunities offered to their able-bodied users. The challenge is how to harness these technologies for the lives of these library users (people with special needs). More so, insufficient fund for acquisition and maintenance of these technologies. However, the availability of haptic and mobility technologies in libraries cannot be over emphasized, but the complex nature and use of some assistive devices is worrisome. It therefore, becomes imperative to survey haptic and mobility assistive technologies on utilization of information resources by people with special needs in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to determine the relationship between haptic and mobility assistive technologies on utilization by people with special needs in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

1. Identify the relationship between haptic assistive technology and utilization of information resources by people with special need in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.
2. Ascertain the relationship between mobility assistive technology and utilization of information resources by people with special needs in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions

- What is the relationship between haptic assistive technology and utilization of information resources by people with special need in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria?
- What is the relationship between mobility assistive technology and utilization of information resources by people with special needs in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

1. There is no significant relationship between haptic assistive technology and utilization of information resources by people with special need in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant relationship between mobility assistive technology and utilization of information resources by people with special needs in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Assistive Technology (AT) is a rubrics term that refers to assistive, adaptive rehabilitative devices, products, or equipment for helping people with disabilities was the discovery and development in the early 1800s being a universal system for reading and writing to be used by people who are blind or visually impaired by Louis Braille. The technology allows the user to accomplish learning tasks and access the environment, resources, and information more independently without limitation either in terms of distance, place, physical disability or time. Sensory Solutions, 2017). assert that assistive technology or adaptive technology (AT) is an umbrella term that includes assistive, adaptive, and rehabilitative devices for people with disabilities; it can be a computer software career readers and communication programs and also includes the process used in selecting, locating, and using them. Assistive technology, also known as Adaptive Technology refers to technology used to maintain, increase or improve the abilities of individuals with disabilities. Assistive technology includes computer programs or electronic devices. It doesn't have to be high-tech; but it should serve the purpose of "assistance". These technologies are dedicated to helping disabled people overcome their disability and assist them to compete in an even basis with their non-disabled peers in the work place. Such technology enables people with disabilities to accomplish daily living tasks, assist them in communication, education, work or recreation activities, in essence, "AT" primary purpose is to maintain or improve an individual's functioning and independence to facilitate participation and to enhance well-being (UNESCO, 2020).

AT promote greater independence by enabling people to perform tasks they were formerly unable to accomplish, or had great difficulty accomplishing, by providing enhancement, or changing methods of interacting with the technology needed to accomplish such tasks and related services which are made specifically to serve the purpose or adapted and used to serve as technical assistance for people with special needs. In the works of Abulubo (2002) cited in Ugwuanyi & Obiyo (2017) concurred that AT helps to enhance student's self-discovery and motivate them in institutions of learning.

Similarly, there are also several types of assistive technology categories to be considered when choosing device. These can include low technology (low tech) to high technology (high-tech) devices. UNESCO (2020) describes low technology devices as 'inexpensive devices that are simple to make and easy to obtain. While, low technologies (low-tech), are the common and inexpensive devices and tools purposively designed or adapted to assist in those areas of difficulties. Some of which include; simple pencil-grips, magnificent eyeglasses, and large-print cardholder to mention but the few.

Information resources in libraries range from print to non-print resources and are often provided for maximum use. Specifically, Popoola & Haliso (2009) affirm that information resources are those information bearing materials that are in both printed and electronic formats such as textbooks, journals, indexes, abstracts, newspapers and magazines, reports, CDROM databases, Internet/E-mail, videotapes/cassettes, diskettes, magnetic disk, computers, microforms. Peschers (2015) emphasized that information resources include illustrated books, comics, dictionaries, encyclopedias, serials, fiction and non-fiction. Confirming further, Glenor (2016) identified information resources to include almanacs, dictionaries, encyclopedias, directories and legal databases; she further stated the general collections as fiction and non-fiction, home grown newspapers and magazines. Information resources fall into two categories which are print and non-print (electronic materials).

Haptic aids assistive technologies are low tech tools. The word haptic from the Greek (haptikos) means pertaining to the sense of touch" and comes from the Greek verb haptesthai meaning "to contact" or "to touch". Haptic devices allow users to feel virtual objects and create computers-generated Haptic Virtual Objects (HVOs), which can be touched and manipulated with one's hands and body. This technology has opened up new areas of participation and activity for people with disabilities that were inaccessible few years ago and it is vital to ensure that users are able to use these enabling technologies to meet the information needs. The use of haptic technology is beneficial for a range of tasks associated with the process of learning. Haptic this is the science of applying touch, sensation and control to interaction with computer

applications. Haptic display technology attempts to solve the problem of allowing students to feel the forces acting on objects within virtual reality simulations by presenting force (kinesthetic) or tactile feedback to the user.

In contrast, haptic technology leads to active participation and interaction with course material – thus more directly involving a student in the learning process. For these and other reasons discussed as follows, the use of haptic display technology may be particularly beneficial in education and service delivery institutions (libraries). With respect to haptic stimulation in the kinesthetic realm researchers have made notable progress; however, there has been weak advancement in creating a haptic device that interfaces with superficial touch, from, e.g., the finger tips through cutaneous (skin based) stimulation.

Human haptic, machine haptic, and computer haptic are three different areas of haptic technology (Srinivasan, 2001). When an object is touched by an operator, interaction forces are imposed on their skin, and consequently the sensory systems convey information to the brain and haptic perception is generated. In response, the brain provides commands that activate the muscles, resulting in hand or arm movement. This principle is called the human haptic system (Saddik, 2017). Specifically, human haptic relies on kinesthetic information and tactile information. 'Kinesthetic feedback is a different kind of feedback, which also plays a significant role in the field of haptic.

Typically, a haptic system includes:

- *Sensors:*
- *Actuator (motor) control circuitry.*
- *One or more actuators that either vibrate or exert force:*
- *Real-time algorithms (actuator control software, which will call a player) and a haptic:*
- *Application programming interface (API), and often a haptic effect authoring tool:*
- *The immersion API is used to program calls to the actuator into your products operating system (OS).*

A person with visual impairment do not have the same condition, ranges from low vision to total blindness. The haptic and auditory senses for example are more suitable for intuitively extracting meaningful patterns from big data. The evolution of Haptic is summarized in generation:

- First generation:*** Use of electromagnetic fields which produce a limited range of sensations. Haptics enable people use their sense of touch in various applications.
- Second generation:*** Touch-coordinate specific responses allowing the haptic effects to be localized to the position on a screen or touch panel, rather than the whole device.
- Third generation:*** Delivers both touch-coordinate specific responses and customizable haptic effects.
- Fourth generation:*** Pressure sensitivity, how hard you press on a flat surface can affect the response. (Swetha, et al. (2018).

Mobility devices are categorized as high tech tools and used to increase the mobility levels of people with mobility limitations. (those having difficulty walking, or who are unable to walk). These devices include but are not limited to crutches, walking frames, rollators, canes and manual and powered wheelchairs. More so, Stindt, Reed & Obukowicz (2019) highlighted that the assistive technologies such as 1) Walking devices - Crutches/Walker 2) Grab bars and rails 3) Manual wheelchairs 4) Powered scooters, toy cars or carts 5) Powered wheelchairs with joystick or other control and 6) Adapted vehicles for driving are and can be used to enable mobility. All these technologies help people with special needs to solve their and achieve their information problem. For becoming a culturally responsible person, it is very important to achieve success in the globalized or modern world.

However, there are lists of advantages which mobility aids devices (MADs) offer in the management of persons with disability, such as it helps to improve the fit between the competency of persons with disability and the demands of the environment, helps to compensate for disabilities, improves the autonomy, self-confidence, productivity, and overall quality of life of people living with disabilities in a cost-effective way (Wasson, Gall & McDonald, 2019) cited in Ezeukwu, et al. (2019). Hence the increasing use of assistive devices (mobility aids). In addition, these aids can help reduce lower-limb loading and thereby alleviate joint pain or compensate for weakness or injury. More so, mobility aids can improve balance control by providing mechanical advantages as well as somatosensory feedback. By enabling users to stand up and walk, mobility aids can also lead to physiologic benefits such as prevention of osteoporosis and cardiorespiratory deconditioning, enhanced circulation (venous return), and improved of renal function; An additional psychosocial benefit is that the mobility aid may make it possible for older adults or people with other impairments to maintain their occupational skills.

Mobility aids benefactors include; cerebral palsy, developmental disabilities, diabetic ulcers and wounds, difficulties maintaining balance, fractures or broken bones in the lower limbs, gout, heart or lung issues, walking impairment due to brains, visual impairment or Blindness, amongst others. Preferably, the physically or mobility impaired may require reading aids such as microform projectors, closed circuit television, prism spectacles, book rests, page-turners. Although not all library authorities will need to purchase these, their availability and use should be known. The second requirement is to take care in planning library accommodation. Public buildings should have one entrance without steps and lifts and doorways; lifts and doorways should accommodate wheel chairs. Ramps should be provided and floor surface should be non-slip. Many of these people are capable of all tasks but walking. Depending on the cause of the disability, other (or additional) voluntary muscles may be affected. For example, a person with disability may not be able to hold a book or turn pages. Spinal cord injuries, musculoskeletal disorders such as arthritis, and some developmental disabilities such as cerebral palsy are common causes of motor impairments (Reddy, 2019) as cited in Assie (2021).

The challenge for academic libraries in Nigeria is to find out what services and accessibility needs disabled (Mobility) students have and to ensure that these needs are met. Rubin (2001) also gave tips for serving patrons with motor impairments as follows

- i. *Keep clear pathways for people using wheelchairs and canes.*
- ii. *A wheelchair (or Scooter or Walker) is part of the personal body space of its user. Do not touch it (or push it) without permission.*
- iii. *Do not carry a patron unless it is an emergency evacuation situation or the person requests it.*
- iv. *Place yourself at the patron's eye level by sitting or crouching.*
- v. *Speak directly to the patron rather than through his/her attendant or trained dog.*
- vi. *Do not assume speech or other disabilities.*
- vii. *Ask the person how you can help.*
- viii. *Be patient, a person with mobility impairment may need extra time to complete a task.*
- ix. *Treat him or her with respect*

All these are necessary if we must provide library and information services that will meet the needs of the physically or mobility impaired student in Nigerian university libraries. Therefore, mobility aids are necessary to select accurate, relevant and current information resources instead of being limited in the utilization of information.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted correlational survey. The correlational survey examines the degree, patterns and strength of relationship between two or more variables being studied rather than explore causal relationship between them (Creswell, 2013). Thus, the correlational design provides clues for the proper understanding of patterns of relationships among variables in the study. It is considered appropriate for this study since the research is about relationship and aimed to determine the relationship between haptic and mobility assistive technologies (independent variables) on utilization of information resources by people with special needs (dependent variable).

Ninety-four (94) people with special needs from six (6) federal and six (6) state universities in south-south, Nigeria constituted the population of the study. The choice of the categories is justified by the fact that only people with special needs could ascertain the relevance attached to assistive technologies and such users need this equipment to facilitate access to the utilization of the information resources in the library. Therefore, the accessible population of the study is 94 people with special needs in the six (6) federal and six (6) state university libraries in South-South. They are Akwa Ibom state University, Library (7), Ambrose Alli University, Library (6), Cross River State University, Library (6), Delta State University, Library (6), Federal university of petroleum resources, library (8), Ignatius Ajuru University of Education library (5), Niger Delta University Library (6) Rivers State University, Library (11), University of Benin, Library (10), University of Calabar (13), University of Port Harcourt, Library (9), and University of Uyo, Library (7).

Questionnaire was used as instrument to gather data from the respondents. The researchers developed a questionnaire titled "Haptic and Mobility Assistive Technologies on Utilization of Information Resources by People with Special Needs in University Libraries Questionnaire (HMATUIRPSBULQ)". It comprises two (2) sections. Sections A and B. Section A contained information on demographic data and Section B focused on the dependent variable. Each of the items was assigned a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) - 4 points; Agree (A) – 3 points; Disagree (2) – points; and Strongly Disagree (SD) - 1 point.

The researchers with the help of research assistants in each of the institutions studied administered the questionnaire. All the 94 copies of the instrument administered to the respondents were found valid and used for the analysis. The data was analyzed using Mean Scores and Standard Deviation in answering the research questions. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. This was computed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 23. The decision to accept or reject was based on the mean rating of 2.50, this implies that any item with a mean of 2.50 and above was accepted while any item with a mean below 2.50 was rejected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Presentation

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between Haptic Assistive Technology on Utilization of Information Resources by People with Special Needs.

Table 1 Haptic Assistive Technology utilize by People with Special Needs

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	x	±	Decision	
1	The sensor module (i.e. radio frequency identification 'RFID' create awareness for people with special needs through context information and environmental context information	56	27	7	4	3.4	3.4	Agree	
2	Actuator help to achieve physical movement by converting energy, often electrical, air, or hydraulic, into mechanical force.	39	29	20	6	3.0	3.3	Agree	
3	Tactile information creates feedback for object and pattern identification and recognition	30	40	14	10	2.9	3.2	Agree	
4	The touch module enables people with disability to perform normal function of listening to environmental sounds.	54	40	4	0	3.6	3.6	Agree	
5	Kinesthetic feedback create awareness or sense of touch created from muscle tensions with the help of sensory receptors	39	30	15	10	3.0	3.4	Agree	
	Weighted Mean	3.18 > 2.5						3.3	Agree

The result from table 1 shows that haptic assistive technology utilized by people with special needs. It revealed that item 4 has a mean score of 3.6 and standard deviation of 3.6. This indicate that the touch module enables people with disability to perform normal function of listening to environmental sounds. Item 1 has a mean score of 3.4 and standard deviation of 3.4. This indicates that the sensor module (i.e. radio frequency identification 'RFID') create awareness for people with special needs through context information and environmental context information. Item 2 has mean score of 2.9 and standard deviation of 3.3. This indicates that Actuator help to achieve physical movement by converting energy, often electrical,

air, or hydraulic, into mechanical force. Item 5 has mean score of 3.0 and standard deviation of 3.4. This indicates that kinesthetic feedback create awareness or sense of touch created from muscle tensions with the help of sensory receptors to people with special needs. Item 3 has mean score of 2.9 and standard deviation of 3.2. This indicates that tactile information creates feedback for object and pattern identification and recognition. The weighted mean of 3.18 which is greater than the criterion mean of 2.5 indicates that haptic assistive technology help people with special needs to utilize information resources in university libraries.

The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant and positive relationship between haptic assistive technology and utilization of information resources by people with special need in university libraries in south-south, Nigeria; the result of the hypothesis also indicates that there is a positive and high relationship between haptic assistive technology and utilization of information resources by people with special needs in university libraries in south-south, Nigeria. This finding is consistent with the opinion of Er (2018) he stated that the application of haptic technology by people with disabilities will not only help them to feed information to the computer but can help them receive information from the computer in the form of a felt sensation on some part of the study. He added that haptic assistive technology allow people with special needs to feel virtual objects and create computer generated haptic virtual objects (HVOs) which can be touched and manipulated with one hand and body.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between Mobility Assistive Technology on Utilization of Information Resources by people with Special Needs in University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Table 2 Mobility Assistive Technology by People with Special Needs

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	x	±	Decision	
1	Walking devices (crutches, walker, canes) increase the activity and independence of special people with walking disabilities	57	37	0	0	3.6	3.6	Agree	
2	Wheelchairs provide wheeled mobility with an appropriate seating system for the user to move around.	34	51	4	5	3.2	3.5	Agree	
3	Walking sticks support balance and weight bearing through the legs.	30	35	10	19	2.8	3.2	Agree	
4	Crutches aid provide support to assist users who have difficulty with elbow, underarm or forearm support to move around.	39	30	14	11	3.0	3.4	Agree	
5	Walking frames provide support to assist people who have difficulty in walking due to balance problems, pain or injury.	40	37	10	7	3.1	3.5	Agree	
	Weighted Mean	3.14 > 2.5					3.4		Agree

Table 2 shows mobility assistive technology on utilization of information resources by people with special needs in university libraries in south-South, Nigeria. It is revealed that Item 1 has mean score of 3.6 and standard deviation of 3.6. This implies that walking devices (crutches, walker, canes.) to increase the

activity and independence of special people with walking disabilities. Item 2 has mean score of 3.2 and standard deviation of 3.5. This implies that wheelchairs provide wheeled mobility with an appropriate seating system for the user to move around. Item 4 has mean score of 3.0 and standard deviation of 3.4. This implies that crutches aid provide support to assist users who have difficulty with elbow, underarm or forearm support to move around. Item 3 has a mean score of 2.8 and standard deviation of 3.2. This implies that walking sticks support balance weight of people with walking disabilities and helps the bearing through the legs. The weighted mean of 3.14 revealed that mobility assistive technology assist people with special needs (walking disabilities) to utilize information resources in university libraries in South-0South, Nigeria.

The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant and positive relationship between mobility assistive technology and utilization of information resources by people with special need in university libraries in south-south, Nigeria; the result of the hypothesis also indicates that there is a positive and moderate relationship between mobility assistive technology and utilization of information resources by people with special needs in university libraries in south-south, Nigeria. This finding corroborates the assertion of Salminen, Brandt and Samuelsson (2000) who described the value as rightly showed that mobility devices (MADS) improve user's activity and participation and increase mobility. This implies that mobility assistive technology is imperative in the utilization of information resources as to walking devices (crutches, walker, canes), increase the activity and independence of special people with walking disabilities, wheelchairs provide wheeled mobility with an appropriate seating system and rely on the user or an assistant to move around, walking frames provide support to assist people who have difficulty waking due to balance problems, pain and injury, crutches aid with elbow, underarm or forearm support a single felted with a tip and through the legs, walking sticks support balance or weight bearing through the legs, and by enabling users to stand up and walk; compensate disability, and create equal opportunities for people with disabilities, as well as provide more support for people with strength, endurance and postural issues.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between haptic assistive technology and utilization of information resources by people with special need in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) on the relationship between haptic assistive technology on utilization of information resources by people with special need.

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	R	p-value	Decision
Haptic Assistive Technology		13.81	2.497			
Utilization of Information Resources	94			.842	.000	Rejected
		14.00	2.597			

The result in Table 3 shows the summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) on the relationship between haptic assistive technology and utilization of information resources by people with special need in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. The result establishes a positive and strong relationship between the two variables with a correlation coefficient value of ($r=.842$). An additional explanation specifies that there is a significant relationship between haptic assistive technology and utilization of information resources by people with special need in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria as [$(p=.000)$ ($p<0.05$)]. The null hypothesis one which states that there is no significant relationship between haptic assistive technology and utilization of information resources by people with special need in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria was rejected and the reverse hypothesis upheld. Thus, there is significant relationship between haptic assistive technology and utilization of information resources by people with special need in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between mobility assistive technology on utilization of information resources by people with special needs in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) on the relationship between mobility assistive technology on utilization of information resources by people with special need.

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	R	p-value	Decision
Mobility Assistive Technology		14.02	3.111			
Utilization of Information Resources	94			.710	.000	Rejected
		14.00	2.597			

The result in Table 4 shows the summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) on the relationship between mobility assistive technology and utilization of information resources by people with special need in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. The result establishes a positive and high relationship between the two variables with a correlation coefficient value of ($r=.710$). An additional explanation specifies that there is a significant relationship between mobility assistive technology and utilization of information resources by people with special need in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria as [$p=.000$] ($p<0.05$). The null hypothesis two which states that there is no significant relationship between mobility assistive technology and utilization of information resources by people with special need in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria was rejected and the reverse hypothesis upheld. Thus, there is significant relationship between mobility assistive technology and utilization of information resources by people with special need in university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Conclusion

The modern educational system and library environment is hopefully, expecting more innovations in the method of enhancing knowledge accessibility and utilization. This is in addition to the improved reading and learning system which has integrated various assistive technologies into the service delivery system such as haptic, mobility assistive technologies. Notwithstanding, dealing with the improved library environment that has brought in service delivery for all users through haptic and mobility assistive technologies as a necessity for utilization of information resources.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendation were made:

1. That there is a positive and strong relationship between haptic assistive technology and utilization of information resources by people with special needs in university library in South-South should continue to use haptic assistive technology, so as to enhance effective and prompt utilization of information resources.
2. That there is a positive and high relationship between mobility assistive technology and utilization of information resources by people with special needs. This could be done by constantly utilizing mobility assistive technology facilities for information resources utilization.

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IMPACT OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ON SERVICE DELIVERY IN SOME SELECTED TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS' LIBRARIANS IN EDO STATE

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Abstract

Libraries serve as dynamic spaces crucial for education, research, and community engagement, with librarianship committing to diversity and inclusion as foundational. Despite this commitment, achieving diversity and inclusion in library services requires continuous effort. This study explores the impact of diversity and inclusion on service delivery by librarians in selected tertiary institutions in Edo State, Nigeria. The research design for this study was a descriptive survey design. The population of this study consisted of Professional and Para-professional librarians in some selected tertiary institutions in Edo state, Nigeria. The entire population was 98 which included library officers and librarians. The study made use of total enumeration sampling technique. With a structured questionnaire, the study aims to examine librarians' awareness, collection development representations, and service delivery methods concerning diversity and inclusion. Findings revealed that majority of the librarians in tertiary institutions in Edo state feel confident in adapting my communication and service delivery style to accommodate users from different backgrounds and aware of the concept of diversity and inclusion in the context of library services. The study underscores the importance of integrating diversity and inclusiveness into library services to create equitable, accessible, and welcoming environments. It was recommended in the study that gaps in awareness, particularly regarding the presence of diverse user bases in Edo state tertiary institutions should be looked into by the various managements of the institutions. Embracing diversity and fostering inclusion can empower individuals to pursue knowledge and lifelong learning, contributing to broader educational and societal goals.

Keywords: Diversity, Inclusion, service delivery, academic library

Introduction

Libraries are not just repositories of books and information; they are dynamic spaces that play a crucial role in supporting education, research, and community engagement. Librarianship long ago made the commitment to diversity and inclusion as foundational elements of the profession. Diversity and inclusion are global necessity; anyone can benefit from it. To achieve diversity and inclusion in substance as well as in form, libraries have to open their arms to all perspectives and experiences (Norman & Pugh, 2022). That requires competency in matters of cultural pluralism that are not intuitive and must be learned, like any other essential skill in order to promote adequate service delivery.

The perspective on diversity has changed considerably over the past few decades, as discourse on diversity has shifted from visual dimensions (gender and race) towards more subtle ways of identifying people on the basis of their ethnicity, race, ability, language, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and nation (Koury et al., 2018).

Jaeger and Renee (2007) have suggested that librarianship curricula with a clear focus on Inclusiveness would result in a “virtuous circle” in which inclusive education would promote inclusive practice, which, in turn, would promote a greater diversity of people drawn to join the profession. The reasons for the lack of a strong commitment to inclusion have never been clear. Though, the profession is committed to supporting equity through information access and education, the underlying goals of the profession are inherently inclusive in intent (Muir et al., 2020). Perhaps it is simply much harder to actually provide service to all than to say you are committed to providing service to all. Yet many elements of library practice that are dedicated to improving the lives of members of communities and society at large are as old

as the modern public library. Inclusion also refers to creating an environment where individuals from diverse backgrounds feel valued, respected, and empowered to participate fully (Maloney, 2012).

It is through books that readers are exposed to other cultures and ethnicities thereby developing appreciations, shared experiences, and tolerances of diversity. Diversity encompasses a wide range of characteristics, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, age, creeds, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, and abilities Follett (2021). It then becomes the role of some selected tertiary institutions' librarians in Edo State to provide diverse and inclusive service to users with a window to the ever-expanding global community through exploring other worlds, cultures, and viewpoints through their collection.

In the context of some selected tertiary institutions' librarians in Edo State, understanding the impact of diversity and inclusion on service delivery by librarians is paramount. As the population of students and faculty become increasingly diverse, librarians must adapt their services and resources to cater to the varying needs and preferences of their users (Thorpe & Galassi, 2018). Moreover, research has shown that diverse teams are more innovative, creative, and capable of problem-solving, attributes that are invaluable in the rapidly evolving landscape of information and technology.

Tertiary institutions are the establishments providing facilities for teaching, learning and research and authorized to grant academic degrees such as Diploma, Bachelor, Master and Doctorates. Tertiary institutions play major roles in the manpower development of any nation, since it provides the high as well as middle level manpower needed for the social, economic and political advancement of a nation. One of the objectives of setting up tertiary institutions is to encourage and promote scholarship and conduct research in all fields of learning and human endeavours (Krishi, 2018). The three major infrastructures constituting tertiary institutions are teachers/classrooms, laboratories and libraries that contain a rich and balanced collection and equipment that can support teaching and learning process as well as research (Afolabi, 2014). The libraries in the Tertiary institutions are playing the roles of the imparting knowledge to the academic fraternity of an institution since ages without discrimination for the dissemination of knowledge among students of different cultural heritage (Saini, 2018). At the centre of every teaching, learning or research institution is a library.

Tertiary Institutions in Edo State

Edo State is situated in South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria. The State was carved out from the defunct Bendel state in 27th August, 1991. The State has eighteen local government areas and three senatorial districts. The State is blessed with so many tertiary institutions (universities, polytechnics and colleges of Education). These include federal, state and private. Among the selected tertiary institutions for this study include University of Benin, Benin City; Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma; Edo State University, Uzairue; Benson University, Benin City; Igbinedion University, Okada and Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi.

University of Benin is a federal owned University established in 23 November, 1970 in Benin city, Edo South Senatorial District. Ambrose Alli University as the first state owned University in Edo State was established in 1981, located in Ekpoma, Edo Central Senatorial District. Edo State University, Uzairue is state owned university established in 2016 in Iyamho, Edo North Senatorial District. Benson University is a private university established in 2002 in Benin City, South Senatorial District. Igbinedion University is also private owned university in Edo State established in 10th May, 1999 at Okada, South Senatorial District. Auchi Polytechnic is a federal polytechnic established in 1963, located in Auchi, Edo North Senatorial District.

In discussing the impact of diversity and inclusion on service delivery by librarians, it is essential to consider various factors, including recruitment and retention practices, professional development opportunities, collection development strategies, outreach initiatives, and the use of technology (Larsen, 2017). By addressing these factors, librarians can better serve their diverse user communities and contribute to the broader goals of education, research, and social development in Edo State.

In examining this topic, this study will draw upon existing literature on diversity and inclusion in librarianship. Additionally, it will utilize quantitative research methods, such as questionnaire, to gather data and insights from key stakeholders in Edo State's tertiary institutions.

Through its findings and recommendations, this study aims to inform policymakers, library administrators, and practitioners about the importance of integrating diversity and inclusiveness into library services and the potential benefits it can bring to the academic community in Edo State. By embracing diversity and fostering inclusion, librarians can create more equitable, accessible, and welcoming library environments that empower all individuals to pursue knowledge, creativity, and lifelong learning.

Statement of the Problem

The integration of diversity and inclusion into library practices is not merely a matter of social justice; it is also essential for enhancing service delivery and meeting the diverse needs of library users. Furthermore, the main focus and core of any libraries, particularly in tertiary institutions has been to engage

in the quality service delivery to all diverse users irrespective of their educational backgrounds, religions, ethnicity, gender, disability, etc through inclusion of information materials that cut across all. In spite of this attention, diversity and inclusion in the area of service delivery in librarianship have not changed greatly over time. However, it was observed that the Edo state tertiary institutions' librarians are having limited understanding of diversity and inclusion concepts of users, inadequate training, collection development representation; physical barriers and limited outreach to diverse student groups. Therefore, the current study endeavours to fill these gaps by undertaking a comprehensive study of some selected tertiary institutions' librarians in Edo State's tertiary institutions, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the awareness of Edo State tertiary institutions' librarians about the diversity and inclusion of users toward service delivery
2. To identify the collection development representation of diverse users in Edo State tertiary institution libraries.
3. To know the types of services delivery methods by Edo State tertiary institutions' librarian for diversity and inclusion of users.

Research Questions

1. What is the awareness of Edo State tertiary institutions' librarians about the diversity and inclusion of users toward service delivery?
2. What are the collection development representations of diverse users in Edo State tertiary institution libraries?
3. What are the types of services delivery methods by Edo State tertiary institutions' librarians for diversity and inclusion of users?

Methodology

The research design for this study is a descriptive survey design. It involves the detail collection of data on the impact of diversity and inclusion on service delivery by some selected tertiary institutions' librarians in Edo State. The population of this study consisted of Professional and Para-professional librarians in some selected tertiary institutions in Edo state, Nigeria. The entire population was 98 which included library officers and librarians in University of Benin, Ambrose Alli University, Edo state University Uzairue, Benson Idahosa University Okada, Federal Polytechnic Auchi, Edo State Polytechnic Usen, College of Education Ekiadolor, Benin City. The study made use of total enumeration due to the small size of the population. The research instrument that was used for the study was a structured questionnaire as the main instruments. The questionnaire was tagged "impact of diversity and inclusion on service delivery by some selected tertiary institutions' librarians in Edo State" (IDISDSTIL). Also, the data collected from the respondents with the aid of questionnaire descriptive method was used to analyze them. The likert scale was used to present the sub-variables for the analysis. Tables, frequencies and percentages were also used for data analysis, thereby enabling easier discussion and interpretation of data.

Literature Review

Academic library serves a diverse community of library users and therefore it is imperative that diversity and inclusion practices are embedded in all aspects of librarianship, including collection development, preservation, teaching, service delivery, and space planning (Jones & Murphy, 2019). Library needs to broaden its stand on diversity and inclusion for service delivery to embrace all populations disadvantaged in terms of information access.

Inclusion means welcoming diversity and offering everyone a sense of belonging. Differences are respected and valued in an environment free from discriminatory attitudes and behaviours, people have equal opportunity, and reasonable adjustments are made to accommodate difference where needed. Inclusivity or inclusiveness denote a practice or policy of including people, members or participants who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized due to their gender, race, class, sexuality, physical disability, or such challenges (Maloney, 2012). People could also be excluded on the grounds of being distant, unknown, or not being influential. Prospective library users may be excluded from normal services on account of comparatively inaccessible rural, distant places or due to poor, inadequate internet connectivity or ICT-related facilities. Potential library users may be excluded from library and information services if such users are already library and information illiterate. A policy that deliberately brings marginalised groups to the fold of services translates into advocating for inclusiveness, inclusivity, and inclusion. Inclusivity or inclusiveness denote a practice or policy of including people, members or participants who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized due to their gender, race, class, sexuality, physical disability, or such challenges (Maloney, 2012).

A relevant lesson may be drawn from the perspective of South Australian research conducted by Kaeding et al. (2017) on public libraries and access for children with disabilities whose special needs are not

catered for in the mainstream public library services. These researchers propose an inclusive library model which is broad and encompasses the collections, physical barriers (space and equipment), partnership, programmes, training and marketing.

Diversity describes all the ways in which people are different, including age and generation, racial, cultural and linguistic background, intellectual and physical ability, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, level of education and faith, as well as skills, knowledge, experience and perspectives. Australian Library and Information Science (2021) stated that far as possible, the composition of the library workforce embraces and reflects the diverse profile of the community. This includes people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with a disability, young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and asexual (LGBTIQA+) The library sector is increasingly focused on diversity, in many professional development environments. The theme of the ALIA National Conference 2022 was Diversity, featuring presentations on workplace diversity, LGBTQIA+ programming and services, services for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities, and more (Australian Library and Information Association 2022. Its Task Force on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion characterized inclusion as constituting an environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully; are valued for their distinctive skills, experiences, and perspectives; have equal access to resources and opportunities; and can contribute fully to the organization's success. Additionally, the ALA Task Force posited that some groups had been systemically disadvantaged in accessing both education and employment. These groups therefore remained organizationally and institutionally underrepresented or marginalized. Given this legacy, a commitment to equity ensured fair policies, practices, processes, and outcomes.

These issues require supportive management. Adjusting the buildings, providing collections that suit groups with physical disabilities, for example, widens the scope of information services so that groups that are different from others can be included into an expanded arrangement that includes diverse clients. This is an ethical outcome that can also bring about synergy between engaged stakeholders. Institutions, services, and corporate bodies that deliberately address inclusivity policies demonstrate a social responsibility to their communities.

Analysis and Discussion of the Findings

Table 1: Demographic information of respondents in some selected Edo state Tertiary Institutions

S/N	Tertiary Institutions in Edo State	Frequency	Percentage
1	University of Benin	30	30.6
2	Ambrose Alli University	13	13.3
3	Edo University Iyamho	7	7.1
4	Benson Idahosa University, Benin City	12	12.3
5	Igbinedon University, Okada	7	7.1
6	Federal Polytechnic, Auchi	17	17.3
7	Edo State Polytechnic, Usen	4	4.2
8	College of Education, Ekiadolor-Benin	8	8.2
	Total	98	100

Table 1.1 above revealed the demographic distribution of respondents in some selected tertiary institutions in Edo state. University of Benin, Benin City has the highest number of respondents 30(30.6%) followed by Federal Polytechnic Auchi with respondents of 17(17.3%); Ambrose Alli University 13(13.3%) and Benson Idahosa University, Benin City 12(12.3%) respectively. While Edo State Polytechnic has the lowest number of respondents 4(4.2%).

Table 2: Administration of Questionnaires

Respondents	Number of questionnaires administered	Number of questionnaires returned	Percentage (%)
	98	92	93.9

The table above revealed that ninety-eight (98) questionnaires were administered to the para-professionals and professionals in some selected Edo State tertiary institutions libraries and ninety-two (92) were returned which represents ninety-three-point nine percent (93.9%) for analysis.

Table 3: Awareness of Edo State tertiary institutions' librarians about the diversity and inclusion of users toward service delivery

Items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	
I am aware of the concept of diversity and inclusion in the context of library services.	30	32.6	35	38.1	26	28.2	1	1.1	3.02
I believe that a diverse user base is present in our tertiary institution's library	--	--	37	40.2	41	44.6	14	15.2	2.25
I am aware of the specific needs of users with disabilities when it comes to accessing library resources and services.	15	16.3	12	13.0	35	38.0	30	32.6	2.13
I consider factors like learning styles, abilities, and cultural backgrounds when planning library services.	30	32.6	45	48.9	15	16.3	2	2.2	1.82
I feel confident in adapting my communication and service delivery style to accommodate users from different backgrounds.	27	29.3	53	57.6	11	12	1	1.1	3.15
Criterion mean									3.00

Table 3 above revealed the distribution of Awareness of Edo State tertiary institutions' librarians about the diversity and inclusion of users toward service delivery. The table revealed that majority of respondents responded to "I feel confident in adapting my communication and service delivery style to accommodate users from different backgrounds with 'Agree' of 53 (57.6%) and with a mean score of 3.15. This closely followed by respondents responding to "I am aware of the concept of diversity and inclusion in the context of library services with 'Strongly Agree' of 30(32.6%) and 'Agree' 35(38.1%) with a mean score of 3.02. These findings implied that majority of the librarians in tertiary institutions in Edo state feel confident in adapting my communication and service delivery style to accommodate users from different backgrounds and aware of the concept of diversity and inclusion in the context of library services.

Table 4 Collection development representations of diverse users in Edo State tertiary institution libraries

Items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	
We consider the needs of diverse user groups (e.g., gender, academic programmes, disability) when selecting library materials?	20	21.7	34	37.0	31	33.7	7	7.6	2.80
The current library collection represents the diverse academic interests and research needs of students and faculty	27	29.3	52	56.5	9	9.8	4	4.3	3.11
There are specific tools or resources used to identify materials that cater to diverse user needs? (e.g., subject-specific bibliographies, disability resource guides)	14	15.2	24	26.1	31	33.7	23	25.0	3.00
We consider factors like learning styles, abilities, and cultural backgrounds when planning library services.	26	28.3	51	55.4	12	13.0	3	3.3	3.09
There are strategies in place to improve the library collection's representation of diverse user groups	27	29.3	21	22.8	23	25.0	21	22.8	2.80
Criterion mean									3.00

Table 4 above indicated that the distribution of collection development representations of diverse users in Edo State tertiary institution libraries. The table disclosed that majority of respondents responded to “The current library collection represents the diverse academic interests and research needs of students and faculty” with ‘Agree’ of 52 (56.5%) and a mean score of 3.11. This is closely followed by respondents responding to “We consider factors like learning styles, abilities, and cultural backgrounds when planning library services” with ‘Agree’ of 51 (55.4%) and a mean score of 3.09. “There are specific tools or resources used to identify materials that cater to diverse user needs (e.g., subject-specific bibliographies, disability resource guides)” also received high response with a mean score of 3.00. These results imply that the current library collection represents the diverse academic interests and research needs of students and faculty and there are specific tools or resources used to identify materials that cater to diverse user needs in tertiary institutions in Edo State.

Table 5: Types of services delivered to diverse population by librarian in Edo state tertiary institutions

Items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	
My institution has tailoring services for users with disabilities to ensure equitable access to library resources.	9	9.8	22	23.9	38	41.3	23	25.0	2.18
My institution offers assistance with research methodology, data analysis, and citation formatting.	17	18.5	33	35.9	30	32.6	12	13.0	2.58
My institution always Organize events and workshops to promote library services and resources to diverse populations within the institution.	2	2.2	26	28.3	33	35.9	31	33.7	2.00
My institution offer assistance to users with finding relevant information through reference interviews, suggesting resources, and navigating databases.	23	25.5	42	45.7	24	26.1	3	3.3	2.92
My institution Facilitates access to materials not available in the library's collection by obtaining them from other institutions.	--	--	22	23.9	45	48.9	25	27.2	1.56
Criterion mean									2.50

Table 5 above indicated the types of services delivered to diverse population by librarian in Edo state tertiary. Some of the librarians responded that their institution offer assistance to users with finding relevant information through reference interviews, suggesting resources, and navigating databases with a mean score of 2.92. Others also responded that their institution offers assistance with research methodology, data analysis, and citation formatting with a mean score of 2.58. These results showed that tertiary institutions in Edo State offer services to users in the area of finding relevant information through reference interviews, suggesting resources, navigating databases and also offers assistance with research methodology, data analysis, and citation formatting but overall, the types of services needed by the diverse population in libraries

Discussion of findings

It was revealed in the study that majority of the librarians in tertiary institutions in Edo state feel confident in adapting my communication and service delivery style to accommodate users from different backgrounds and aware of the concept of diversity and inclusion in the context of library services. This finding agrees with Maloney (2012) who stated that differences are respected and valued in an environment free from discriminatory attitudes and behaviours, people have equal opportunity, and reasonable adjustments are made to accommodate difference where needed. Inclusivity or inclusiveness denote a

practice or policy of including people, members or participants who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized due to their gender, race, class, sexuality, physical disability, or such challenges.

The study revealed that the current library collection represents the diverse academic interests and research needs of students and faculty and there are specific tools or resources used to identify materials that cater to diverse user needs in tertiary institutions in Edo State. This finding is in congruence with Jones and Murphy (2019) who posit that academic library serves a diverse community of library users and therefore it is imperative that diversity and inclusion practices are embedded in all aspects of librarianship, including collection development, preservation, teaching, service delivery, and space planning.

It was also discovered in the study that tertiary institutions in Edo State offer services to users in the area of finding relevant information through reference interviews, suggesting resources, navigating databases and also offer assistance with research methodology, data analysis, and citation formatting. This study is in agreement with Muir et al. (2020) who posited that the profession is committed to supporting equity through information access and education, the underlying goals of the profession are inherently inclusive. Yet many elements of library practice that are dedicated to improving the lives of members of communities and society at large are as old as the modern public library. Inclusion also refers to creating an environment where individuals from diverse backgrounds feel valued, respected, and empowered to participate fully (Maloney, 2012). Conversely, this finding contradicts the work of Kaeding et al. (2017) who opined that public libraries do not provide access for children with disabilities whose special needs are to be catered for in the mainstream public library services.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the role of libraries, particularly in tertiary institutions in Edo State, extends far beyond being repositories of books and information. The data gathered and evaluated found that the majority of librarians at Edo state tertiary institutions revealed the distribution of awareness of Edo State tertiary institutions' librarians about the diversity and inclusion of users toward service delivery was considerably known and this was revealed by responded to 'Agree' to 'I feel confident in adapting my communication and service delivery style to accommodate users from different backgrounds with 'Agree'. Also, the findings of this study underscore the importance of raising awareness among librarians about diversity and inclusion in service delivery. While many librarians demonstrated confidence in adapting their services to accommodate users from different backgrounds, there were also gaps in awareness, particularly regarding the presence of diverse user bases in their institutions.

By and large, they serve as dynamic spaces central for supporting education, research, and community engagement. However, to truly fulfil their potential, libraries must embrace diversity and inclusion as foundational elements of their profession. Addressing these gaps requires concerted efforts from library administrators, policymakers, and practitioners. Librarians need adequate training and support to understand and implement diversity and inclusion practices effectively. Additionally, the study revealed varying levels of collection development representations and service delivery methods catering to diverse populations across different libraries in Edo State.

Recommendations

- *The gaps in awareness, particularly regarding the presence of diverse user bases in Edo state tertiary institutions should be looked into by the various managements of the institutions.*
- *Collection development strategies should prioritize representing the diverse academic interests and research needs of students and faculty.*
- *Service delivery methods in Edo State tertiary institutions by librarian should be tailored to meet the specific needs of diverse user groups, including those with disabilities.*

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IMPACT OF LIBRARY STAFF INCLUSION IN DECISION MAKING IN UNIVERSITY ON THE NIGER, UMUNYA, ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

The study examined the impact of library staff inclusion in decision making in University on the Niger, Umunya, Anambra State. The objectives were to ascertain areas the library staff can be involved in during decision making within the university system, ascertain ways the library staff inclusion in decision making in University can promote the institutional effectiveness, and to determine the impact of non inclusion of library staff in decision making in University on the Niger, Umunya, Anambra State. A descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The population was 65 staff while a sample of 30 selected staff from the various departments in the university was used. A structured questionnaire was used for collection of data. The study found that the areas library staffs are involved in during decision making were academic calendar planning, learning resource allocation decisions within the various departments, curriculum development and academic support services, , among others. The impacts of non inclusion of library staff in decision making were that universities may allocate resources in ways that do not effectively support the needs of library users, and universities will miss out on valuable insights that could inform decisions related to library services, among others. The study concluded that the role of librarians in shaping the institutional landscape of universities is very significant and it has become evident that the inclusion of library staff in these processes has far-reaching implications for the institution as a whole. The study recommended that the university should establish formal structures and standing committees or task forces that include representation from the library staff, faculty, administration, and student body

Keyword: University, University Library, Library staff, inclusiveness, decision making

Introduction

Universities serve as institutions of higher education, research, and academic excellence, playing a pivotal role in the advancement of knowledge, dissemination of information, and development of human capital. These institutions provide a conducive environment for teaching, learning, and scholarly activities, fostering intellectual growth and innovation among students, faculty, and staff (Altbach, 2019). The functions of universities are multifaceted, encompassing teaching, research, community engagement, and knowledge dissemination. Through their academic programs, universities impart knowledge and skills to students, preparing them for professional careers and lifelong learning. Additionally, universities conduct research to generate new knowledge, address societal challenges, and contribute to intellectual and technological advancements (Clark, 2019). Universities also perform other task such making laws for the smooth running of the universities as well as taking critical decision of how the academic activities are implemented. In this regard, decision making is a critical component of the university

Decision making in universities refers to the process of making choices and formulating strategies to address various organizational challenges and opportunities. Effective decision making is essential for the efficient operation and strategic management of universities, ensuring alignment with institutional goals, values, and priorities (Bryson, 2018). Several areas within universities require effective decision making, including academic planning, resource allocation, curriculum development, faculty recruitment and retention, student services, infrastructure development, and institutional governance. Also, the university management is expected to make decision on how to support teaching and learning through provision of library adequate resources for the students. Decisions made in these areas have significant implications for the overall functioning and reputation of the university (Birnbbaum, 2016).

The essence of effective decision making in universities lies in its ability to promote institutional effectiveness, innovation, and accountability. By involving stakeholders in the decision-making process and considering diverse perspectives and expertise, universities can make informed choices that enhance organizational performance and student success (Kezar & Maxey, 2019). This level of staff involvement in decision making in the universities will give room for effective results, commitment of staff, sense of belonging and productivity. The staff will feel better positioned to commit to the ideals of the universities knowing that their opinion and suggestions will count. This level of involvement of all category of staff in the university including professionals librarians and other faculty heads and lecturers in the decision making process is referred to as inclusiveness

Inclusiveness refers to the practice of involving individuals from diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and roles in decision making and problem-solving processes. Inclusiveness entails recognizing the value of input from various stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students, administrators, and external partners (Harmon et al., 2020). In the context of librarians and library staff in universities, the inclusiveness of these professionals in decision making in universities is crucial for promoting collaboration, leveraging expertise, and ensuring that library resources and services align with the institution's academic mission and goals. As key stakeholders in the academic community, library staff possesses valuable insights and perspectives that can inform decisions related to library collections, services, technologies, and policies (Schonfeld & Housewright, 2010).

Inclusiveness of librarians in university libraries by university management in their decision of resources allocation, library infrastructure, and planning of the teaching and learning activities are very important aspect that should not be overlooked. Supporting the university's teaching and research needs through the acquisition of quality and required resources and infrastructures requires effective and collective decision making involving librarians. Inclusiveness and collective decision making in this aspect should include the professional librarians and sectional library heads as they are responsible to proffer advice on the type of collection and resources that are needed to support students' reading and learning as well as contributing to all academic discussion within the system towards enhancing the university's objectives of teaching and research for the academic staff. Since no university can exist without a fully equipped library, there is the need to implement inclusiveness by ensuring that professional librarians are members of councils or committee responsible for decision making in certain key areas most especially in relation to teaching, learning, research, and learning resource acquisition and allocation in the university

The need for robust inclusiveness of librarians in decision making in universities stems from the recognition of libraries as integral components of the academic enterprise. By involving library staff in strategic planning, budgeting, and policy development, universities can harness the full potential of library resources and expertise to support teaching, learning, and research activities (Oakleaf et al., 2018).

Despite the importance of inclusiveness, several issues may affect the extent to which library staffs are included in decision-making processes in universities. These issues may include organizational culture, communication barriers, power dynamics, institutional structures, and perceived roles and responsibilities (Lewis, 2017). Addressing these challenges requires proactive efforts to promote collaboration, transparency, and mutual respect among stakeholders. Notwithstanding these challenges, the inclusion of library staff in decision making in universities has the potential to enhance organizational effectiveness, innovation, and stakeholder engagement. By recognizing the expertise and contributions of library staff, universities can leverage their resources and insights to advance the institution's academic mission and strategic goals. Therefore, this empirical paper will examine the Impact of library staff inclusion in decision making in University on the Niger, Umunya, Anambra State

Statement of Problem

In an ideal situation, universities are supposed to operate as collaborative environments where decisions are made through inclusive processes that involve input from various stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students, and administrators. In this scenario, library staffs as part of her academics will play a vital role in decision-making processes, contributing their expertise and insights to inform strategic choices that align with the institution's academic mission and goals. However, the current situation in many universities may fall short of this ideal, with library staff often excluded from decision-making forums or marginalized in the process.

The current situation at some universities may reflect a lack of robust inclusiveness of library staff in decision-making processes. Library staff members may not be adequately represented or consulted in key decision-making forums, such as strategic planning committees, budget allocation processes, or policy development initiatives. As a result, decisions related to library resources, services, and policies may be made without sufficient input from those directly involved in library operations and management, leading to potential inefficiencies, missed opportunities, and suboptimal outcomes.

Previous studies examining the impact of library staff inclusion in decision making in universities may have overlooked or inadequately addressed certain aspects of the issue. Gaps in previous research may

include limited empirical evidence on the extent of library staff involvement in decision-making processes, as well as the perceived benefits and challenges associated with their inclusion. Additionally, previous studies may have focused primarily on larger, research-intensive universities, neglecting the unique context and dynamics of emerging institutions such as the University on the Niger, Umuaya, Anambra State. This has provided a gap in the literature. The motivation for this research stems from the recognition of the need to fill these gaps, hence the need for this study

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this paper is on Impact of library staff inclusion in decision making in University on the Niger, Umuaya, Anambra State. The specific objectives were to:

- ascertain areas the library staff can be involved in during decision making within the university system in University on the Niger, Umuaya, Anambra State
- ascertain ways the library staff inclusion in decision making in University can promote the institutional effectiveness of the Niger, Umuaya, Anambra State
- determine the impact of non inclusion of library staff in decision making in University on the Niger, Umuaya, Anambra State

Literature Review

Concept of Universities

A university is a tertiary institution of learning. The concept of universities encompasses multifaceted institutions dedicated to higher education, research, and community engagement. At their core, universities serve as hubs of intellectual activity, fostering critical thinking, knowledge creation, and academic inquiry among students, faculty, and staff (Clark, 2019). These institutions offer a wide range of academic programs spanning various disciplines, from the arts and humanities to the sciences and professional fields, with the aim of providing students with comprehensive educational experiences.

Universities also play a crucial role in advancing research and scholarship, serving as centers of innovation, discovery, and intellectual discourse (Birnbaum, 2016). Through their research activities, universities generate new knowledge, address societal challenges, and contribute to scientific, technological, and cultural advancements. Faculty members and researchers within universities conduct cutting-edge research across diverse fields, disseminating their findings through publications, conferences, and collaborations with other institutions (Bryson, 2018).

Moreover, universities serve as engines of social and economic development, driving regional growth, and prosperity through their educational and research activities (Altbach, 2019). These institutions contribute to workforce development, entrepreneurship, and innovation, fostering partnerships with industry, government, and the community to address societal needs and promote sustainable development. Additionally, universities provide platforms for cultural enrichment, artistic expression, and civic engagement, enriching the fabric of society and promoting diversity and inclusion (Birnbaum, 2016).

Concept of Library staff

The concept of library staff encompasses individuals employed within libraries who are responsible for various functions related to the organization, management, and provision of library services. Library staff members fulfill diverse roles, including librarians, library assistants, technicians, and support staff, each contributing to the effective operation of the library (Oxford University Press, 2022). These professionals possess a range of skills and expertise, including information organization, research assistance, user services, collection development, and technology management, aimed at meeting the information needs of library users.

Librarians constitute a key component of library staff, holding specialized qualifications in library and information science. They play central roles in managing library collections, providing reference services, instructing users on information literacy skills, and facilitating access to electronic resources (Lewis, 2007). Library assistants and technicians support librarians in various tasks, such as shelving books, processing materials, assisting patrons with circulation services, and maintaining library facilities

Furthermore, library staff are responsible for ensuring the efficient operation and administration of library services, including budget management, policy development, and strategic planning (Lewis, 2007). They collaborate with other departments and stakeholders to address the information needs of their user communities and enhance the overall effectiveness of library operations (Budden & Jeffrey, 2009). Additionally, library staff engage in professional development activities to stay abreast of emerging trends, technologies, and best practices in the field of library and information science

Concept of Decision making

Decision making is a cognitive process involving the selection of a course of action from among multiple alternatives based on a set of criteria and objectives (Bazerman & Moore, 2019). It is a fundamental aspect of human behavior and organizational functioning, occurring at various levels and in diverse contexts, including individual, group, and organizational decision making. Decision making encompasses both rational and intuitive processes, influenced by cognitive biases, emotions, preferences, and situational factors (Kahneman, 2011).

At its core, decision making involves identifying problems or opportunities, generating potential solutions or options, evaluating alternatives, and choosing the most appropriate course of action (Bazerman & Moore, 2019). Decision makers gather information, analyze data, assess risks, weigh trade-offs, and consider the potential outcomes and consequences of their choices. The decision-making process may be influenced by various internal and external factors, including individual beliefs and values, organizational norms and culture, time constraints, and resource availability (Kahneman, 2011).

Effective decision making is essential for organizational success and performance, as it enables individuals and groups to navigate uncertainty, manage complexity, and achieve desired outcomes (Simon, 1997). In organizations, decision making occurs across different functional areas, including strategic planning, resource allocation, policy formulation, and problem-solving. By making informed decisions, organizations can capitalize on opportunities, mitigate risks, adapt to changes, and achieve their goals and objectives.

Concept of Inclusiveness

The concept of inclusiveness refers to the practice of actively involving individuals from diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and identities in decision-making processes, policies, and practices (Kabeer, 2005). Inclusive processes recognize and value the contributions of all stakeholders, ensuring that their voices are heard, their needs are addressed, and their interests are taken into account. Inclusiveness encompasses a commitment to equity, diversity, and social justice, promoting fairness, respect, and equal opportunities for participation (Dowling et al., 2018).

Inclusive decision-making involves fostering an environment where all individuals feel empowered to contribute their ideas, opinions, and expertise to the decision-making process. It entails creating spaces and mechanisms for dialogue, collaboration, and consensus-building among stakeholders, regardless of their position, status, or identity (Stout & Dasgupta, 2011). Inclusive decision-making seeks to build trust, foster mutual respect, and promote shared ownership of outcomes, leading to more robust, effective, and sustainable decisions.

Moreover, inclusiveness extends beyond decision-making processes to encompass broader organizational practices and cultures (Dowling et al., 2018). Inclusive organizations embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion as core values, embedding them into their policies, structures, and practices (Stout & Dasgupta, 2011). They actively address systemic barriers and biases that may prevent certain groups from fully participating or benefiting from organizational opportunities, striving to create environments where everyone feels valued, respected, and supported.

Areas library staff can be involved in decision making within the university system

Library staff can contribute their expertise and insights to decision-making processes across various areas within the university system, enhancing the overall effectiveness and relevance of decisions. One key area where library staff can be involved is in strategic planning and policy development. As information specialists, librarians possess valuable knowledge about evolving trends in information resources, technologies, and services (American Library Association, 2020). Their input can inform strategic plans related to library collections, digital initiatives, user services, and educational programs, ensuring alignment with institutional goals and priorities.

Additionally, library staff can play a significant role in budget allocation and resource management decisions within the university. Librarians and library administrators are responsible for managing library budgets, allocating funds for acquisitions, subscriptions, and technology upgrades. Their involvement in broader university budgeting processes enables them to advocate for adequate funding for library resources and services, advocating for the needs of students, faculty, and researchers (Johnson, 2017).

Furthermore, library staff can contribute to decisions related to curriculum development and academic support services. Librarians collaborate with faculty to integrate information literacy instruction and research skills development into the curriculum, enhancing student learning outcomes (American Library Association, 2020). They also provide input on the selection of course materials, textbooks, and electronic resources, ensuring that students have access to relevant and up-to-date information resources (Johnson, 2017).

Moreover, library staff can be involved in decisions related to technology planning and infrastructure development within the university. Librarians are often responsible for managing library systems, databases, and digital repositories, as well as providing technical support to users. Their expertise in information technology can inform decisions about the adoption of new technologies, software applications, and digital tools to enhance teaching, learning, and research across campus (Johnson, 2017).

In view of the foregoing, library staff can contribute to decision-making processes in strategic planning, budget allocation, curriculum development, and technology planning within the university system. Their expertise in information resources, services, and technologies positions them as valuable contributors to institutional decision making, ensuring that library resources and services meet the evolving needs of students, faculty, and researchers.

Essence of library staff inclusion in decision making in universities

The essence of including library staff in decision-making processes within universities lies in recognizing the valuable expertise, perspectives, and contributions they bring to the table (Johnson, 2017). As information specialists, librarians possess in-depth knowledge about information resources, technologies, and user needs, making them well-equipped to inform decisions that impact library services, collections, and infrastructure (American Library Association, 2020). Their inclusion ensures that decisions are informed by a comprehensive understanding of library operations and the evolving information landscape, leading to more effective and sustainable outcomes.

Furthermore, including library staff in decision making fosters a culture of collaboration and shared governance within the university community (American Library Association, 2020). By involving librarians in strategic planning, budget allocation, and policy development processes, universities demonstrate a commitment to inclusiveness, transparency, and stakeholder engagement. This collaborative approach not only enhances the quality of decisions but also builds trust, promotes buy-in, and strengthens the sense of ownership among all members of the university community.

Moreover, the inclusion of library staff in decision making facilitates the alignment of institutional priorities and library goals. Librarians can advocate for resources and initiatives that support teaching, learning, and research objectives, ensuring that library services and collections meet the evolving needs of students, faculty, and researchers (American Library Association, 2020). Their involvement also promotes interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation, as they work collaboratively with other university stakeholders to address complex challenges and opportunities.

The essence of including library staff in decision making in universities lies in leveraging their expertise, fostering collaboration, and aligning institutional priorities with library goals. By valuing the contributions of librarians and involving them in key decision-making processes, universities can enhance the effectiveness, relevance, and impact of their library services and resources (Johnson, 2017).

Relationship between library staff inclusion and decision making in universities

The relationship between library staff inclusion and decision making in universities is symbiotic, with each reinforcing and enhancing the other to create a collaborative and effective decision-making environment (Budd, 2010). When library staff are included in decision-making processes, universities benefit from the diverse perspectives, expertise, and insights that librarians bring to the table. Librarians possess specialized knowledge about information resources, technologies, and user needs, enabling them to provide valuable input and recommendations on issues related to library services, collections, and infrastructure (Johnson, 2017).

Moreover, the inclusion of library staff in decision making fosters a sense of ownership and accountability among all stakeholders within the university community. By involving librarians in strategic planning, policy development, and resource allocation processes, universities demonstrate a commitment to transparency, shared governance, and stakeholder engagement (Budd, 2010). This inclusive approach promotes buy-in, builds trust, and strengthens relationships among different departments and units, leading to more cohesive and collaborative decision-making outcomes.

Furthermore, the relationship between library staff inclusion and decision making extends beyond the library's operations to encompass broader institutional priorities and goals. Librarians advocate for initiatives and resources that support teaching, learning, and research objectives, ensuring that library services and collections align with the university's mission and strategic direction (American Library Association, 2020). Their involvement in decision making facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation, as they collaborate with faculty, administrators, and other stakeholders to address complex challenges and opportunities facing the university.

The relationship between library staff inclusion and decision making in universities is characterized by mutual benefit, collaboration, and alignment with institutional goals (Budd, 2010). By valuing the expertise and perspectives of librarians and involving them in key decision-making processes, universities

can enhance the effectiveness, relevance, and impact of their decisions, ultimately contributing to the overall success and advancement of the institution.

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was used for the study. A descriptive survey design is a study that aims at collecting data on something and describing it in a systematic manner. This involves collection of data on a representative population of the target audience, on which generalization is made (Nworgu, 2015). The area of the study is University on the Niger, Umunya, Anambra State. The population was 65 staff while a sample of 30 selected staff from the various departments in the university were used. A structured questionnaire on a four (4) – point Likert scale was used for collection of data for this study. The instrument was subjected to face validation and pilot test using Cronbach Alpha which gave a reliability coefficient value of 0.92. Personal method of distribution and data collection was used to get the data from the respondents. Data collected from the study were analyzed using mean scores

Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: In what areas are library staffs involved in during decision making within the university system in University on the Niger, Umunya, Anambra State?

Table 1: Responses on the areas library staffs are involved in during decision making within the university system

S/NO	Items	Mean	Decision
1	Day to day running of the university	1.16	Disagree
2	Budget allocation decisions within the university	1.29	Disagree
3	Academic calendar planning	2.96	Agree
4	Learning resource allocation decisions within the various departments	3.15	Agree
5	Technology planning and infrastructure development	1.02	Disagree
6	Curriculum development and academic support services	3.04	Agree
7	Library resource selection and acquisition	3.31	Agree
8	Policy development for new departments and courses	2.98	Agree

In Table 1, the areas library staffs are involved in during decision making within the university system in University on the Niger, Umunya, Anambra State as agreed by the majority of the respondents were academic calendar planning, learning resource allocation decisions within the various departments, curriculum development and academic support services, library resource selection and acquisition, and policy development for new departments and courses. However, day to day running of the university, budget allocation decisions within the university, and technology planning and infrastructure development were not areas library staffs are involved in during decision making within the university system in University on the Niger, Umunya, Anambra State. This result is in line with the findings of American Library Association (2020) who stated that library staff can be involved is in strategic planning and policy development since they are information specialists who possess valuable knowledge about evolving trends in information resources, technologies, and services. Johnson (2017) in agreement of the result stated that library staff involvement can also be on areas that will enable them to provide input on the selection of course materials, textbooks, and electronic resources, ensuring that students have access to relevant and up-to-date information resources.

Research Question 2: What are the ways the library staff inclusion in decision making in University can promote the institutional effectiveness of the Niger, Umunya, Anambra State?

Table 2: Responses on the ways library staff inclusion in decision making in University can promote the institutional effectiveness of UNINIGER

S/NO	Items	Mean	Decision
1	By involving library staff in decision-making processes related to budget allocation and resource management, universities can ensure that adequate funding is allocated to library services, collections, and infrastructure	2.86	Agree
2	Library staff inclusion in decision making ensures that library services and initiatives are aligned with the broader institutional goals and priorities of the university	3.19	Agree

3	Library staff involvement in decision making can lead to the development of programs and services that directly impact student success	3.06	Agree
4	Through their involvement in curriculum development and academic support services, library staff can contribute to the enhancement of teaching and learning within the university	3.25	Agree
5	Inclusive decision making that involves library staff from diverse backgrounds can promote a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion within the university community	3.12	Agree

In Table 2, the ways library staff inclusion in decision making in University can promote the institutional effectiveness as agreed by all the respondents were that library services and initiatives can be aligned with the broader institutional goals and priorities of the university, universities can ensure that adequate funding is allocated to library services, collections, and infrastructure, it can lead to the development of programs and services that directly impact student success, library staff can contribute to the enhancement of teaching and learning within the university, and involving library staff from diverse backgrounds can promote a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion within the university community. This result is in line with the findings of Budd (2010) who found that involving library staff in decision-making processes related to budget allocation and resource management can enable universities to provide adequate funding to library services, collections, and infrastructure. Their involvement will ensure that the library can effectively support the teaching, learning, and research needs of the university community, contributing to overall institutional effectiveness. In support of the above findings, Johnson (2017) attested that library staff involvement in decision making can enable librarians to contribute to decisions regarding information literacy instruction, research support services, and access to academic resources, all of which are critical components of student learning and achievement.

Research Question 3: What are the impacts of non inclusion of library staff in decision making in University on the Niger, Umuinya, Anambra State?

Table 3: Responses on the impacts of non inclusion of library staff in decision making in UNINIGER

S/N	Items	Mean	Decision
1	Without input from library staff, universities may allocate resources in ways that do not effectively support the needs of library users	2.73	Agree
2	When library staff are excluded from decision - making processes, universities miss out on valuable insights that could inform decisions related to library services, collections, and infrastructure	2.92	Agree
3	When library staff are not included in decision making, there is a risk that library initiatives and services may not align with the broader institutional goals and priorities of the university	2.75	Agree
4	The exclusion of library staff from decision making can negatively impact student success by limiting access to critical library resources and services	2.92	Agree
5	When library staff are not involved in decision making, there is a risk that faculty needs and preferences may not be adequately considered, leading to dissatisfaction and decreased support for library initiatives and services	2.90	Agree
6	The non-inclusion of library staff in decision making within universities can result in poor resources selection and acquisition	3.05	Agree

In Table 3, the impacts of non inclusion of library staff in decision making in University on the Niger, Umunya, Anambra as attested by the respondents were that universities may allocate resources in ways that do not effectively support the needs of library users, universities will miss out on valuable insights that could inform decisions related to library services, collections, and infrastructure, there is a risk that library initiatives and services may not align with the broader institutional goals and priorities of the university, it can negatively impact student success by limiting access to critical library resources and services, there is a risk that faculty needs and preferences may not be adequately considered, leading to dissatisfaction and decreased support for library initiatives and services, and that it can result in poor resources selection and acquisition. This result is in line with the findings of Johnson (2017) who found that in universities where library staff are not included in decision making, there is a risk that library initiatives and services may not align with the broader institutional goals and priorities of the university. This can lead to disjointed efforts and missed opportunities for collaboration between the library and other academic units, diminishing the overall effectiveness of the institution. Also, in support of this result, Budd (2010) who attested that in situations where library staff are not included in decision making in the universities, it may warrant the poor allocation of resources in ways that do not effectively support the needs of academic staff, students and other library users. This can result in inadequate funding for critical library services, collections, and technologies, hindering the ability of the library to meet the information and research needs of students, faculty, and researchers.

Conclusion

The study on the impact of library staff inclusion in decision making at the University on the Niger, Umunya, Anambra State, has revealed significant insights into the role of librarians in shaping the institutional landscape. Through an examination of the various dimensions of decision making within the university setting, it has become evident that the inclusion of library staff in these processes has far-reaching implications for the institution as a whole. The study has demonstrated that library staff inclusion in decision making enhances the effectiveness and relevance of institutional decisions. This inclusive approach ensures that decisions align with the mission and goals of the university, ultimately leading to improved outcomes for students, faculty, and researchers. Through inclusive decision-making processes, librarians have the opportunity to engage with faculty, administrators, and students on issues related to teaching, learning, and research support. This collaboration fosters a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for the institution's success, leading to more cohesive and innovative approaches to addressing complex challenges and opportunities.

Recommendations

- The university should establish formal structures and standing committees or task forces that include representation from the library staff, faculty, administration, and student body.
- The university should empower library staff to effectively contribute to decision-making processes and take on leadership roles within the university community
- The university should actively promote a culture of inclusivity and diversity within the institution. This includes creating opportunities for dialogue, reflection, and learning around issues of equity and inclusion.
- The university should regularly evaluate its policies and procedures to ensure that they support inclusive decision making and equitable participation.
- The university should recognize and reward the contributions of library staff and other stakeholders who actively participate in decision-making processes.

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IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON EFFICIENT LIBRARY SERVICE DELIVERY: CASE STUDY OF HIGHER INSTITUTIONS IN DELTA STATE

BY

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Abstract

Libraries across the globe are incorporating social media (to render) seamless library services to users. Prior studies have revealed the degree of deployment of social media in rendering library services. This study moves a little forward by investigating social media and the pursuit of efficiency in library service delivery. The study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study comprised 151 librarians from universities in Delta State. A total enumeration technique was adopted for the study. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that librarians used very few social media spaces for delivering library services. Low bandwidth, which culminated in a slow internet connectivity, was the main challenge to the application of social media. Recommendations such as an increase in the use of social media space and the provision of robust bandwidth to enhance internet connectivity were proffered.

Keywords: Social Media, Library Services, Library Service Delivery, Librarians, Efficiency

Introduction

Service delivery is a condition for the development and survival of any institution or organization. Effective service delivery enhances the attainment of organizational growth as well as its desired goals and objectives. Library as a service-oriented organization is founded to deliver appropriate services that will meet the information needs of the people in the users it serves. Service delivery is the act of offering services to users. Within the context of the library, service delivery is an element of activities that describes the relationship between librarians and library users. Libraries as the center of information and knowledge are encumbered with significant tasks of supporting teaching, learning, and research activities (Akparobore & Omoisejimi, 2020). Librarians are the major drivers of effectiveness and efficiency in the discharge of library services (Lawrence, 2019).

Notwithstanding the financial and resource constraints encountered by libraries, libraries have to satisfy the information needs of their patrons. In the current era of information and communication technologies (ICTs), libraries employ social media for interactive communication with library patrons and the public in an online environment. More importantly, social media has the potential to enhance the image of the library and ameliorate the users' experience. More so, social media has been acknowledged as a pacesetter in diverse professions ranging from marketing, health, politics, technology, and entertainment to the education industry. Social media has been widely viewed as an easy means of updating library outreach programs and exhibitions and can be employed for online customer services and interactive feedback (Shafawi & Hassan, 2018).

Social media is the buzz of the moment (Adekoya, 2021). Social media refers to the websites and applications that make it possible for users to create and share content or to partake in social networking (Sahu & Naik, 2019). Librarians as essential members of faculty research and teaching use social media to enhance their efficiency in the delivery of library services in modern times. Considering the protracted history of noteworthy improvement witnessed resulting from the use of ICTs in libraries in modern times, libraries and librarians are expected to, at all times, meet the information needs of the library users. This study therefore explores the impact of social media on efficient library service delivery: Case study of Higher Institutions in Delta State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

1. find out the extent to which the use of social media has enhanced efficiency in the delivery of library services;
2. explore the extent of using social media for library service promotion; and
3. investigate the extent to which libraries create and post content on social media.

Use of Social Media in Libraries

The use of social media is extensive across diverse organizations. This is because of the acknowledgment of social media as a potent platform for interactive communication, information sharing, promotion and marketing of library collections and services, and online customer service (Shafawi &

Hassan, 2018). The use of social media enables information institutions, notably libraries to reach out to library users with slight efforts (Adekoya & Fasae, 2022). In the current era, libraries use social media as a platform for knowledge sharing, information dissemination, and communication. The engagements of the Web 2.0 environment enable libraries to use diverse social media tools like WhatsApp, Facebook, X, Telegram, LinkedIn, and Instagram amongst others. Social media is today an effective information dissemination tool that needs minimal effort for it to be utilized in marketing library services. Social media is used for diverse purposes which include breaking news, advertisement, sending and receiving files and image attachments, etc. Through social media, people and organizations communicate and share experiences.

The presence of social media is in all places, especially now that the vision of the library is that library services should go to users not essentially that users should come physically to the library (Oyeniran & Olajide, 2019). Libraries that desire to connect continually with their patrons and enhance users' satisfaction make use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Telegram, and Instagram, amongst others for service delivery (Omini & Osulake, 2019). Bakare et al. (2018); and Adewojo and Mayowa-Adebara (2016) averred that libraries in Nigeria are gradually making use of Facebook, Twitter, Blog and WhatsApp to render services to users.

The use of social media in the library has led to a persistent enhancement in library website traffic and foot traffic to the physical library, enhancement in the promotion of reading and literacy awareness programs, enhanced participation of the users in library activities, and enhanced library community building (Shafawi & Hassan, 2018). In conjunction with the swift advancement of digital resources, contemporary-era libraries are using diverse social media tools to better serve online experiences to the library community. Through social media, users can be regularly notified of the library programs, the current events, as well as the current library collections, facilities, and services. The reactions of users to various library activities and services can be conveyed via social media. Social media enables users to visit the library virtually at any time and at any place. Studies have shown that social media helps connect library users and makes library services accessible, providing broad news and library events, announcing new books, marketing the library resources and services, and interacting with online users (Chen et al., 2012). Palmer (2014) averred that social network advertising is useful in promoting the library at minimal financial cost.

Social Media and Library Service Delivery

Social media as interactive tools opens the door for libraries to easily and conveniently deliver their products and services. Library services are activities performed in the library to meet the information needs of library patrons. These services comprise of user education, serials management, ICT services, reference services, selective dissemination of information, etc. In the current era of ICTs, the vast majority of library services are rendered through the use of social media (Ilesanmi & Mabawonku, 2020). Effective service delivery in academic libraries is said to have occurred when the delivered library services match and/or exceed the expectations of the users, influenced by their information needs (Alex-Nmecha, 2018). Awurdi (2019) opined that social media has progressively crept into the library profession and become a vital tool for communicating with library users and extending and offering improved services to users. More importantly, in the current era of technology, libraries employ social media to ensure their pertinence as it allows them to share novel concepts, knowledge, information, network the users, and create awareness of new services to satisfy the information needs of the users (Akinola et al., 2022).

Librarians employ social media to render services which include public access catalogs, electronic resources, physical and web-based reference services, and general online services to their users (Husain & Nazim, 2015). A study by Eze and Uzoigwe (2013) revealed that libraries enhance their service delivery by making use of social media. The services, among others, include user education, user orientation, reference, bibliographic, electronic databases, interlibrary loan, and exhibition and display services. In an examination of the application of social media by new library professionals in the United Kingdom and Ireland, Monagle, and Finnegan (2018) found that new library professionals make adequate use of social media for the promotion of library services. Also, Zohoorian-Fooladi and Abrizah (2014) investigated librarians' social media presence in Malaysian academic libraries. It was found that the librarians used social media to ameliorate library service and fortify the relationship between library staff and library users.

Coming to Africa, Ndlangamandla and Chisenga (2016) investigated the use of social media among librarians in selected institutions in Africa. It was found that the majority (72%) of the libraries have a social media presence on their library websites. The libraries make effective use of social media to deliver their services update library activity, and share library general information and photo images. In Nigeria, a study conducted by Anyaoku et al. (2012) revealed that libraries in Anambra State, Nigeria employed social media in delivering their services. Similarly, in an investigation of social media use by librarians in Nigeria, Opeke and Onuoha (2013) found that most of the librarians used online social networks to deliver library services.

Library Service Promotion and Posting of Content in Social Media

Social media assists libraries in promoting vital information relating to their resources, services, projects, events, community, exchange programs, etc. (Malik, 2019). With this, libraries can grow a community of patrons as everybody is online. The engagement of social media for library service promotion is very common among academic libraries in the 21st century. This is because service promotion is a means of marketing that makes it known to the world that a library has a brand with the goal of promoting research and sharing knowledge (Joo et al., 2018). Promotion is among the main concerns of the social media pages of both academic and public libraries.

Libraries use social media to create and post content for immediate and potential users to see. Some of the contents are text-based posts, videos, photos, instant chat, blog posts, articles, ad interviews, amongst others. With the use of social media, libraries showcase their services and products to the whole world. Social media content refers to the collection of digital content which includes videos, images, text, and audio files that can be organized, stored, and accessed in a central location (Mon, 2015). Joo et al. (2018) investigated the types of social media content that public libraries create for communication. It was found that libraries create social media content such as videos, images, and texts. Also, posts relating to service promotion can be joined with content that accentuates informal learning prospects. Libraries can employ participatory features of social media to begin discussions, give invitations to users to comment, or participate in surveys to intentionally request users' views, comments, and requests. This can be valuable for engaging users in collection development, improvements to library spaces, and other operational activities. Users' responses to the content posted can assist in determining how reputable the library is in the community (Mon, 2015).

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study was 151 librarians in 10 Public Higher Education Institutions (5 Universities, 3 Polytechnics, and 2 Colleges of Education) in Delta State, Nigeria. A total enumeration sampling technique was used for the study because of the manageable size of the population. A Questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire has 3 sections. Descriptive statistical tools were used to analyze the data collected. The analysis was facilitated by the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Out of 151 copies of the questionnaire administered, 111 were filled and returned, representing a 73.5% response rate which was adequate because the standard and acceptable response for most studies is 60% (Dulle et al., 2010).

Results

Use of social media in enhancing efficiency in the delivery of library services

Table 1: Extent the Use of Social Media Enhances Efficiency in the Delivery of Library Services

Library Services	VHE	HE	ME	LE	VLE	Mean	Std Dev.
Circulation services	16	20	36	11	28	2.86	1.365
Current awareness services	14	12	17	42	26	2.51	.645
Selective dissemination of information	5	7	31	37	31	2.26	1.076
User education	7	8	15	39	42	2.09	1.172
Reference services	9	3	11	42	46	1.98	1.168
Marketing of information products and services	5	9	9	34	54	1.89	1.139
Document delivery services	1	4	11	26	69	1.65	.782
Exhibition and display	1	0	16	31	63	1.60	.801
Sharing of news, pictures and videos	0	3	10	37	61	1.59	.767
Inter-loan library service	1	4	11	26	69	1.58	.880
Average Mean						2.00	
Criterion Mean						2.50	

As revealed in Table 1, the average mean of 2.00 is less than the criterion mean of 2.50. This means that the use of social media has enhanced efficiency in the delivery of library services to a small extent.

Use of social media for library service promotion

Table 2: Extent of Using Social media for Library Service Promotion

Services Promoted	VHE	HE	ME	LE	VLE	Mean	Std Dev.
Event promotion							
Showcase awards received by library	26	43	25	10	7	3.64	1.126
Programmes/events for the year/semester	5	7	31	37	31	2.26	1.076
Information about library conferences and seminars	5	9	9	34	54	1.89	1.139
Information about scholarship	1	4	11	26	69	1.65	.782
Average Mean						2.36	
Personnel and Service Promotion							
New staff (Their specializations and works)	19	56	19	10	7	3.63	1.070
New library services – Employment of metadata management librarians	7	8	15	39	42	2.09	1.172
Reference services	0	3	10	37	61	1.59	.767
Pictures of students studying in reading areas	1	4	11	26	69	1.58	.880
Average Mean						2.22	
Resource Promotion							
Special collection pictures	17	56	20	10	8	3.58	1.083
Photographs of diverse sections of library	27	38	21	18	7	3.54	1.204
Announcement of new library resources	7	8	15	39	42	2.09	1.172
Announcement of new research from faculties	9	3	11	42	46	1.98	1.168
Average Mean						2.80	
Teaching Tool Promotion							
The way to manage research citation (help in giving link to online resource)	21	24	43	17	6	3.33	1.115
Using Google scholar for academic	12	24	57	13	5	3.23	0.950

As shown in Table 2, the grand mean (=2.47) is less than the criterion mean (=2.50). This means that the extent of using social media for library service promotion is low. Even though social media is highly used for resource promotion (=2.80), teaching tool promotion (=3.02), and library orientation promotion (3.21), the use of social media for event promotion (=2.36), personnel and service promotion (=2.22), promotion of use of databases (=1.59), and research promotion (=1.98) is low.

Table 3: Extent Libraries Post Contents on Social Media

Contents	VHE	HE	ME	LE	VLE	Mean	Std Dev.
Text-based posts	17	56	20	10	8	3.58	1.083
Video	16	20	36	11	28	2.86	1.365
Photos	14	12	17	42	26	2.51	.645
Blog posts	5	7	31	37	31	2.26	1.076
Instant chat	7	8	15	39	42	2.09	1.172
Articles	1	4	11	26	69	1.65	.782
User-generated content (UGC)	1	4	11	26	69	1.65	.782
Interviews	0	3	10	37	61	1.59	.767
Webinars	1	4	11	26	69	1.58	.880
Stories and reels	0	0	9	35	67	1.48	.645
Average Mean						2.16	
Criterion Mean						2.50	

Table 3 reveals that the average mean (=2.28) is lower than the criterion mean (=2.50). This implies that libraries post content on social media to a low extent.

Discussion

The pursuit of efficiency in library service delivery in the era of ICT requires the use of social media. This study found that the use of social media has enhanced efficiency in the delivery of library services to a small extent. This indicates that social media has not been adequately employed for delivering library services even though the use of social media is extensive across diverse organizations. Meanwhile, studies by Adekoya and Fasae (2022); and Shafawi and Hassan (2018) found that social media has been acknowledged as a potent platform for interactive communication, information sharing, and promotion and marketing of library collections and services. Prior studies by Oyeniran and Olajide (2019); and Adewojo and Mayowa-Adebara (2016) found that libraries in Nigeria are making effective use of Facebook, Twitter, Blog, and WhatsApp to render services to users. Shafawi and Hassan (2018) posited that contemporary-era libraries are using diverse social media tools to better serve online experiences to the library community. A study by Uwandu and Osuji (2022) found that the extent of service delivery by libraries using social media is high. The study revealed that librarians can offer effective reference services, marketing of information products and services, user education, circulation services, exhibition and display, and document delivery services with the use of social media. A similar study by Obi et al. (2019) found that the efficiency of librarians in the delivery of reference services, online registration of users, current awareness services, and circulation services is enhanced with the use of social media.

It was found in this study that the extent of using social media for library service promotion is low, even though social media is highly used for resource promotion, teaching tool promotion, and library orientation promotion, the use of social media for event promotion, personnel, and service promotion, promotion of use of databases, and research promotion is low. Meanwhile, Malik (2019) noted the potency of social media in promoting vital information relating to library resources, services, projects, events, community, and exchange programs, Joo et al. (2018) registered their discomfort with the way libraries have not sufficiently leveraged social media in promoting their services in this era of ICT. However, Mon (2015) affirmed that libraries in the advanced world are making adequate use of social media to promote

resource promotion, teaching tool promotion, library orientation, promotion of the use of databases, and research promotion. The onus is on libraries in Nigeria to employ social media in promoting their services.

The finding that libraries post content on social media to a low extent is an indication that social media has not been adequately used to enhance the delivery of library services in Nigeria. There is no doubt that libraries can use social media to create and post content for immediate and potential users to see. A study by Joo et al. (2018) found that libraries adequately create social media content such as videos, images, and texts. Also, Mon (2015) noted that in advanced countries such as the United States, France, and Canada users' responses to the content posted assist in determining how reputable the library is in the community. However, at the time of writing this paper, there was no literature on how libraries in Nigeria post content on social media.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Social media is the buzz of the moment. Libraries employ social media to delivery library services to the users in the modern era of ICT. Across the nations of the world, there has been general acknowledgement that the use of social media can enhance efficiency in the delivery of library services. Meanwhile, academic libraries in Nigeria have not been making effective use of social media in ameliorating the delivery of library services. More so, the extent of using social media for library service promotion in Nigeria is low. This indicates that the libraries have not fully embraced modern library service delivery tools and technologies. It is expected that libraries should post content about their services on social media so that their efficiency in library service provision and delivery can be make known to the world.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that libraries in Nigeria should make effective use of social media in delivery their services, and for service promotion. Libraries in Nigeria in particular and the whole world in general should post content relating to their service on social media to attract media attention.

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IMPLEMENTATION OF DIVERSITY STRATEGIES FOR MANAGEMENT OF LIBRARY STAFF FOR ENHANCEMENT OF SERVICE DELIVERY IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper explored the implementation of diversity strategies for management of library staff to enhance service delivery in university libraries in Nigeria. The study adopted narrative content analysis to collect relevant data on the subject of the study. The paper discussed the definition and scope of diversity in library contexts, emphasizing its importance and challenges for service provision. It further outlined strategies for assessing and enhancing staff diversity, including inclusive recruitment practices, cultural competency training, and fostering an inclusive work environment and finally the way forward for the adoption of positive diversity management practices in the university libraries for effective service delivery and improved user satisfaction. The study recommends that recruiting and retaining staff from diverse racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds should be considered because it brings a variety of perspectives and experiences to the library, improving service delivery and decision-making provision of training on diversity, equity, and inclusion will help create a supportive and inclusive organizational culture where staff feel valued and empowered. The study concludes that diversity among university library staff is not only desirable but essential for libraries to fulfil their mission of serving diverse communities effectively. By embracing diversity, university libraries can enhance their relevance, accessibility, and impact, ultimately fostering stronger connections with the communities they serve.

Key words: Diversity, Library Staff Management, Service Delivery, University Libraries, Diversity Strategies.

Introduction

In today's world, which is diverse and interconnected, libraries are crucial centers for information, education, and community involvement. As caretakers of knowledge and resources, libraries play a vital role in meeting the varied needs of their communities and promoting inclusivity and fairness. A key factor in the success of libraries in fulfilling their mission is effectively managing staff diversity. By embracing diversity among their employees, libraries can better represent the communities they serve, improve cultural understanding, create inclusive spaces, stimulate innovation, and address systemic inequalities.

According to American Library Association (2024), the library profession recognises the critical need for access to library and information resources, services, and technologies by all people, especially those who may experience language or literacy-related barriers; economic distress; cultural or social isolation; physical or attitudinal barriers; racism; discrimination on the basis of appearance, ethnicity, immigrant status, religious background, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression; or barriers to equal education, employment, and housing. Thus, as the world is becoming increasingly diverse and includes people of many religions, languages, economic groups, and other cultural groups, the issue of implementing staff diversity strategy is very important in university libraries because of the possibility of having diverse workforce and ensuring that libraries can effectively provide services to their communities.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2021) "diversity" is "the practice or quality of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic back-grounds and of different genders, sexual orientations. Diversity can be defined as acknowledging, understanding, accepting, and valuing differences among people with respect to age, class, race, ethnicity, gender and disabilities.

Diversity encompasses the range of differences among individuals in a workforce. These differences can be visible, such as race and gender, or invisible, such as cultural background and cognitive styles. Embracing diversity means acknowledging and appreciating these differences, understanding their significance, and leveraging them to enhance creativity, innovation, and problem-solving within the university libraries. A

diverse workforce brings a variety of viewpoints, skills, and experiences to the table, which can lead to better decision-making and overall performance.

Andrade & Rivera (2015) is of the view that diversity is beneficial not only because it facilitates a greater ability to understand and provide service to diverse communities of patrons, but because organisations that embrace diversity are ultimately more successful while Kreitz (2008) says that organisations that rely on individuals who are all the same gender, race, and age, and who think similarly and have similar backgrounds and approaches, are more likely to fall prey to biases, which can diminish the success of the organization.

Diversity refers to the presence of differences within a given setting or group. These differences can encompass a wide range of characteristics, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, socioeconomic status, disability, nationality, language, and cultural background. The concept of diversity recognizes and values the uniqueness of individuals and acknowledges that these differences contribute to the richness and complexity of university libraries, society, and communities.

Concept of University library

According to [Ashikuzzaman](#) (2023) A university library is a library that is part of a higher education institution, typically a college or university. These libraries provide a wide range of resources, services, and facilities to support the academic programs and research activities of the institution and diverse needs of the staff and patrons.

Furthermore, [university libraries](#) offer access to a vast collection of resources, including books, journals, research papers, books, special and rare book collections, major reference books which are highly priced, complete sets and files of academic and scholarly journals, government publications, union catalogues, bibliographies, dissertations, theses, and provide access to electronic publications on CD – ROMs or online. the other hand, university libraries offer a wide variety of services that include reference, current awareness, selective dissemination of information, bibliographic, documentation, lending and inter library loan, newspaper clippings, network-based services such as access to Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), Internet and consortia-based services and multimedia materials. They also provide study spaces, research support services, and access to technology resources, such as computers, printers, and scanners. University libraries may also have special collections of rare and unique materials, collaborative spaces that encourage creativity, diversity, inclusivity and innovation, outreach and engagement opportunities for the wider community. American Library Association advocates for equal and equitable access to all library resources and services by users of all ages so as to support, diversity, equity and inclusivity. Overall, university libraries play a crucial role in the academic success of students and faculty members, providing the necessary diversified and inclusive resources and support for learning, research, and innovation.

Concept of Diversity in the Context of Library Staff

Diversity in the context of library staff is crucial for creating inclusive and equitable environments that can effectively serve diverse communities. Diversity encompasses various factors such as race and ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, and socio-economic background. Embracing diversity in these areas enriches library services, fosters innovation, and promotes equity and social justice. According to Mobley & Bailey (2018), diversity in age reflects the inclusion of individuals from different age groups within the library workforce. This includes young professionals entering the field, mid-career professional with varied experiences, and older adults bringing wisdom and expertise.

Diversity in sexual orientation encompasses individual who identify as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, or any other sexual orientation. Embracing sexual orientation diversity promotes a culture of acceptance and inclusivity within the library (Green,2020).

Jaeger & Bertot (2018) is of the view that diversity in disability includes individuals with various types of disabilities, such as physical disabilities, sensory disabilities (e.g., visual or hearing impairments), cognitive or developmental disabilities, and mental health conditions. Creating an inclusive environment for individuals with disabilities is essential for accessibility and equity.

Diversity in socio-economic background encompasses individuals from diverse socio-economic statuses, including low-income, working -class, middle class, and affluent backgrounds. Recognising and valuing socio-economic diversity promotes equity and inclusion within the library workforce, (Brown, 2019). Diversity in race and ethnicity refers to the representation of individuals from various racial and ethnic backgrounds within the library work force. This includes African American, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, and other ethnic groups.

Diversity in gender encompasses individuals who identify as male, female, transgenders, non-binary, genderqueer, or any other gender identity. Embracing gender diversity fosters an inclusive work environment where all staff feel respected and valued. By embracing diversity across these factors, libraries can create a vibrant and inclusive workforce that reflects the complexity and richness, of the communities they serve. This diversity enriches library services, fosters innovation, and promotes equity and social justice. By valuing and embracing diversity in library staff, libraries can better reflect the communities they serve and create environments that are welcoming and inclusive to all individuals.

Diversity is beneficial to both associates and employers. Although associates are interdependent in the workplace, respecting individual differences can increase productivity. Diversity in the workplace can reduce lawsuits and increase marketing opportunities, recruitment, creativity, and business image (Esty, et al., 1995). In an era when flexibility and creativity are keys to competitiveness, diversity is critical for an organization's success. Also, the consequences (loss of time and money) should not be overlooked.

Importance of Diverse Staff in University Libraries

Libraries are essential community resources that serve a diverse population with varying needs, background, and preferences. The composition of library staff plays a vital role in ensuring that services are accessible, relevant, and responsive to the community they serve. Here are several reasons why diversity among library staff is critically important:

1. **Representation and accessibility:** Diverse library staff can better represent and understand the need of the community they serve. According to a study by the American Library Association (ALA), diverse library staff can help bridge cultural and linguistic gaps, making library resources and services more accessible to underserved and marginalized populations (Kumaran, 2019).
2. **Cultural competency:** A diverse work force enhances the library's cultural competency, enabling staff to interact sensitively and effectively with patrons from various cultural backgrounds. Research shows that libraries with culturally diverse staff are better equipped to develop collections, programs, and services that resonate with the community's cultural diverse diversity (Taylor, 2016).
3. **Innovation and creativity:** Diversity fosters innovation and creativity by bringing together individuals with different perspectives, experiences, and problem-solving approaches. Studies have demonstrated that diverse teams are more likely to generate innovative ideas and solutions, leading to the development of new services and initiatives within libraries (Cox & Blake, 1991).
4. **User satisfaction and engagement:** libraries that prioritize diversity in their staff are better positioned to build trust and rapport with patrons, leading to higher levels of user satisfaction and engagement. Research conducted by the U.L.C found that libraries with diverse staff reported increased patron engagement and positive feedback from their communities (Urban Libraries Council, 2018).
5. **Social justice and equity:** Promoting diversity in library staffing aligns with principles of social justice and equity, ensuring that library services are provided fairly and inclusively to all members of the community. By actively recruiting and retaining staff from underrepresented groups, libraries can contribute to broader efforts aimed at addressing systemic inequalities and promoting diversity in workforce (Hathhock, 2015).
6. **Innovation:** According to Taylor & Fancis (2019), a diverse library staff brings together individuals with different backgrounds, experiences and viewpoints. This diversity of perspectives stimulates creativity and fosters innovation by encouraging the exploration of new ideas, approaches, and solutions to address emerging challenges and opportunities within the library.
7. **Adaptability:** Diverse teams are more adaptable and resilient in responding to changes in library environment and the evolving needs of patrons. By drawing on a wide range of skills, talent, and experiences, diverse library staff members can identify innovative strategies and adapt quickly to changing circumstances.
8. **Creativity:** Kumaran (2018) is of the view that the intersectionality of diverse within the library staff enriches the creative process by offering multiple lenses through which to approach problems and opportunities. This intersectionality fosters creativity by encouraging collaboration, brainstorming, and the synthesis of diverse ideas and perspectives.
9. **Risk Taking:** Diverse teams are more likely to engage in risk-taking and experimentation, as individual feel empowered to share their unique perspectives and ideas without fear of judgement or reprisal. This willingness to take risks can lead to breakthrough innovations and creative solutions to complex problems.
10. **Cultural competence:** A diverse library staff promotes cultural competence and empathy by fostering understanding respect, and appreciation for the perspectives, and needs of patrons from different cultural background. This cultural competence enables library staff to engage with patrons empathetically, recognizing and valuing their unique identities and experiences (Cooke, 2018).
11. **Reflective Practice:** Diverse library staff members engage in reflective practice, continuously examining their own biases, assumptions, and privileges. This self-awareness enables them to approach interactions with patrons empathetically, acknowledging and validating their feelings, concerns, and experiences.
12. **Cultural Relevance:** Kumara (2018), says that Libraries serve diverse communities with varying cultural backgrounds, languages, and traditions. Having a staff that reflects this diversity enables

libraries to better understand and connect with their patrons, ensuring that libraries services, programs, and collections are culturally relevant and responsive to community needs.

13. **Language Access:** Language diversity is common with communities, with residents speaking a variety of languages. Having multilingual staff members enables libraries to provide language assistance, outreach, and programming in languages spoken by community members, ensuring that language barriers are addressed and all patrons can access library resource and services. (Dali & Sayar, 2020).
14. **Community Trust and Engagement:** Libraries are trusted community institutions where individuals seek information, education, and connection. Having a diverse staff fosters trust and rapport with patrons from various backgrounds, building stronger relationships and increasing engagement with library services and programs. (Taylor & Francis, 2019).
15. **Addressing Information Needs:** communities have diverse information needs and preferences based on factors such as s, socio-economic status, education level, and cultural background. Having a diverse staff enables libraries to understand and address these varied information needs, ensuring that library resources and services are accessible, inclusive, and responsive to the community. (York & Vance, 2019).
16. **Cultural competence and sensitivity:** Cultural competence is essential for effectively serving diverse communities. Having a diverse staff brings first-hand knowledge and understanding of various cultural norms, customs, and sensitivities. This enables libraries to provide services and programs that are culturally sensitive, respectful, and inclusive, fostering positive interactions with patrons from different cultural backgrounds. (Cooke, N.A., 2018).
17. **Tailored programing and Outreach:** Diverse communities have unique interests, needs, and preferences. Having a diverse staff allows libraries to develop and deliver programs, events, and outreach initiatives that are tailored to the specific interests and concerns of different demographic groups within the community. This personalized approach enhances community engagement and participation in library activities. (Jaeger & BERTOT, 2018).
18. **Building Trust and Bridging divides:** In communities marked by social, economic, or cultural divides, libraries serve as neutral spaces where individuals from diverse backgrounds can come together. Having a diverse staff helps to build trust and foster understanding among community members, bridging divides and promoting social cohesion. Libraries become places where people feel welcomed, respected, and valued regardless of their background. (Brown, 2019).
19. **Addressing Health Disparities:** Libraries increasingly play a role in addressing health disparities by providing access to health information and resources. Having a diverse staff allows libraries to better understanding and respond to the health needs and concerns of different demographic groups within the communities, contributing to efforts to reduce disparities and improve health outcomes. (Clayton, 2018).
20. **Promoting Civic Engagement and social justice:** Libraries are important hubs for civic engagement and social justice advocacy. Having a diverse staff enables libraries to engage with and advocate for marginalized communities, amplifying their voices, addressing systemic inequalities, and promoting social justice initiatives within the community. (Burke, 2019).
21. **Reflecting Community Diversity:** Libraries serve diverse communities with varying backgrounds, cultures, and needs. Having a staff that reflects this diversity enables libraries to better understand and connect with their patrons, leading to more effective service delivery.
22. **Representation and accessibility:** Diverse library staff can better represent and understand the need of the community they serve. According to a study by the American Library Association (ALA), diverse library staff can help bridge cultural and linguistic gaps, making library resources and services more accessible to underserved and marginalized populations (Kumaran, 2019).
23. **Cultural competency:** A diverse work force enhances the library's cultural competency, enabling staff to interact sensitively and effectively with patrons from various cultural backgrounds. Research shows that libraries with culturally diverse staff are better equipped to develop collections, programs, and services that resonate with the community's cultural diverse diversity (Taylor, 2016).
24. **Innovation and creativity:** Diversity fosters innovation and creativity by bringing together individuals with different perspectives, experiences, and problem-solving approaches. Studies have demonstrated that diverse teams are more likely to generate innovative ideas and solutions, leading to the development of new services and initiatives within libraries (Cox & Blake, 1991).
25. **User satisfaction and engagement:** libraries that prioritize diversity in their staff are better positioned to build trust and rapport with patrons, leading to higher levels of user satisfaction and engagement. Research conducted by the U.L.C found that libraries with diverse staff reported increased patron

engagement and positive feedback from their communities (Urban Libraries Council, 2018).

26. **Social justice and equity:** Promoting diversity in library staffing aligns with principles of social justice and equity, ensuring that library services are provided fairly and inclusively to all members of the community. By actively recruiting and retaining staff from underrepresented groups, libraries can contribute to broader efforts aimed at addressing systemic inequalities and promoting diversity in workforce (Hathcock, 2015).

The above points are the importance of diversity in library staff that reflect the community they serve. They highlight how having a diverse staff, can enhance cultural relevance, language access, community trust, representation, role modeling, and addressing various information needs within the community. By having staff that mirror the diversity of the community, libraries can better connect with patrons, provide culturally relevant services, and build stronger community relationships showcasing the significance of diversity in library staff in promoting inclusivity, understanding cultural sensitivities, tailor-made programs and outreach services, building trust, addressing health disparities, and promoting civic engagement and social justice. Embracing diversity in library staff composition can ultimately help libraries becoming more inclusive, accessible, and empowering communities through the provision of robust resources.

Strategies of Diverse Staff in University Libraries

The strategies and initiatives employed by Nigerian libraries to advance diversity and inclusiveness are multifaceted and comprehensive. They include curating diverse collections, organizing inclusive outreach programs, leveraging technology for accessibility, hosting cultural events and workshops, forming partnerships and collaborations, providing multilingual services, conducting sensitivity training for staff, ensuring accessible facilities, engaging with the community through various platforms, and promoting indigenous knowledge. These efforts collectively contribute to creating a more inclusive and culturally vibrant library environment in Nigeria.

1. **Curating Diverse Collections:** Babalola & Babalola (2020) is of the view that Collection Diversity refers to the practice of libraries ensuring that their collections include a wide range of perspectives, cultures, and experiences. This can be achieved by acquiring materials in different languages, formats, and genres that reflect Nigeria's diverse cultural heritage and also represent the global community. By collaborating with local authors, publishers, and community organizations, libraries can acquire culturally relevant materials that better serve their patrons.
2. **Multilingual services:** According to Adetimirin (2018) Nigerian University libraries recognizes the linguistics diversity of the country and provides services in multiple languages. This includes offering materials in indigenous languages alongside English, the official language, to cater to diverse linguistic communities. Additionally, libraries may offer language learning resources and programs to promote multilingualism and cultural exchange. This means that libraries in Nigerian libraries provides information in various languages spoken in Nigeria to make it easier for people from different linguistic backgrounds to access information. This can involve having staff who speak multiple languages, using multilingual signage, and providing translation services for important documents and information. By offering services in multiple languages, libraries can ensure that their information is accessible to a wider audience (patrons).
3. **Technology for Accessibility:** Nigerian Libraries leverage information and communication technologies (ICTs) to enhance accessibility for individuals with disabilities. This involves providing assistive technologies, such as screen readers and braille displays, as well as digitizing resources to make them accessible to a wider audience (Jegade & Salawu, 2018). This means that libraries should make sure that their spaces and technology are accessible to all users, including those with disabilities through the provision of things like wheelchair ramps, braille materials, screen readers, and other assistive technologies so that everyone can make full use of the library's resources and services.
4. **Cultural Events and workshops:** Libraries host cultural events, workshops, and exhibitions that celebrate Nigeria's diversity and promote intercultural dialogue. These events provide opportunities for patrons to engage with diverse perspectives, traditions, and artistic expressions (Okello-Obura, 2019).
5. **Cultural Programming** involves organizing events, workshops, and programs that highlight Nigeria's rich cultural heritage. By showcasing various aspects of Nigerian culture, such as storytelling, performances, films, and exhibitions, these activities help bring communities together, create a sense of belonging, and promote mutual understanding and appreciation among different groups.

6. **Inclusive Outreach programs:** Libraries in Nigeria organize outreach programs tailored to engage diverse communities, including mobile library services, community reading initiatives, and literacy programs aimed at marginalized groups. (Aina, 2016)
7. **Community Engagement Platforms:** Libraries serve as community hubs where people from different backgrounds come together for learning, cultural exchange, and social interaction. Nigerian Libraries actively engage with local communities through forums, discussion groups, and social media platforms to solicit feedback, address community needs, and co-create library services that are responsive to diverse interests (Aina, 2016)
8. **Community engagement** involves actively interacting with various communities to gain insight into their specific information needs and preferences. Libraries can organize outreach programs, surveys, and focus groups to collect feedback and customize their services accordingly. Building partnerships with local schools, universities, non-governmental.
9. **Sensitivity Training for Staff:** Libraries conduct training sessions to sensitize staff members about cultural diversity, inclusiveness, and the needs of marginalized groups. Staff training programs may cover topics such as cultural competency, inclusive communication, and serving patrons with diverse backgrounds sensitively and effectively (Olatoye & Babalola, 2021).
10. **Digital inclusion** refers to the efforts to reduce the gap between those who have access to technology and the internet and those who do not. This is achieved by providing access to computers, internet connectivity, and training on how to use digital tools effectively. It is important to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to benefit from online resources and services. Mobile libraries and community outreach programs can help reach areas that may not have easy access to traditional library services, thus bridging the digital divide and promoting equal access to technology for all.
11. **Inclusive Policies and Practices:** Implementing inclusive policies that promote equal access, non-discrimination, and respect for diversity is essential. This involves providing training for library staff on cultural competency, sensitivity, and inclusivity to ensure that all patrons feel welcome and valued in the library.
12. **Data-driven decision making** involves using data analytics and feedback from users to evaluate the success of diversity and inclusiveness initiatives in libraries. By analyzing usage statistics, conducting satisfaction surveys, and tracking demographic trends, libraries can make informed decisions and allocate resources effectively to improve their services.
13. **Promotion of Indigenous Knowledge:** Nigerian libraries recognize the importance of preserving and promoting indigenous knowledge systems. They actively collect, preserve, and disseminate indigenous knowledge resources, including oral histories, traditional practices, and indigenous technologies, to ensure that these valuable cultural assets are accessible to present and future generation (Adetimirin, 2018).

By incorporating these considerations into diversity management strategies, libraries can enhance their capacity to provide equitable and inclusive services to all members of their communities.

Challenges of Diverse Staff in University Libraries

Some of the notable challenges hindering the implementation of staff diversity initiatives include but not limited to:

1. **Limited resources:** Limited resources, including financial, human, and time resources, can hinder the development and implementation of effective diversity and inclusion initiatives (Roberts, 2019). Without adequate support, organizations may struggle to invest in training, infrastructure, and programs
2. **Recruitment and Retention challenges:** Limited Access to educational opportunities: Socio-economic barriers can limit access to higher education and professional opportunities for individuals from underrepresented groups (Brown, 2019).
3. **Biases in hiring practices:** unconscious biases can influence hiring decisions, leading to the underrepresentation of certain demographic groups in library staff. (Taylor & Francis, 2019)
4. **Lack of Inclusive workplace policies:** Absence of policies supporting work-life balance, parental leave and accommodations for disability may hinder recruitment and retention efforts (Mobley & Bailey, 2018)

Unconscious bias challenges:

5. **Impact on decision- making:** unconscious biases can influence recruitment, hiring, promotion, and service delivery decisions, perpetuating inequalities (Green, 2020).

- Mitigation strategies: addressing Unconscious bias requires awareness-building, training, and implementation of fair and equitable practices within the library (Brown. 2019).

Conclusively, despite these challenges, the importance of managing library staff diversity for effective service delivery cannot be overstated. By addressing these challenges proactively and implementing strategies to promote diversity and inclusion, libraries can better meet the needs of their diverse communities and contribute to a more equitable and inclusive society.

Recommendations:

Recruiting and retaining staff from diverse racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds should be considered diversity, equity, and inclusion will help create a supportive and inclusive organizational culture where staff feel valued and empowered. The study concludes that diversity among university library staff is not only desirable but essential for libraries to fulfil their mission of serving diverse communities effectively. By embracing diversity, university libraries can enhance their relevance, accessibility, and impact, ultimately fostering stronger connections with the communities they serve.

Conclusion

University libraries are the intellectual hubs of their campus, and as such, they also have a role in shaping diversity and the conversation on diversity and inclusion through culturally competent collection management and hiring and promotion practices. Diversity among library staff is not only desirable but essential for libraries to fulfil their mission of serving diverse communities effectively. By embracing diversity, libraries can enhance their relevance, accessibility, and impact, ultimately fostering stronger connections with the communities they serve.

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IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE PRACTICES: MANAGING LIBRARY STAFF DIVERSITY FOR EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

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Abstract

Libraries, in today's diverse society, serve as important hubs for information dissemination and community engagement. However, the effectiveness of library services greatly depends on the inclusivity of its staff and their ability to cater to the needs of varied clientele. This paper explores the significance of implementing inclusive practices within library settings and managing staff diversity to improve service delivery. Through a review of literature, it examines strategies for recruiting, training and retaining a diverse workforce, as well as fostering an inclusive organisational culture. Furthermore, it delves into the challenges and opportunities inherent in managing staff diversity, such as addressing unconscious biases, promoting cultural competency, and ensuring equitable opportunities for career advancement. By embracing inclusivity and leveraging the unique viewpoints and talents of diverse workforce, libraries can optimally fulfil their mission of providing accessible, relevant and impactful services to all members of the community.

Keywords: Inclusive Practices, Managing, Library Staff Diversity, Effective Service Delivery

Introduction

Libraries are often seen as safe, welcoming spaces that promote learning and connect people with resources. For many individuals, the library is an essential part of their lives and offers opportunities for personal and professional growth. It is therefore important for libraries to foster an environment that is inclusive and accessible to all. Inclusive practices in libraries refer to the intentional efforts and strategies implemented to ensure that library services, resources, and environments are accessible, welcoming, and responsive to the needs of all individuals, regardless of their background, identity, abilities, or circumstances (Gupta et al., 2023). This approach aims to create an environment where everyone feels valued, respected, and included, and where barriers to participation and access are identified and addressed. According to Maestro et al. (2018), inclusive library practices may involve providing diverse collections that reflect the interests and experiences of the community, offering accessible facilities and technologies, employing staff trained in cultural competence and sensitivity, and actively engaging with diverse communities to understand and respond to their unique needs and preferences. In summary, it strives to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion in all aspects of library operations and services.

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis in the library profession on promoting diversity and creating spaces that welcome all individuals. This has been reflected in various policy documents, such as the American Library Association's Diversity Standards: Cultural Competency for Academic Libraries and the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) Strategy of 2012. The IFLA Strategy emphasises the need to transform library services so that they are the same for everyone, everywhere. Inclusive practice benefits individuals and groups in the community by supporting their personal growth

and development; it also fundamentally enriches the services and resources offered by the library. In our opinion, this can involve changes to the physical assets that are publicly available, considering the ways in which staff deliver services and interact with members of the public, providing services to individuals with protected characteristics, or anticipating the requirements of different community groups, such as providing large print or braille material.

In contemporary library environments, managing staff diversity has become crucial for effective service delivery. Diverse teams can bring a wide range of perspectives, experiences, and skills that enhance the library's ability to serve its community. However, this diversity also presents unique challenges in terms of communication, cultural understanding, and team cohesion. Libraries must adopt inclusive practices to ensure that all staff members feel valued, respected, and able to contribute to their fullest potential. Despite the recognized benefits of diversity, many libraries struggle with implementing effective strategies to manage this diversity issue. Issues such as unconscious bias, a lack of cultural competency, and insufficient training can hinder the integration of diverse staff and limit their potential contributions. Additionally, diverse staff may face barriers to professional development opportunities and leadership roles, impacting overall staff morale and service quality. While there is extensive literature on the benefits of workplace diversity and the general principles of inclusive practices, there is a notable gap in specific, actionable strategies/wayforward tailored for library environments. The paper will contribute to the development of robust, evidence-based strategies/wayforward for managing library staff diversity, ultimately enhancing service delivery and community engagement.

Significance of Implementing Inclusive Practice in Libraries

Inclusive practices in libraries are strategies and actions designed to create an equitable, welcoming and supportive environment for all staff and patrons, regardless of their backgrounds. However, there are some key inclusive practices that libraries can implement:

- i. *Recruitment and Hiring:* Libraries should utilise a variety of platforms and networks to reach a broader pool of candidates from different backgrounds. According to Houk and Nielsen(2023), inclusive job descriptions that focus on essential skills and experience should be the library's priority rather than rigid qualifications that may exclude capable candidates. Moreso, libraries should ensure hiring panels reflect diversity to bring multiple perspectives into the decision making process.
- ii. *Training and Professional Development:* This entails providing staff training on cultural competences, unconscious bias and inclusive customer service. Educating staff about the needs of different user groups, including those with disabilities should be of utmost importance in libraries. Cobbler and Van der Walt (2016) averred that training is necessary for working library professionals to improve their work performance, refresh their knowledge and to know the technological development in their subject.
- iii. *Inclusive Programming:* This involves creating and implementing services, resources, and activities that cater to diverse populations such as understanding community needs, language accessibility, inclusive collections, intergenerational programs, outreach and partnerships etc. This encompasses various aspects of diversity , including cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic , age, and ability differences.
- iv. *Policy and Advocacy:* This involves implementing policies that promote inclusion and prevent discrimination as well as advocating for equity and inclusion within the library and broader community. According to ALA(2024), they are crucial components of library operations, ensuring that libraries can effectively serve the communities, secure necessary funding and uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and equitable access to information.
- v. *Creating safe space:* Libraries should ensure the library is a safe, welcoming place for everyone, including marginalised and vulnerable populations(IFLA 2018). Establishing clear guidelines for behaviour to maintain a respectful environment is paramount.
- vi. *Accessibility:* This entails ensuring physical accessibility by providing ramps,elevators and accessible restrooms, offering digital accessibility features such as screen readers, large print books and accessible websites, providing assistive technologies like magnifiers, hearing loops and adaptive keyboards.

Furthermore, the promotion of inclusion in libraries is a very important yet complex issue, and everything in the library setting should be aimed at facilitating a positive, dynamic interaction between information in all its forms and the user, in which the religious, family, or individual interests and the desires of the individual as a civic-minded, reflective, and emotional being are all taken into consideration. This is made much easier when we embrace inclusive practices. Such practices are essential in modern libraries. A positive example of this can be found in DSPS, which is the Disabled Student Programs and Services. This department is dedicated to providing both the resources and the auxiliary aids required for disabled persons to enjoy and make the most of a full post-secondary education (Uwa Online 2020). For the visually impaired, large print services, audiobooks, computer aid adaptive technology, closed-circuit television

magnifiers, reader services, and scribes can all be invaluable. In the library computer lab, the screen reading software, JAWS, is available, and students can also use the Kurzweil Adaptive Computer to listen to a printed page by passing it through a scanner and the OCR, which is the Optical Character Reader (Sutar and Hande 2021). Many of the services and resources offered by DSPS are also very useful for the wider community. For instance, talking books, magazines, newspapers, and multimedia kits can provide education, entertainment, and solace to the elderly, who may be housebound due to ill health. According to Elac (2022), as digital methods of information storage and dissemination become ever more common, the possibilities of being able to economically and promptly alter a given format to make it more accommodating for a variety of impaired users become more likely, and software and hardware tools that harmonize with assistive technology applications have been developed, such as learning management systems, library circulation modules, and adaptive research database programs. It is here that the concept of universal design is most fully realized. Adopting inclusive practices in the electronic landscape can lead to a proactive approach that goes beyond reasonable accommodations, enhancing the overall effectiveness of inclusive practices.

In addition, inclusive practices ensure that libraries are accessible to everyone, regardless of age, race, gender, ability, socioeconomic status, or any other characteristics. In the views of Duarte, Iosleben, and Flortoft (2023), This promotes equal opportunity for all members of the community to benefit from library resources and services. Furthermore, libraries play a vital role in reflecting and celebrating the diversity of their communities. Inclusive practices involve curating collections, programming, and services that represent the varied interests, backgrounds, and experiences of library patrons (Ashikuzzaman, 2024). This helps individuals see themselves reflected in library materials and fosters a sense of belonging. Inclusive libraries provide educational opportunities for individuals of all backgrounds and abilities. By offering diverse learning materials, accessible technologies, and inclusive programming, libraries support lifelong learning and personal development for everyone in the community. Inclusive practices in libraries aim to provide equal convenience and comfort to users regardless of physical or mental impairments, fostering a more responsive, relevant, and effective institution in the 21st century. This approach is crucial for the university community and library.

Understanding Diversity in Library staff

In today's rapidly changing world, libraries serve as beacons of knowledge, inclusion and community engagement. To effectively fulfil their mission, libraries must recognize the importance of embracing diversity not only in collection and services, but also within their own staff members.

Diversity encompasses a wide range of dimensions:

i. Demographic Diversity: This includes factors such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, nationality and socioeconomic status. According to de Anca and Aragon (2018), the traits that define our identities at birth and that we will carry with us throughout our lives are linked to demographic diversity.

ii. Cultural diversity: This refers to differences in cultural backgrounds, traditions, customs, languages and beliefs. It encompasses both visible aspects, such as clothing and food, as well as deeper cultural norms and values. As opined by Kaufman, cited in Edewor, Aluko and Folarin (2014), cultural identity defines people's cultural bonding, the group to which they belong. The author further buttressed that within mobilization tactics, cultural identity is usually portrayed as a fixed characteristic, which must be defended against "others" who are generally viewed as competing for the same resources, power or status.

iii. Cognitive Diversity: This involves differences in thinking styles, problem solving approaches and cognitive abilities. It includes diverse perspectives, skills and knowledge bases that individuals bring to a team or organisation (Reynolds and Lewis 2017).

iv. Functional Diversity: In the views of Cletus et al (2018), this relates to differences in skills, expertise, and professional backgrounds. It encompasses diversity in educational qualifications, professional experiences and areas of specialisation.

v. Generational Diversity: This refers to differences in attitudes, behaviours and values across different generations, such as baby boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. Each generation may have unique perspectives and preferences (Muhammed and Rosima 2020).

vi. Physical diversity: This includes differences in physical abilities, disabilities, and appearances. It encompasses variations in mobility, sensory abilities and bodily characteristics

vii. Linguistic Diversity: In the opinion of Cenoz (2013), this involves differences in languages spoken, dialects and communication styles. It encompasses multilingualism and variations in language proficiency.

viii. Geographic Diversity: This relates to differences in geographic locations, regional cultures, and environmental contexts. It includes variations in urban, suburban and rural settings. According to Harley et al (2023), geographical diversity is defined as “the set of physical, human, and cultural elements, differentiated from each other, that converge in the same relatively small geographic space that is part of the same zone, region, or county”.

However, understanding the significance of diversity in staff is crucial for fostering an environment of inclusivity, innovation, and excellence. Diversity among library staff encompasses a wide range of dimensions, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, and cultural perspectives. The library benefits from a diverse staff, as it reflects the community's diversity, creating a sense of connection, trust, and belonging for patrons who encounter staff members with similar backgrounds (Fitzgerald, et al 2023). This fosters a welcoming atmosphere where individuals from all walks of life feel valued and respected.

A diverse library staff brings a wealth of different perspectives, experiences, and ideas to the table. These varied viewpoints enrich discussions, decision-making processes, and problem-solving endeavors within the library. By embracing diverse perspectives, libraries can develop more innovative solutions, create more relevant programs, and better address the evolving needs of their patrons. Diversity in staff fosters cultural competence and sensitivity, as members from diverse backgrounds provide unique insights into the norms, values, and preferences of diverse communities. This enables libraries to provide more culturally responsive services, develop collections that reflect the interests of all patrons, and engage with communities in meaningful ways. Additionally, libraries foster a diverse workforce, serving as role models and mentors for future generations. Underrepresented groups are inspired to pursue careers in librarianship, contributing to a more inclusive and equitable society.

Managing Staff Diversity for Effective Service Delivery

Managing staff diversity is crucial for effective service delivery for several reasons. According to Akinnusi et al. (2017), a diverse team brings together individuals from different backgrounds, cultures, and experiences. This diversity fosters a wider range of perspectives and ideas, which can lead to innovative solutions and approaches to service delivery. More so, with a diverse staff, organizations are better equipped to understand and meet the needs of a diverse customer base. Employees who reflect the diversity of customers can empathise better and provide more personalized and culturally sensitive services. Interestingly, diverse staff tend to be more effective at problem solving (Georgiadou, 2014). By drawing on the varied skills, knowledge, and experiences of team members, organizations can tackle complex challenges more effectively and efficiently. Moreover, managing staff diversity requires effective communication strategies that accommodate different communication styles, languages, and cultural norms. Enhanced communication leads to better coordination, collaboration, and ultimately, improved service delivery. According to [Alshaabani](#) et al. (2021), a commitment to diversity and inclusion fosters a positive work environment where employees feel valued, respected, and included. This, in turn, enhances employee engagement and reduces turnover, ensuring continuity and consistency in service delivery. Overall, managing staff diversity is not just a matter of compliance or social responsibility; it is essential for libraries to thrive in today's diverse and globalized world and deliver effective services that meet the needs of their clientele.

Challenges of Managing Library Staff Diversity for Effective Service Delivery

Nigerian libraries, in particular, are encouraged to reflect the plurality and cultural richness of society through their collections and services, leveraging modern tools and techniques to ensure accessibility and retrieval (Enweani, 2018). Managing the diversity of library staff poses a number of challenges that may hinder the provision of quality services:

i. **Individualistic behaviour** : Nwokpoku et al (2017) made mention of employee's individualistic behaviour especially their ideologies and belief systems. Humans are complex and complicated with varying personalities, which can influence the degree to which changes can be accepted in libraries. Put differently, managers face resistance in implementing new policies or changes in a workplace. Individualistic behaviour often prioritised personal goals over team objectives, which can undermine team cohesion. Diverse teams rely on collaboration and collective efforts, so when individuals focus more on their own success, it can create divisions and reduce the effectiveness of the team.

ii. **Lack of skill and initiative:** According to Rahman (2019), a manager's lack of skills and initiative as well as inability to communicate ideas hinders implementation of diversity policy. A library staff lacking the necessary skills may struggle to understand and meet the varied needs of a diverse client base. This can result in subpar service delivery, as the library staff might not be equipped to address cultural nuances or specific requirements effectively. Moreover, without the skills to manage and work within a diverse team, the library staff might not fully benefit from training programs designed to enhance diversity management. This can perpetuate a cycle of inadequacy, where the lack of skills prevents effective learning and adaptation.

iii. ***lack of institutional commitment:*** In the views of Wagner and Williams(2010), Lack of commitment on the part of libraries, creates challenges for managers. Without institutional commitment, there may be inadequate investment in training programs designed to enhance employees' understanding and management of diversity. This results in a workforce that is ill-equipped to handle diverse customer needs and collaborate effectively within diverse teams. Moreso, libraries without a strong commitment to diversity may have inconsistent or poorly enforced policies. This inconsistency can lead to confusion and mistrust among employees, undermining efforts to create an inclusive environment.

iv. ***Intergenerational issues:*** This can sometimes be difficult for managers, especially human resources to leverage in an organisation (Kuusela, 2013). Besides, Van der Walt and Du Plessis (2014) studied intergenerational differences in South African libraries and found that management will have to contend with how to balance the differences in intergenerational conflicts, especially between experienced older librarians and inexperienced younger librarians in situations where the latter oversees the former. Younger employees may prefer digital communication methods such as emails, instant messaging, or social media, while older employees might favour face to face meetings or phone calls. This disparity can lead to misunderstandings and insufficiencies if not managed. No wonder Munde (2010) argued that conflicts between intergenerational employees are due to power struggle, technology and expression of ideas differently.

v. ***Discrimination:*** This is another issue that has plagued managers, with underlying factors linked to gender, disability and culture, which could emanate from managers, individuals and teams (Martins, 2015). Discriminatory practices or perceptions of discrimination can lower the morale and motivation of employees. When staff feel undervalued or unfairly treated based on race, gender, age , or other characteristics, their engagement and productivity often decline. Moreso, if discrimination influences decisions regarding promotions, training, and development opportunities, it can result in inequitable career progression. This can demotivate employees who feel they do not have the same opportunities as their peers, impacting overall performance and service quality. This explains why Bolivar et al (2019) averred that manager's personal bias and perception of people can colour their decision-making process especially in recruitment, and promotion of staff.

vi. ***Structure and organisational culture:*** This can become a challenge. Studies revealed that in Nigeria public services, in which the majority of libraries operate, hierarchy structure of communication can become a challenge for contemporary managers (Abugu & Jerry, 2018; Inegbedion et al, 2020). Traditional , rigid and hierarchical structures can stifle diversity and inclusive efforts. These structures often centralise decision making and create power imbalances, which can perpetuate existing biases and limit the influence of diverse perspectives. Employees from diverse backgrounds might find it harder to advance or have their voices heard, leading to disengagement and reduced effectiveness in service delivery. Also, organisational culture deeply rooted in traditional or homogeneous norms can resist change and be unwelcoming to diversity. This resistance can be subtle, such as through a lack of support for diversity initiatives.

viii ***Communication gap:*** Navigating the varying viewpoints, backgrounds, and communication styles of staff members, which, if left unchecked, can result in misunderstandings and conflicts. A communication gap in managing staff diversity can hinder effective service delivery by creating misunderstanding , leading to inefficiencies, conflicts, and reduced productivity. When team members come from diverse backgrounds, including different cultures, languages and communication styles, misunderstandings can arise more easily. These misunderstandings may stem from differences in interpretation, tone , or non-verbal use.

ix. ***Exclusive social groups or cliques:*** This in the views of Fagbe et al (2019), can impede social integration and hinder the sharing of knowledge and skills. It can pose significant challenges by creating divisions, fostering a sense of exclusion, and hindering collaboration. When certain employees form exclusive social circles, it can lead to favouritism, bias, and unequal treatment within the workplace. This can exacerbate existing diversity issues and create a hostile or unwelcoming environment for those who are not part of the group. These cliques may develop based on various factors such as shared interests, backgrounds, or personality, but they can inadvertently exclude individuals who don't fit into the group dynamics.

In a nutshell, managing library staff diversity and inclusivity not only promotes fairness and equity but also leads to improved service delivery and organisational effectiveness.

Opportunities and Benefits of Managing Library Staff Diversity and Inclusivity for Effective Service Delivery

Libraries can benefit from promoting staff diversity and inclusivity for effective service delivery. Managing library staff diversity and inclusivity presents numerous opportunities and benefits:

i. ***Broader perspective:*** Diverse staff bring a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives to the table. This diversity enriches discussions, decision-making processes, and problem-making approaches

within the library, leading to more comprehensive and innovative solutions to meet the needs of patrons (Chin and Trimble, 2015). With staff members from different backgrounds and experiences, libraries gain insights into the diverse needs and preferences of their patrons. This understanding enables them to tailor services and resources to better meet the requirements of different user groups. Different perspectives spark creativity and innovation in program development.

ii Enhanced Creativity and innovation: Inclusive environments foster creativity and innovation by encouraging the exploration of different ideas and viewpoints. When staff members feel valued and respected for their unique contributions, they are more likely to feel empowered to think outside the box and propose new initiatives or services that cater to a wide range of library users. A diverse staff brings together a wide range of perspectives, experiences and ideas. This diversity fosters creativity in developing new library programs and initiatives that cater to the unique needs and interests of various user groups within the community. In this regard, The American Library Association (ALA) is actively promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion through initiatives like the EDIcon program (Ghalioungui, 2023).

iii Increased cultural competence: Managing a diverse staff helps build cultural competence among team members. By interacting with colleagues from different backgrounds, staff members gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of various cultures, languages, and perspectives (Hutchin and Goldstein, 2019). This enables them to better connect with and serve patrons from diverse communities, enhancing the library's relevance and impact. A culturally competent staff is better equipped to understand and respond to the diverse needs of the community they serve. By recognizing and respecting cultural differences, library staff can tailor services and programs to better meet the preferences and expectations of various cultural groups.

iv Improved communication: Inclusive environments promote open communication and collaboration among staff, leading to better teamwork and ultimately improved service delivery (Boakye, 2015). When library staff come from different backgrounds, they bring different communication styles, languages, and cultural norms to the workplace. This diversity encourages staff to adapt their communication approaches to effectively interact with colleagues and patrons from various cultural backgrounds fostering cross-cultural understanding and cooperation. Moreso, having staff members who are proficient in multiple languages can facilitate communication with patrons who speak different languages, including those who may have limited English proficiency. This enables libraries to better serve linguistically diverse communities and ensures that language barriers do not hinder access to library services.

v. Increased patron engagement: Patrons from various backgrounds in the views of Adetayo et al (2022), are more likely to feel welcome and represented when interacting with a diverse library staff, leading to increased engagement and usage of library services. When library staff reflect the diversity of the community they serve, patrons from various backgrounds are more likely to feel represented and included. This sense of representation fosters a welcoming environment where patrons feel valued and respected, leading to increased engagement with library services and resources.

vi Positive public image: Libraries that prioritise diversity and inclusivity demonstrate their commitment to equality and social justice, enhancing their reputation and attracting support from the community. Libraries that prioritise diversity and inclusivity in their staffing demonstrate a commitment to equality, social justice, and community representation. This commitment is highly valued by patrons, stakeholders, and the broader community, contributing to a positive public image for the library. Moreso, as noted by Fagbe, et al (2019), by employing staff members who reflect the diversity of the community they serve, libraries signal that they understand and respect the unique backgrounds, perspectives, and needs of their patrons. This alignment between staff and community demographics enhances the library's reputation as an inclusive and responsive institution. Academic libraries must embrace workforce diversity to maximise its potential, fostering creativity, adaptability, and a competitive organisational image.

vii Enhanced problem-solving skills: Diversity fosters a range of problem-solving skills and approaches, enabling staff to address challenges in creative and effective ways. In the views of Cletus et al (2018), a diverse staff is better equipped to adapt to changing circumstances and emerging challenges. Staff members with different skill sets, expertise, and experiences can collaborate to develop flexible solutions that address evolving needs and priorities within the community. Moreso, inclusive environments promote collaboration and teamwork among staff members. When faced with complex problems, diverse teams can leverage their collective expertise and perspectives to generate innovative solutions through brainwashing, consensus building and mutual support.

Consequences of Not Including Diversity and Inclusivity in Managing Library Staff for Effective Service Delivery

There can be serious and wide-ranging repercussions if diversity and inclusivity are not incorporated into the management of library employees:

i. Limited understanding of community needs: Without a diverse staff, libraries may struggle to fully grasp the nuanced needs and preferences of their diverse patron base. This can result in services, programs, and resources that are out of touch or irrelevant to certain segments of the community (Aykanian, et al, 2020). A lack of diversity among library staff can lead to an incomplete understanding of the community's informational and recreational needs. This may result in collection development practices that prioritise materials catering to the preference of the majority demographic while overlooking resources that reflect the interest of underrepresented groups.

ii Exclusion of Underrepresented Groups: Libraries risk excluding underrepresented or marginalised groups when staff composition does not reflect the community's diversity (Glusker et al, 2022). They further averred that this exclusion can lead to decreased engagement with library services, exacerbating existing disparities in access to information and educational opportunities. Libraries serve communities with diverse cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Without staff members who share similar cultural experiences or identities, underrepresented groups may feel that the library does not understand or cater to their specific needs and preferences.

iii Lack of Cultural Competence: Inadequate representation of diverse backgrounds among staff can result in a lack of cultural competence. In the views of Nair and Adetayo (2019), without the ability to understand and navigate cultural differences, library staff may unintentionally perpetuate stereotypes, misinterpret patron needs, or create barriers to access for certain groups. A lack of cultural competence among library staff can result in programming and resource offerings that do not resonate with the cultural backgrounds or interest of the community. This can lead to underutilization of library resources as patrons may perceive the library as irrelevant or unresponsive to their needs.

iv Missed Opportunities for Innovation: Diversity fosters creativity and innovation by bringing together a variety of perspectives and ideas. Libraries that lack diversity among staff may miss out on valuable insights and innovative approaches to service delivery, hindering their ability to adapt to changing community needs and technological advancements (Wang, et al., 2019). Homogeneous staff teams may approach problems and challenges in similar ways, limiting the potential for innovative solutions. Without input from diverse perspectives, libraries may miss out on creative ideas and alternative approaches to address community needs.

v. Negative Perception and Trust Issues: Communities increasingly expect organisations, including libraries, to prioritise diversity and inclusion. According to Gehner (2010), failure to do so can damage the library's reputation, leading to negative perceptions among patrons and stakeholders. This erosion of trust may result in decreased support, funding, and participation in library programs and initiatives. Moreover, when library staff lack diversity, certain groups within the community may feel marginalised or underrepresented. This can lead to perceptions of exclusion and a sense that the library does not cater to their needs or interest, eroding trust in the institution.

vi Legal and Ethical Concerns: In some jurisdictions, there may be legal and ethical implications for failing to promote diversity and inclusivity in the workplace. Libraries that do not prioritise diversity risk facing legal challenges related to discrimination, harassment, or unequal treatment of staff and patrons. Failure to prioritise diversity and inclusivity may lead to violations of equal employment opportunity (EEO) laws and regulations. These laws, in the views of Bika (2024), prohibit discrimination in employment practices based on protected characteristics such as race, gender, age, disability, and religion. Libraries that do not actively promote diversity and inclusivity may face legal repercussions for discriminatory hiring practices or creating a hostile environment.

In summary, the consequences of not including diversity and inclusivity in managing library staff extend beyond service delivery to affect the library's relationships with its community, its reputation as an inclusive and equitable institution. By prioritising diversity and inclusivity, libraries can serve the needs of all community members and foster a welcoming and inclusive environment for patrons and staff alike.

Conclusion

In conclusion, implementing inclusive practices and effectively managing library staff diversity are essential steps towards ensuring equitable and effective service delivery in libraries. By embracing diversity within the library workforce and fostering a culture of inclusivity, libraries can better reflect the communities they serve, promote innovation and creativity, and enhance the quality of services. Ultimately, by prioritising diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of library operations, libraries can fulfil their mission of providing accessible, relevant, and impactful services that enrich the lives of individuals and contribute to the advancement of society as a whole. Together, let us continue to champion diversity and inclusivity within library staff and strive towards creating libraries that truly serve and represent all members of our diverse communities.

Way forward

i. Libraries should create a formal diversity and inclusion strategy that outlines the library's commitment to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of its operations. This strategy should include specific goals, objectives, and action plans for promoting diversity within the library staff and enhancing service delivery.

ii. Training and professional development opportunities for library staff on topics such as cultural competence, unconscious bias, inclusive communication, and diversity awareness should be organised. These training programs will help staff members develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to work effectively with diverse colleagues and patrons.

iii. Inclusive hiring practices that attract and retain a diverse workforce should be implemented. This may include using diverse recruitment channels, eliminating biases in job descriptions and selection criteria, and implementing diversity-focused recruitment strategies.

iv. Libraries should foster a culture of inclusion where all staff members feel valued, respected, and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives and talents. Open communication, collaboration, and mutual respect among staff members should be encouraged.

v. Libraries should provide support and resources for staff members from underrepresented groups, such as mentoring programs, affinity groups, and opportunities for career advancement and professional development. Library management should ensure that all staff members have access to the resources and support they need to succeed in their roles.

vi. Libraries should make sure that library facilities, services, and resources are accessible to individuals with disabilities and other diverse needs. This may include providing assistive technologies, accommodating language preferences, and offering accessible formats for library materials.

vii. There should be regular monitoring and evaluation of staff progress towards diversity and inclusion goals. Data on staff demographics, patron demographics, and feedback on library services to identify areas for improvement should be collected regularly. This will help measure the impact of diversity initiatives.

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INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY PRACTICES IN LIBRARY SERVICE DELIVERY IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Libraries serve as a hub of information and knowledge for the community where users can access information, resources and services. Libraries make sure that their collections and programming reflect the diversity of their communities and making sure that everyone feels welcome, comfortable and supported. This study explores on the ways of services delivery in public libraries in Nigeria. The sole objective is creating an environment where everyone feels welcome and can access the information and resources, they need by ensuring that all members of the community benefit from the library services. This paper provides a conceptual description of Public library environment, the significance, how such libraries can add value to humanity and the different types of library services provided by Public libraries. In addition, the paper elucidates on the concept of Inclusivity and Diversity practices in libraries such as Diverse collections, Multilingual Services, Cultural programs, Community Engagement, Technology Inclusivity, Anti-Bias Programming and Collaboration The paper provides an analysis of the major challenges that effect Library services delivery in Public Libraries in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Library Service, Inclusivity, Diversity Public Library, Nigeria.*

Introduction

Libraries serve as a hub of information and knowledge for the community where users can access information, resources and services and also saddled with the responsibility of acquiring, processing, preserving, storing, retrieving and disseminating information to users, as well as repackaging of such information into formats suitable for their use. Anaeme and Okoye (2017) define a library as an organized collection of information resources in print and electronic formats, under the custody of trained librarians who effectively manage the resources to ensure they are adequately utilized by users to satisfy their varying needs. There are different types of libraries such as academic, public, special, schools, private and national libraries.

Public libraries are libraries that are found in communities and open to the public with the primary goals of providing a wide range of information resources and services for all members of the public. Public libraries offer a wide range of resources including print and e-resources, in form of books, magazine, newspapers, computer facilities and resources, A public library is an organization established, supported and funded by the community or public resources, either through local, regional, national government or through some other form of community organization (Laila, 2014).

Consequently, it is the duty of public libraries to ensure that their collections and services reflect the diversity of their communities and making sure that everyone feels welcome, comfortable and supported through inclusive resource provision and service delivery. Inclusivity and diversity practices in libraries make sure that library collections reflect the diversity of the community, by including materials that represent a variety of perspectives, race, gender, abilities and experiences. Inclusivity, within the context of this paper, is about creating a sense of belonging and making sure that every user of the library feels welcome, comfortable and supported within the library spaces while diversity means the idea of having a wide range of different perspectives, experiences and backgrounds represented and accommodated within the library space. Diversity encompasses a variety of factors, including race, gender, age, socioeconomic status and religious belief, hence for the library to make sure that every users feels welcome and comfortable and supported it has to provide information services that will benefit all members of the community.

Information services are library activity intended for providing or assisting users in finding information within or outside the library. It is expected that librarians would put in place services that would ensure and facilitate easy access and use of the library resources. Some of these library services include reference services that help users find information and resources by answering questions and providing guidance, circulation services which are responsible for checking out and returning books and other materials, interlibrary loan services which help users obtain materials from other libraries, information services,

reader advisory services, user education including storytime for children, book clubs for adults support for literacy programmes . Idowu (2011) enumerates the following library services according to the international standard: reference services, document delivery services, borrowing, renewing and reserving services, computerized interactive search, technical services, IT services, E-library services, serial services, exhibition and displays, user education, selective dissemination of information (SDI), current awareness services (CAS), referral services, reprographic services and counseling services.

Public library play a vital role in the community it is seen as a library that is available to the general public they are established to provide unrestricted access to information resources free of charge to all the residents of a given community, and they usually provide a wide range of resources and services to the users of the community. Aiyebilehin, Onyam, and Akpom, (2018) in contribution opine that public libraries are agencies that promote education and eliminate illiteracy among the people by providing educational, social and political information to people in a particular community. Hence, it is the local information centre; making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users. The primary purpose of the public library in Nigeria is to provide facilities, resources and services in a variety of media to meet the needs of individuals and groups for information and development.

FUNCTIONS OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (1995) states that "the public library shall in principle be free of charge and services should be provided based on equality of access for all regardless of age, race, gender religion, nationality, language or social status". To provide equality of access to users, specific services and materials must be provided for those users who for whatever reason cannot use the regular services and materials, for example linguistic minorities, people with disabilities, in hospital or prison and Provision of free access to a myriad of information sources which makes for a liberal and knowledgeable mind required for democracy (Nwofor and Ilorah, 2015).

The public libraries provide access to all kinds of information to ensure intellectual freedom, cultural and personal development (LRCN, 2015); and also, preservation and development of cultural and antiquarian heritage of the community which contributes to socio-economic development and improvement of the general quality of life of people (Laspinas, 2014). Public libraries provide information resources and services that will meet the needs of children and young people to encourage and strengthen the formation of reading habit through the provision of excellent fiction and general- interest material and making fundamental contribution to daily survival and social development by providing information to people in rural communities such as basic life skills, adult basic education and awareness programme.

INFORMATION SERVICES PROVIDED IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Public libraries have long been recognized as provider of information, as it provides access to information, knowledge, works of the imagination through a range of resources and services and is equally available to all members of the community regardless of race, age, language, religion, nationality, gender, disability, economic, employment status, and educational attainment (Dhiman, 2012). In today's environment public libraries provide numerous services to their clientele to facilitate teaching, learning, research and other interests of the community. The major role of information services is facilitating access to information resources that will satisfy the information, educational and recreational needs of their users. According to Cassell and Hiremath (2013), information service connotes any process of resolving information needs of users in response to a particular type of question, interest, assignment or problem and building positive relationships with users.

Various services are offered in public libraries and Ibe (2014) defined public library services as those jobs performed by public libraries for the benefit of the general public whom they are meant to serve. IFLA (2011) emphasized that public library services include the loaning of books and other media, provision of books and other materials for use in the library, information service including print and electronic media, readers' advisory services including reservation services. It can be seen that public libraries provide different services that will benefit members of the community.

TYPES OF PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES

Public libraries offer various services including; educational services, information awareness services, reference Services. Children library services, information literacy services, web based library services, lending services and reading promotion campaign and competition. Educational services provided by public libraries involve the provision of a range of services to help users learn and expand their knowledge. These educational services include classes and workshops, story times, book clubs and craft activities for children and teens and access to information and research assistance from knowledgeable librarians. IFLA/UNESCO (2001) pointed out that access to information is the basic human right. By offering educational services, libraries can support the lifelong learning and personal growth of their users.

Also, the current awareness services provided by public libraries is aimed by helping users become more knowledgeable and informed in finding and evaluating information to meet their needs. According to Zhu (2016) Current Awareness Service is designed to alert scholars, researchers, readers, customers, or employees to recently published literature or resources in their field of specialization, usually available in public libraries serving the users in which they can access to current information is essential. The information awareness services may include one-on one research assistance, online tutorials on how to use databases, information resources and classes on information literacy. These services make users become more aware of the wide range of information available to them and how to use it effectively. This can have a positive impact on individuals, communities and society as a whole. Reference services is another core service of public libraries it refers to the assistance that library staff provide to help users find and use information. According to Udensi and Akor (2014) in Akor and Alhassan (2015) is a direct personal assistance to readers seeking for information in the library. Reference services can be in- person, such as a reference desk or help from a librarian, assisting users to locate and evaluate information and on how to use the library resources. The goal of reference service is to help users find information they need and make the most effective use of the library's resources.

Other services rendered by public libraries are Children Library Services. This is a service expose child to information resources as early as possible. Children Library Service is special type of library services that focuses on the needs of young people and is often designed to foster a love of reading and learning to children and help them develop the skills they need to succeed in school and in life. These services for children consist of story time, literacy programs, homework help, provide picture books, storybooks, cartoons, games, poems, children's magazine, textbooks, fiction and non - fiction for children and young adults and access to age-appropriate materials. Derby city council (2016) observes that for library to be attractive to children and young people, the following services are necessary: Board books for babies and toddlers, Picture books, Developing effective library services for children and young people in public libraries: a structured review 18 Books for children learning to read, Stories and information books for all ages, books to help with homework, Graphic novels, Audio books on CD, Stories in large print format, Comics and magazines.

While Information literacy services as part of the services of public libraries seen as a set of abilities requiring individuals to “recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information.” Landoy, Popa, and Repanovici, (2020). Defined information literacy as the ability of any individual to think critically and evaluate any information found and uses it wisely. The ability of any individual to think critically and evaluate any information found and use it wisely depends on the level of information literacy skills possessed by such individuals. Being in the 21st Century, web-based library services is are services provided by the public libraries, it refers to digital, internet and electronic library services that made the library services become dynamic. Web based services are mainly provided through the library portal which is a special kind of gateway to web-based library resources. According to Gavit (2019), users can access the library at anytime from anywhere without visiting it physically. With the advent of web-based services, contents are now available to users on their desktop.

In addition, lending Service is considered as a service provided by public libraries, this services is essential part of a public library's offerings, providing access to books, movies, music and other materials that patrons can check out and borrow. Lending service include a physical circulation desk where patrons can check out materials, as well as an online catalog where patrons can search for items and place holds on them and traditional materials like books and DVDs, video games, board games and craft kits. Another services provided by the public libraries is Reading promotion campaign and competition, these services are designed to encourage people to read more and help them find books and other materials that they enjoy. Reading promotion campaigns include book clubs, book discussions, reading list and author events. Public libraries also offer incentives to encourage reading, such as prizes for reading a certain number of books or completing reading challenges.

Inclusivity and Diversity Practices in Library Services Delivery

Inclusivity and diversity practices in libraries make sure that library collections reflect the diversity of the community, by including materials that represent a variety of perspectives and experiences as well as inclusivity through creating a sense of belonging and making sure that every user of the library feels welcome, comfortable and supported. Jones 2020 described diversity as the ways in which people are described at individuals' levels and affiliated with socially identified groups regarded to race, gender identity, ability, age, religion, national origin, socioeconomic status, mental and emotional changes, among others. Inclusivity and Diversity practice in public libraries include:

1. **Diverse Collection:** A diverse collection is a library's holdings that present a wide range of perspectives, experiences and backgrounds. In a diverse collection the materials are not just about one specific groups or topic, but reflect the diversity of library's users' community ensuring a wide variety of materials that represent different cultures, perspectives and experiences. This includes

books, magazines and other media about different cultures, religions, orientations and gender identities. Agosto (2011) asserted that information needs of people including students are diverse; some of these include information relating to peer, family and other relationships, popular culture, emotional needs, physical health and safety, consumer needs, academics, leisure activities and interests, careers and college. Diverse collections are important because they help to ensure that everyone in the community has access to materials that reflect their own experiences and interests.

2. **Multilingual Service:** Multilingual Service is a library service that provides materials, resources and services in multiple languages to accommodate diverse languages preference within the community. Multilingual service helps people learn a new language, connect with their heritage and access information that is relevant to their life and culture and also break down barriers to promote understanding between different cultures and communities. Library created a “translation aid” or flip chart of phrases in different languages and translations, which allowed community members to have basic conversations with library staff (Baker, 2012).
3. **Cultural Programs:** is the process of Hosting events, workshops and programmes that celebrate various cultures, traditions and identities. Cultural programmes are important in public libraries as they help to foster appreciation for and understanding of different cultures and communities. These programmes can take many forms, from book talks and exhibitions to workshops and guest speakers which are often designed to be informative and educational, but they can also be entertaining and engaging by providing opportunities to learn about and celebrate different cultures, libraries help to promote diversity and inclusion in their communities.
4. **Accessible Space:** accessibility is an important part of creating a welcoming and inclusive environment in a public library by making sure that the library is accessible to every members of the community by designing and implementing facilities that are physically accessible and accommodating for individuals with different abilities. Phukubje and Ngoepe (2016) pointed out that the people including students with disabilities require special convenient access to library services as compared to the general student population. This may include features like wide aisles and doorways, lowered shelves and accessible restrooms.
5. **Community Engagement:** This is an effort made by library to connect with and serve the community by involving the community in decision making processes to understand and address their unique needs and preference. Community Engagement include hosting events that are open to the public, offering services that meet specific community needs and collaborating with other organizations to provide resources and support. By engaging with the community, the library can better understand the needs of its patrons and work to meet those needs.
6. **Staff Training:** Staff training involves the provision of training for library staff to foster cultural competence, inclusivity, and sensitivity to diverse backgrounds. Amoah and Akussah (2017) advocated training and development of human capital as a key to addressing the information needs of clients, especially in this era of information overload and technological advancement. The staff training includes orientations for new staff, ongoing professional development, workshops, and in-service days.
7. **Technology Inclusivity:** This is the efforts made to ensure that digital resources and services are accessible to members of the community with varying levels of technological proficiency and different abilities. This can be done by providing accessible technology, such as assistive devices for people with disabilities as well as offering training and support for using technology. And also by establishing mobile libraries to provide services to meet the information needs of the elderly, nomadic children, youths and the members of the community who may find it difficult to visit any nearby public library. Mobile libraries are means of taking information resources (books and non books) and services to remote areas using bicycles, backpacks, boxes, boats, trains, streetcars, motorcycles, oxen, donkeys, elephants and camels (Hisham and Abdullah, 2018).
8. **Representation:** Representation in public libraries refers to the degree to which the library's collection reflects the diversity of the community it serves. Striving for diversity in staffing to reflect the demographics of the community, fostering a sense of belonging for all patrons by ensuring that the library has materials that represent a wide range of perspectives, experiences and culture.
9. **Anti-Bias Programming:** Implementing programmes and activities that promote understanding, tolerance, and the elimination of stereotypes and biases. These types of programming may include event that educate library users about different cultures, religions or life styles.
10. **Collaboration:** public libraries engage in partnering with community organizations, individuals and groups to provide services and resources to the community, in order to better understand and address the unique needs of different segments of the population. Pham and Tanner (2015) in their studies reported, that collaboration among librarians facilitate access and enables provision of more discipline-relevant resources to students and greater enhancement of their academic skills. This may include partnerships with schools, non-profit organizations, or government agencies. Collaboration allows the libraries to expand its reach and to provide more comprehensive services to the community.

Challenges of Inclusivity and Diversity in Services Delivery in Public Libraries Nigeria

There are several factors that that effect Library services delivery in public library in Nigeria. They include:

- I. Lack of Adequate Finance:** Finance is a major resource in public library service delivery and without it, nothing meaningful can be achieved. Consequently, inadequate is a major challenge affecting the activities of public libraries in Nigeria. The government does not fund the public library adequately and this has continued to hinder effective and efficient service delivery in public libraries in Nigeria. Ibrahim (2017) in his study reported that non-provision of adequate fund, inadequate current information resources and services, and lack of ICT facilities are the main challenges faced by all the libraries in provision of information resources in libraries for legislation in House of Assembly of North-central states.
- II. Lack of ICT Infrastructure:** ICT Infrastructure improves the quality of service delivery in public libraries by playing vital roles in every day library activities especially in the 21st Century where libraries used ICT in provision of cyber based resources and services. Lack of ICT Infrastructure can make it difficult for librarians to provide cyber based resources and rendered their service to the community. Lewis (2019) stated that threat on ICT facilities, especially hardware and software, are cyber threats that lead to loss of service, data, and loss of security. .
- III. Lack Staff with ICT Skills:** ICT skills consequently changed the ways librarians provide and render their services to the community. Majority of the public library staff are not sufficiently skilled in ICT operations which are now necessary for effective services delivery and has become one of the major problems facing public libraries in Nigeria as they move into the 21st century. This claim is collaborated with the finding of Tella, Akande, Orim and Olaniyi (2018), that some library staff lack the skills and competencies required to provide effective services to users in the information age.
- IV. Lack of Epileptic Power Supply:** Epileptic power supply in public library obstructs librarian's roles in information access, retrieval and services delivery since access and use of electronic Information resources strongly depend on it. This assertion is corroborated by the result from Anyim (2020), study which reported that result, lack of steady power supply is a challenge associated with utilization of electronic information resources for research by students.
- V. Library Location:** In Nigeria, public libraries are located in areas that not easily accessible by the community people hence public libraries service are limited to only people who live in the areas the library is located. Most of the times, the rural dwellers are not benefiting from public library services, except in few cases where the use of mobile and bookmobile are adopted. According to Bioks and Papadimitrion (2018), Bookmobile was established to serve the public and disseminate knowledge to all, especially to those who find it difficult to resort to standard libraries due to social or geographic reasons or health issues or old age.
- VI. Poor Conditions of Service:** In public libraries, there is insufficient staff simply because of poor conditions of service and frequent promotion. Young librarians prefer employment in federal government-owned establishments and academic libraries for the reasons of better salary, regular promotion and study leave with pay which are not obtainable in public libraries. Poor conditions of service lead to poor staff commitment to job, job satisfaction, motivation and fulfillment which can hinder service delivery.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Public library are library that is available to the general public they are established to provide unrestricted access to knowledge, information resources and services free of charge to all the residents of a given community. They usually provide a wide range of resources and services to the users of the community regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion, language, disability, economic and employment status and educational attainment. Inclusivity and diversity are practices in public libraries that make the library collections reflect the inclusion of all categories of users as well as diversity of the community, by including materials that represent a variety of perspectives, experiences and making sure that every user of the library feels welcome, comfortable and supported. So it is the responsibility of the public library to provide timely, accurate, pertinent and reliable information in all subjects to their users through materials that communicate experience and ideas from one person to another making them easily and freely available to all members of the community. This paper gave conceptual description of public library environment, the significance, how such libraries can add value to humanity and the different types of library services provided by Public libraries. In addition, the paper elucidates on the concept of inclusivity and diversity practices in Nigeria and problems that effect library services delivery and recommends measures on how to address the challenges.

Consequently, the paper recommends the followings:

1. There should be provision of adequate finance to enable provision of facilities recourses and infrastructure to make public libraries in Nigeria effective and efficient.

2. There should be provision of ICT Infrastructure to improve the quality of public libraries' service.
3. There should be training of staffs on ICT skills for them to improve their services by ensuring that they have the skills and knowledge needed to provide high-quality services to the members of the community
4. There should be provision of stable power supply in public library to enable service delivery in public libraries
5. Public libraries should be located in areas that all the community members can have access to.
6. Public libraries should have a good condition of service to staff and salaries, allowances, employment process, retirement and others should be upwardly reviewed to motivate the staff.

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INCLUSIVITY IN DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE DELIVERY IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN DELTA STATE

BY

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Abstract

This study investigated inclusivity in distributed leadership and service delivery in academic libraries. Quantitative research methodology was adopted using the descriptive survey design. The 101 librarians in 5 public universities in Delta State, Nigeria formed the population of the study. 3 research questions were raised to guide the study including: What is the extent of inclusiveness of staff in distributed leadership in university libraries in Delta State? A total enumeration sampling technique was used for the study. A Questionnaire was used for data collection. The data generated were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and percentage. It was found that the extent of inclusiveness of staff in distributed leadership in university libraries in Delta State is low. The study also found a moderate extent of distributed leadership among university librarians, and also a high extent of service delivery among library staff in university libraries in Delta State. It was concluded that the extent of inclusiveness of staff in distributed leadership in university libraries in Delta State is low, the university librarians moderately practice distributed leadership and also the university librarians distribute leadership in areas such as delegated instructional supervision, and delegated administrative supervision, but fail to distribute leadership in areas such as delegation of duties, and shared decision-making. It was recommended that all cadres of staff in the library should be co-opted in library leadership. Also, university librarians should embrace distributed leadership by distributing their leadership responsibilities to lessen the weight of leadership on them.

Keywords: Inclusivity, Distributed leadership, Service delivery, Academic libraries, Librarians

Introduction

The inclusive roles leaders play in leading library organisations require them to possess sufficient competencies and skills to promote inclusivity for the effective delivery of library services. Inclusivity in the library context is the practice of ensuring that the library staff of all backgrounds, identities, and experiences are welcomed, valued, and able to participate fully within the library environment, community, or the institution. Libraries all over the world are battling with numerous challenges that need effective leadership, especially now that the purposes and activities of libraries are scrutinised to the level of raising vital questions about the need for libraries in contemporary societies (Adekoya & Busayo, 2023). As such, libraries have to substantiate their pertinence in the society through the services they offer in supporting teaching, research, and community development which require effective service delivery by the library staff.

The role of leadership in ameliorating service delivery challenges among library staff cannot be over-emphasised. Library leaders are encountering vast concerns on how to provide effective leadership through which the efficiency in service delivery can be enhanced (Ashiq et al., 2021). Leadership styles are the various approaches leaders use to guide, motivate, and manage their teams like transformational, situational, charismatic, bureaucratic, servant leadership style, and many others. Due to this, several leadership styles have been employed by libraries to ensure that there is inclusivity in library leadership. These include autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire, transactional, transformational, and bureaucratic leadership styles, amongst others (Adekoya, 2020). An effective leader often blends elements from multiple styles to suit the needs of the organization and the team, recognising their different situations may call for different approaches. Owing to the increasing pressure on library leadership to make sure that there is inclusivity in library leadership, distributed leadership is gaining great acceptance not only in the field of education but in library practice (Goulding & Walton, 2014).

Distributed leadership is a way of thinking about leadership practice that involves significant relationships among leaders, followers, and their situations (Sol, 2021). It is a leadership approach where multiple members of an organization share responsibility and accountability for leadership tasks. Adekoya and Busayo (2023) viewed distributed leadership as a theoretical and analytical technique of getting knowledge of the manner the leadership activities are carried out among the people, and in the context of a complex organisation. Distributed leadership has been extensively employed to understand the nature of leadership in an academic environment in which the participation of parents, students, and government is essential for effective service delivery among teachers (Spillane et al., 2004). Nevertheless, the concept of distributed leadership is nascent among information scientists, practicing librarians, and library policymakers all over the globe, particularly, in Nigeria (Bennett et al., 2003). Most of the research on library leadership is on the way democratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles determine service delivery among librarians. This research aims to domicile distributed leadership within the library setting. More so that libraries are service-rendering institutions, this study investigates inclusivity in distributed leadership and service delivery in academic libraries. The focus is on librarians in university libraries in Delta State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

1. *find out the extent of inclusiveness of staff in distributed leadership in university libraries in Delta State;*
2. *explore the extent of distributed leadership among university librarians in university libraries in Delta State; and*
3. *investigate the extent of service delivery among library staff in university libraries in Delta State.*

Research Questions

1. *What is the extent of inclusiveness of staff in distributed leadership in university libraries in Delta State?*
2. *What is the extent of distributed leadership among university librarians in university libraries in Delta State? and*
3. *What is the extent of service delivery among library staff in university libraries in Delta State?*

Literature Review

Staff Inclusiveness in Library Leadership

The need to ensure effective delivery of library services makes inclusivity in library leadership very expedient (Sanchez-Rodriguez, 2020). For ages, libraries have been struggling with a modest way to address the issue of fairness and inclusivity in library leadership (Schonfeld & Sweeney, 2017). Among the major weaknesses, is in ways to ensure a representative quantity of library staff of different gender, knowledge, and backgrounds in library leadership (Frey, 2014). In the real sense of it, library leaders have to uphold inclusivity as a productive value. Nevertheless, the struggle to improve inclusivity in library leadership can be met with confrontation.

Leadership is a serious issue in the library. Library leadership goes beyond possessing skills and academic qualifications. Inclusivity is desired from the library leadership at every point. There is an expectation to always see staff as active people whose contributions are important to the achievement of the objectives of the libraries. Subordinate staff are expected to be involved in the transformation process in libraries. This, according to Martin (2018), is because subordinate staff are active elements that can influence more than any skill, aptitude, or quality of the actual accomplishment of libraries and their leadership. Among the main factors in the manner leaders lead, is the level of including subordinate staff in the management of the libraries.

Leaders that aim at achieving meaningful results should embrace inclusivity in leadership. Leadership is a result of the collaboration among leaders, followers, and the environment (Uhl-Bien, et al., 2014). There is complexity in the relationship between leaders and followers within the context of the library (Manning & Robertson, 2016). Most of the studies on library leadership have neglected the complexity. Meanwhile, for the library to succeed, the leadership of the library has to ensure a condition that allows the involvement of all staff in improving the library condition for all members of the library.

Distributed Leadership in the Library

Leadership as a multidimensional phenomenon happens in every organisation that recognises staff motivation as a manner of attaining organisational objectives. Library leadership is vital in running libraries (Adekoya & Busayi, 2023). Realisation of library objectives necessitates the application of suitable leadership styles. In the library, several leadership styles can be used. These include autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles, amongst others (Akidi & Chukwueke, 2020). Democratic leaders encourage dialogue and mediation. It is difficult to approach autocratic leaders. Their decision-making is a unilateral decision (Oyelude & Oladele, 2014). Distributed leadership is a new concept in library leadership (Goulding & Walton, 2014). The origin of the concept is traceable to the field of organisational theory (Harris, 2012). The concept became popular in educational leadership in the early 2000s (Oyelude & Oladele, 2014).

Distributed leadership is one of the ancient leadership concepts recommended for achieving organisational goals through people (Hermann, 2016). Dampson et al. (2018) viewed the distributed leadership movement as a call for the democratic distribution of leadership in an organization. The rudimentary basis of distributed leadership is to ensure that leadership activities are not concentrated in the hands of one person but instead distributed the activities among members of the organization (Adekoya & Busayo, 2023). A distributed standpoint means seeing leadership actions as a situated and social process at the intersection of leaders, followers, and the current situation (Hermann, 2016). Some leadership styles, for instance participative, delegated, and democratic leadership styles, are strictly related to distributed leadership (Leithwood et al., 2009)

The metrics measured in distributed leadership are delegation of duties, delegated instructional supervision, shared decision-making, and delegated administrative supervision (Adekoya & Busayo, 2023). Delegation of duties is about giving responsibilities to other library staff. Duties are delegated because the management of a library is typically too large for one person. Delegated instructional supervision is an aspect of the distributed leadership role that library leaders give to other library staff. Instructional supervision is about the systematic examination of information in the process of executing programs to ensure that staff adheres to the libraries' moral values, rules, and practices in executing given responsibilities (Jones & Harvey, 2017).

University librarians can delegate administrative supervision to fellow librarians. University librarians are in charge of library administration. They plan, organize, and develop competitive strategies for the libraries. They manage staff welfare through delegated administrative supervision, mentor and prepare their deputies and the unit heads for leadership tasks (Nwokike & Unegbu, 2019). University librarians likewise, delegate leadership by including subordinate librarians in decision-making. Decision-making is the combined participation of university librarians and subordinate librarians on issues that bother the library, staff, and library patrons. All staff is allowed to participate in the decision-making in the library. Distributed leadership encourages enhanced library services by allowing subordinate librarians to partake in decision-making through a less official, hierarchical leadership style (Hermann, 2016).

Service Delivery among Library Staff

A library is a service organisation whose effective service delivery depends on the staff and the leadership style used. Effective delivery of library services is vital because libraries are service-oriented organizations. Service delivery in the context of this study means the way and manner library services are being rendered to the library users. Academic Libraries are at the forefront of providing information services to the respective academic communities to support teaching, learning, and research needs (Oni et al., 2019). Effective service delivery of information that meets the needs and aspirations of citizens, decision-makers, and life-long learners is a long-standing aim of the library staff. The role of library staff is to support, enrich, and provide superb services.

Librarians are the major drivers of effectiveness and efficiency in the discharge of library services (Lawrence, 2019). Although the economic and resource constraints are encountered by libraries, there is still a need for libraries to meet the information requirements of their users. More so, in the contemporary age of information and communication technologies (ICTs), libraries and library staff are employing technologies, notably social media to communicate with library users. Wagu and Echedom (2021) investigated library service delivery among library staff of four National Agricultural Research Institute Libraries in North-Central Nigeria. The result revealed a high level of service delivery among the library staff. A related study by Nwezi et al. (2017) found a satisfactory level of service delivery among university library staff in South-South, Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted quantitative methodology using the descriptive survey design. The 101 librarians in 5 public universities in Delta State, Nigeria formed the population of the study. A total enumeration sampling technique was used for the study. A close-ended questionnaire was used for data collection. Two principal librarians at the University of Benin, Benin City validated the research instrument. The questionnaire was pre-tested to ascertain that the questions worked as planned and were comprehended by the intended respondents. Five copies of the questionnaire were administered to librarians at the University of Benin, Benin City, which did not form part of the university covered by the study. The Cronbach's alpha method employed for calculating the level of reliability of the instrument returned a reliability coefficient index of 0.68. The Instrument was adjudged sufficient for the research as the majority of research studies used a reliability coefficient index of 0.60 (Nworgu, 2015). The criterion means of 2.50 was used for the study.

The questionnaire had three parts; Part 1: Extent of inclusiveness of staff in distributed leadership in university libraries in Delta State; Part 2: Extent of distributed leadership among university librarians in university libraries in Delta State; and Part 3: extent of service delivery among library staff in university libraries in Delta State. A four-point Likert-type scale of Very High Extent, High Extent, Low Extent, and Very Low Extent was used for the study. The data generated in the study were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and percentage, and were presented in figures and Tables. Out of the 101 copies of the questionnaire administered, only 63 were filled and returned. This gave a response rate of 62.4%. The response rate of 62.4% is sufficient as a 60% minimum standard response rate is recommended to avoid sampling error (Dulle et al., 2010).

Results

Inclusiveness of staff in distributed leadership in university libraries

Table 1: Extent of inclusiveness of staff in distributed leadership in university libraries in Delta State

Library Staff	Mean (\bar{x})	Std Dev.
Deputy university librarians	3.34	1.62
Principal Librarians	3.06	2.93
Senior librarians	2.95	2.31
Librarian I	2.37	1.07
Librarians II	2.19	0.94
Graduate librarians	1.87	0.57
Library officers	1.63	1.83
Library assistants	0.91	2.13
Other staff	0.77	2.01
Average Mean	2.12	
Criterion Mean	2.50	

Table 1 shows that the average mean (\bar{x} =2.12) is less than the criterion mean (\bar{x} =2.50). This indicates that the extent of inclusiveness of staff in distributed leadership in university libraries in Delta State is low. Apart from deputy university librarians (\bar{x} =3.34, SD=1.62), principal librarians (\bar{x} =3.06, SD=2.93) and senior librarians (\bar{x} =2.95, SD=2.31) that are highly included in the distributed leadership, the level of inclusiveness of other staff is low.

Distributed leadership among university librarians

Table 2: Extent of distributed leadership among University Librarians in Universities in Delta State

Distributed Leadership	Mean (\bar{x})	Std Dev.
Delegation of Duties		
University librarian delegates librarians to checkmate patrons	3.56	1.46
University librarian authorizes librarians to oversee library activities	2.87	3.06
University librarian allows librarians to observe the tasks of other staff in the libraries	2.07	1.54
Average Mean	2.83	
Shared Decision Making		
University librarian allows librarians to contribute to library development	3.15	1.91
University librarian guarantees that goal setting and staff development are a shared duty	2.94	2.71

University librarians include librarians in making rules for the library	2.27	1.29
Average Mean	2.79	
Delegated Instructional Supervision		
University librarians regularly coin the best approaches to advance librarians' instruction delivery	3.06	4.01
University librarian uses constructive tactics to correct the lapses of librarians in instruction delivery	2.44	2.37
University librarian regularly checks lecture notes to make sure they are up to date	1.76	1.09
Average Mean	2.42	
Delegated Administrative Supervision		
University librarians ensure that there is suitable use of resources to accomplish objectives	2.99	1.66
University librarians include librarians in library routine management	2.08	1.02
University librarians include librarians in staff personnel administration	1.71	1.23
Average Mean	2.26	
Grand Mean	2.58	
Criterion Mean	2.50	

As revealed in Table 2, the grand mean ($\bar{x}=2.58$) is higher than the criterion mean ($\bar{x}=2.50$). This implies a moderate extent of distributed leadership among university librarians in universities in Delta State. While the extent of distributed leadership is high in the areas of delegation of duties ($\bar{x}=2.88$) and shared decision making ($\bar{x}=2.79$), it is low for delegated instructional supervision ($\bar{x}=2.42$) and delegated administrative supervision ($\bar{x}=2.26$).

Service delivery among library staff in university libraries

Table 3: Extent of service delivery among library staff in university libraries in Delta State

Services	Mean (\bar{x})	Std Dev.
Information literacy instruction	3.40	1.15
Users orientation	3.29	1,22
Serial ordering	3.11	3.02
Electronic document delivery	3.02	2.06
Book recommendation	2.93	2.77
Current awareness service	2.87	1.05
Reference service delivery	2.81	1.13

Overdue reminder	2.73	1.23
Selective dissemination of information	2.68	2.47
Posting of library events	2.43	2.02
Book reservation	2.01	1.79
Average Mean	2.84	
Criterion Mean	2.50	

As revealed in Table 3, the average mean ($\bar{x}=2.84$) is higher than the criterion mean ($\bar{x}=2.50$). This indicates a high extent of service delivery among library staff in university libraries in Delta State. However, the service delivery is low in areas of posting of library events ($\bar{x}=2.43$) and book reservation ($\bar{x}=2.01$).

Discussion

The expectation from libraries to deliver effective services that meet the needs of the users is becoming higher each day. This requires library leadership to pay more attention to the various library activities. Since leadership tasks of the library are heavy and distributable, university librarians have to use a distributed leadership style by including some other library staff in library leadership. This study found that the extent of inclusiveness of staff in distributed leadership in university libraries in Delta State is low. This may be due to the pattern of leadership of the university librarians. Meanwhile, a study by Sanchez-Rodriguez (2020) found a high level of inclusivity in library leadership. The inclusion of different categories of library staff with a range of different potentials in library leadership expedites the achievement of the goals of the libraries (Adekoya & Busayo, 2023). However, this also portends danger because most of the subordinate staff have little or no understanding of what leadership involves (Aslam & Aslam 2019).

The finding that the extent of distributed leadership among university librarians in universities in Delta State as moderate is a testimony that more must be done to facilitate distributed leadership and foster suitable leadership style in the library even though the concept is nascent in librarianship. An examination of distributed leadership practice among heads of libraries and job performance of librarians in higher educational institutions in Nigeria by Adekoya and Busayo (2023) indicated that the level of distributed leadership among the heads of libraries is high. This suggests that the subordinate librarians and other staff in particular circumstances have the prospect of acting as leaders (Goleman, 2002). The fact remains that the lower-level staff may decline to take up leadership roles if they do not have a clear understanding of what they stand to benefit from it (Harris, 2014).

This study found a high extent of service delivery among library staff in universities in Delta State, Nigeria. This indicates that the staff are alive to their duties in terms of provision of library services. In the real sense of it, the mandate before library staff is to support, enrich, and provide superb services that meet the needs of the users. The finding of the study is in line with that of Wagu and Echedom (2021) which explored library services delivery among library staff of four National Agricultural Research Institutes Libraries in North-Central Nigeria. And found a high level of service delivery among the library staff. Also, Nwezi et al. (2017) found a satisfactory level of service delivery among university library staff in South-South, Nigeria. The implication of this is that, the effective delivery of services will lead to an enhancement in library patronage by users.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Facilitation of the use of the library requires effective service delivery by staff. This also requires that the task of leadership should not be shouldered by university librarians alone. The university librarians have to adopt distributive leadership which embraces inclusivity by involving subordinate staff in leadership tasks. Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that the extent of inclusiveness of staff in distributed leadership in university libraries in Delta State is low. The university librarians moderately practice distributed leadership. The university librarians distribute leadership in areas such as delegated instructional supervision, and delegated administrative supervision, but fail to distribute leadership in areas such as delegation of duties, and shared decision-making.

Arising from the findings of this study:

1. *It is recommended that all cadres of staff in the library should be co-opted in library leadership to know and address the needs of workers in the cadres.*
2. *University librarians should embrace distributed leadership by distributing their leadership responsibilities to lessen the weight of leadership on them, and also mentor the upcoming librarians to get ready for leadership positions in the libraries.*

3. *Library staff should be ready to enhance their leadership capacity by attending leadership training to perform proficiently when leadership roles are distributed to them within the library.*

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INTEGRATING CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVENESS IN THE ACQUISITION OF LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICES IN FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC LIBRARIES IN EDO STATE

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Abstract

The study examined integrating cultural diversity and inclusiveness in the acquisition of library resources and services in Federal Polytechnic libraries in Edo State. Descriptive research design was used in carrying out this study. The population of the study was twenty one (21), which comprises the library staff in federal polytechnics in Edo State, in which Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi has seventeen (17) library staff and National Institute of Construction Technology and Management, Uromi has four (4) staff. Total enumerative sampling technique was used for the study since the population is of a manageable size and questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection, which has 20 items for the respondents. Data collected was analyzed using frequency counts and mean score of 2.50. Out of 21 questionnaires distributed, 20 (95.2%) questionnaires were returned and found useable for the analysis. Findings of the study revealed that developing a library policy that includes cultural diversity and inclusiveness is how federal polytechnic libraries in Edo State promote integration of cultural diversity and inclusiveness through acquisition of library resources and services. The study also revealed that building bridges of cultural understanding and developing understanding and respect for other people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds are the major positive impacts of integrating cultural diversity and inclusiveness in the acquisition of library materials and services to library users. The extent at which acquired library resources and its services helped in integrating cultural diversity and inclusiveness are that it has helped in cultural knowledge of different cultures and in cultural skills and communication. The study recommend amongst others that it is not enough to only develop a library policy that includes cultural diversity and inclusiveness but the policy should be strictly implemented with the help of the management of both polytechnics.

Keywords: Cultural diversity, Inclusiveness, Library resources, Library services, Polytechnic libraries

Introduction

Culture is said to be ideas, customs and social behaviour of a particular people or society. Culture includes shared characteristics that define how a person lives, thinks, and creates meaning. These characteristics include customs, traditions, rituals, food, dress, and language. Typically people from the same cultural group share similar characteristics. Nieto (1999) emphasized that the idea of culture is complex, extending beyond foods, festivals, fashion, and folklore to include daily experiences influenced by myriad social factors defined by a particular community or region as well as larger national influences. Ethnicity, race, family composition, ancestry, ability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, language fluency, citizenship status, religious preference, age, gender expression, education level, and domicile are all aspects of a person's culture.

People experience culture by way of their families' values and practices, in their daily interactions with others in school and throughout the community, and through the stories and characters they encounter in books, television programs and films, music, video and computer games, digital apps, and other forms of print and digital media. In today's increasingly globalized and interconnected world, libraries play a critical role in the integration of their culturally and ethnically diverse services (Trembach, 2022). Diversity in library

collections and programs refers to cultural diversity of library services. Therefore, cultural diversity is the quality of diverse or different cultures, as opposed to monoculture. It has a variety of meanings in different contexts, sometimes applying to cultural products like art works in museums or entertainment available online, and sometimes applying to the variety of human cultures or tradition in a specific region, or in the world as a whole. It is the inclusion of different cultural perspectives in an organization or society.

Diverse and culturally authentic materials in library collections and services allow library users to meet people like themselves and develop an appreciation for the beauty of their culture and the cultures of others. Library materials that provide inaccurate, stereotyped depictions of diverse languages and cultures can equally have a negative influence on library users from diverse cultures. When library users are consistently exposed to books and other media that negatively represent their culture, then it is likely they will internalize these social messages and develop a poor sense of self. Similarly, negative images or misinformation about a particular cultural group reinforces stereotypes in library users outside the culture (Myers, 2014).

By including diversity in its collection and services, the library has the potential for helping library users make cross-cultural connections and develop the skill necessary to function in a culturally pluralistic society. Cooke et al. (2022) noted that in order to render effective library services, libraries must be safe spaces where all people can come together, see themselves represented, and discover and share different points of view. The library profession's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion is not only warranted, it is imperative. Methods that can illustrate the impact of libraries' collections and services for student success in diversity, equity, and inclusion courses and research would help libraries address university-level strategic goals as well as departmental goals across campus (Sappington, De León, Schumacher, Vardeman, Callender, Oliver, Veeder, and Heinz, 2022).

Statement of the Problem

In integrating cultural diversity and inclusiveness in its services and information materials, the library has the potential for helping library users make cross-cultural connections and develop knowledge to function in a diverse cultural environment. Library materials that accurately portray diversity in multiple languages and cultures can have a positive influence on information user self-image and help him or her build bridges of cultural understanding. Library users anticipate seeing library resources that reflect themselves and encounter stories in their native language and within the context of their personal cultures. Diverse, culturally authentic materials in library collections allow all library users to meet people like themselves and develop an appreciation for the beauty of their culture and the cultures of others. However, through careful observation it seems that most libraries neglect acquiring library resources that can integrate cultural diversity and inclusiveness. Most libraries tend to focus more on academic materials than materials that showcase diverse cultures. When libraries acquired reading materials that provide inaccurate, stereotyped depictions of diverse languages and cultures, it can have a negative influence on library users. When library users are consistently exposed to books and other media that negatively represent their culture, then it is likely they will internalize these social messages and develop a poor sense of self. Similarly, negative images or misinformation about a particular cultural group reinforces stereotypes in library users outside the culture.

Objective of the Study

1. *ascertain how library promotes integration of cultural diversity and inclusiveness through acquisition of library resources and services.*
2. *determine positive impacts of integrating cultural diversity and inclusiveness in the acquisition of library materials and services to library users.*
3. *Find out the extent acquired library resources and its services helped in integrating cultural diversity and inclusiveness.*

Literature Review

Diversity describes the empowerment and representation of different cultures, genders, religions, ethnicities, disabilities, educational backgrounds, and sexual orientations, and how these different forms of identity interact with each other. Every individual has their own unique sense of self that stems from these different aspects of diversity. Gathering together a diverse group of individuals brings new perspectives and experiences, allowing innovation, connectivity, and encouraging a wider mindset. EasyLlama (2023) stated that diversity in the organization strongly encourages new perspectives, with people from a wide range of backgrounds offering their views, expertise, and experiences. These varying perspectives can help with faster problem solving, increased creativity, and a better and more creative decision-making process. When issues or projects are presented to people from a wide range of backgrounds, they will all see the issue or project from a different angle, often influenced by their varying experiences. This can bring fresh ideas, as well as a wider range of potential solutions.

Talking about inclusiveness or inclusion, it is where diversity is embraced, utilized, and respected in different environments. Individuals from varying backgrounds have to be both accepted and treated

equally, to ensure that a sense of being valued and belonging is achieved. Therefore, diversity and inclusion can bring many benefits such as higher performance, greater innovation, and a more positive environment for both employees and other associates. This is why diversity and inclusion is important if an organization wants to thrive in its operations. To be able to effectively unlock the potential that diversity and inclusion provide, it is important to make sure that organizational workforce is properly trained to avoid any biases, stereotypes, or other harmful influences (EasyLlama (2023)).

Cultural inclusivity is the practice of including members of all cultures in the design and delivery of services, programs, and activities. It is a commitment to creating a culture that is welcoming and respectful of all cultural identities and experiences and to ensuring access to opportunities and resources for all. It involves recognizing and valuing diversity and creating an environment that helps people feel safe, respected and included. Cultural inclusivity involves recognizing, understanding, and respecting differences in cultural backgrounds, values, beliefs, and practices. It also involves creating an environment that encourages meaningful participation from people of all backgrounds.

On the other hand, cultural diversity means an ideological belief upheld in societies that recognize, appreciate, and respect the cultural behaviours and presence of other people or people from diversified groups. Societies comprise different types of people originating from diversified ethnic groups. Each ethnic group is constrained by its specific values, behaviours, and social norms. Therefore, a culturally diverse society enables and empowers different contributions that different people make from various ethnic backgrounds. Essentially, cultural diversity is the act of inclusiveness; that is, acknowledging people from different cultural backgrounds and creating an enabling environment that recognizes and values the social behaviours of others. Understanding diversity stands out as a critical aspect of promoting cultural diversity. In this regard, diversity is attributed to various factors such as religion, ethnicity, and race, among others. Cultural diversity promotes peaceful coexistence among different people in modern society.

In integrating cultural diversity and inclusiveness in libraries, it intended to focus on two goals, which are the recruitment and retention of personnel and the introduction or reconfiguration of library services to meet the needs of diverse populations. More recently, the development of diverse library collections has emerged as an important topic. Diverse library collections are defined as collections that provide good representation of the topics, perspectives, authors, characters, and narratives associated with underrepresented or marginalized groups (Anaya & Maxey-Harris, 2017; Frederick & Wolff-Eisenberg, 2021).

This definition has been adopted, explicitly or implicitly, by most of the authors who discuss diversity in library collections. As several have pointed out, the focus on adequacy of representation is really more about equity than diversity, and the literature of library and information science does not always distinguish among the three components of DEI – diversity, equity, and inclusion. Diverse library collections are important for at least two reasons. First, they can facilitate the kind of discussion and understanding that informs and promotes social change and cultural differences among library users (Lawrence, 2020, 2021; O'Neal, Curé, & Peick, 2020; Winston, 2010).

Librarians can help library users develop favorable attitudes towards those perceived as the “other” by introducing them to authentic, high-quality literature about diverse cultures. Particularly, positive representations of diversity in acquired library materials provide positive role models for culturally diverse library users; introduce library users to characters with similar experiences and emotions; convey the richness and beauty of the diverse cultures in the society; reinforce a distinct cultural identity; promote multilingual and literacy development; inspire learning of other cultures and general cultural knowledge; facilitate acceptance of cultures different from one's own; and foster global connections.

When selecting books for the library collection or to use in library programs, it is imperative that acquisition librarians choose materials representative of a wide range of perspectives and cultures. Opportunities should be provided for all library users to hear stories and interact with characters whose lives and experiences are different from their own. Library users need a global perspective on the world in order to develop cultural competence and move beyond their immediate environment. They need to hear more than one story once a year about a particular cultural group. Kennedy (2023) opined that culturally responsive materials may offer learners a look into their own culture or expose them to the cultures of others. These materials include the books on our shelves, the digital subscription services we maintain, the websites that we use to instruct learners, and the magazines that we have in print or digitally. Librarians are expected to have suggestions for titles and websites in their back pocket, readily at hand when information is needed or recommendations are requested. Luckily, there are culturally responsive resources that can take your suggestions to a new level.

Culturally responsive programs facilitate understanding and acceptance of diversity based upon culture, ethnicity, linguistic ability, religion, physical ability, immigration status, and sexual orientation. However, some librarians may not know how to offer these types of programs; instead they attempt to promote cultural competence and global understanding through a “tourist approach” common in many diversity-oriented library programs. This approach highlights the five Fs—foods, festivals, folklore, fashion, and famous people of a particular culture—rather than exploring the daily interactions of people within that culture.

It is unrealistic for a librarian to have relevant cultural knowledge in every interaction with hundreds of patrons in a library context. Librarians need only recognize that there will be cultural elements and power dynamics in the interaction instead of assuming their manifestation. Also, as librarians of color, cultural humility is not requiring them to hide their identity and influence. Mainstream culture may drive potentially inaccurate narratives of individuals of color, and it is difficult to change popular attitudes about them without access to their repressed history and knowledge. Librarians have an opportunity to lead efforts to break down stereotypes by providing accurate information that supports the practice of cultural pride and cultural humility (Hurley et al., 2019). The Association of College and Research Libraries (2012) stipulates language diversity poses challenges to librarians and library staff as a whole. Language as a means of communication encompasses all languages spoken by librarians, library staff and library users, including users living with disabilities such as speech and/or hearing difficulties.

Cultural diversity no doubt can be a factor in influencing the acquisition of library resources and services. This is mostly applicable where there is existence of different cultural background in library host community. According to Picco (2008), as libraries expanded their role in providing timely and culturally sensitive library support, they grew increasingly intentional about strengthening their services specifically tailored to the needs of multicultural populations. Distinguishing a multicultural library service is the value purposefully placed upon cultural pluralism and tolerance, if not acceptance, of different views, opinions, or beliefs. An orientation toward multiculturalism presupposes the intellectual enrichment of all cultural groups through the provision of equal access to information, the preservation and exchange of literature, experiences, and attributes-all necessary tools for integrating multicultural library users into their new society.

There are strategies libraries can adopt in developing cultural diverse collection in their resources collection. The strategies includes evaluating their existing collection and identify its strengths and gaps. This can be done using various tools and methods, such as collection mapping, diversity audits, user surveys, and usage statistics, to analyze how well their collections represents and serves their host communities. There should also be a consideration of multiple dimensions of diversity, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, religion, language, culture, and more. Based on the assessment of already existing collection, libraries can establish specific and measurable goals for improving their collection diversity. This aims at increasing the percentage of books by authors of color, or to acquire more materials in different languages or formats. Libraries have to the resources acquired visible and accessible to their users of diverse cultures. Libraries have to also to incorporate it into their programs and services. They can design and deliver various activities and events, such as book clubs, storytimes, workshops, lectures, and festivals, that feature and celebrate diverse materials and topics. Libraries can monitor and update their diverse collection regularly and systematically. They can use various indicators and methods, such as circulation, feedback, reviews, and trends, to evaluate the performance and relevance of their diverse collection.

Methodology

The descriptive research design was used in carrying out this study. This type of research design was deemed fit in a bid to elicit data from library staff in determining how acquisition of library materials can help in integrating cultural diversity and inclusiveness. The population of the study is 21 respondents, which comprises the library staff in federal polytechnics in Edo State (Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi has 17 library staff and National Institute of Construction Technology and Management, Uromi has 4 staff). Total enumerative sampling technique was used for the study since the population is of a manageable size. Questionnaire instrument was used as instrument for data collection. Data collected was analyzed using frequency counts and percentages mean score of 2.50. Out of 21 questionnaires distributed, 20 (95.2%) questionnaires were returned and found useable for the analysis.

Results

Table 1: How does your library promotes integration of cultural diversity and inclusiveness through acquisition of library resources and services?

<i>S/N</i>	<i>How Library Promotes Integration of Cultural Diversity and Inclusiveness</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>MEAN</i>
1.	By offering new collections of books that sincerely present new cultural experiences across marginalized communities	6	13	0	1	3.2
2.	By providing library service support to community events that highlight different cultures.	5	12	2	1	3.0

3.	By planning and implementing new services to respond to host community needs.	4	14	2	0	3.1
4.	By creating a diverse library staff to allow more people to see them represented in the physical space.	2	11	7	0	2.8
5.	<i>By developing and implementing a comprehensive library policy that includes cultural diversity and inclusiveness</i>	10	10	0	0	3.5
6.	<i>By organizing interactive workshops and inviting guests from diverse languages to speak or read and participate in reading challenges.</i>	2	15	3	0	2.9

Table 1 shows how library promotes integration of cultural diversity and inclusiveness through acquisition of library resources and services in federal polytechnics in Edo State, Nigeria. From the responses, all the items were positive looking at the criterion mean value of 2.5. On the mean value of \bar{x} = 3.2, the respondents indicated offering new collections of books that sincerely present new cultural experiences across marginalized communities. Others are: providing library service support to community events that highlights different cultures (\bar{x} = 3.0), planning and implementing new services to respond to host community needs (\bar{x} = 3.1), creating a diverse library staff to allow more people to see them represented in the physical space (\bar{x} = 2.8), developing a library policy that includes cultural diversity and inclusiveness (\bar{x} = 3.5) and organizing interactive workshops and inviting guests from diverse languages to speak or read and participate in reading challenges (\bar{x} = 2.9).

The above data shows that developing a library policy that includes cultural diversity and inclusiveness was the most indicated by the respondents as its mean value was the highest among other items, which is \bar{x} = 3.5, followed by offering new collections of books that sincerely present new cultural experiences across marginalized communities with a mean value of \bar{x} = 3.2.

Table 2: What are the positive impacts of integrating cultural diversity and inclusiveness in the acquisition of library materials and services to library users?

S/N	<i>The Impacts of Integrating Cultural Diversity and Inclusiveness</i>	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN
1.	It helps library users to build bridges of cultural understanding.	7	13	0	0	3.4
2.	<i>It allows library users to develop an appreciation for the beauty of their culture and the cultures of others</i>	7	12	1	0	3.3
3.	It fosters unity among library user of diverse culture	7	9	3	1	3.1
4.	It gives room for library users to celebrate the accomplishments of people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.	7	5	7	1	2.9
5.	<i>It creates learning environments that help library users develop a positive sense of self while using such materials</i>	7	9	4	0	3.2
6.	<i>It helps library users to develop understanding and respect for other people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.</i>	9	10	1	0	3.4

7.	It helps library users make cross-cultural connections and develop the skills necessary to function in a culturally pluralistic society.	5	10	3	2	2.9
8.	It empowers library users to function in a global society	8	9	3	0	3.3

Table 2 seeks to find out the positive impact of integrating cultural diversity and inclusiveness in the acquisition of library materials and services to library users. At a mean value of 2.5, the respondents all agreed that there is a positive impact of integrating cultural diversity and inclusiveness in the acquisition of library materials and services to library users as all their mean values were above criterion mean value of 2.5. It helps library users to build bridges of cultural understanding has mean value of $x=3.4$, it allows library users to develop an appreciation for the beauty of their culture and the cultures of others has mean value of $x=3.3$, it fosters unity among library user of diverse culture has mean value of $x=3.1$, it gives room for library users to celebrate the accomplishments of people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds has mean value of $x=2.9$, it creates learning environments that help library users develop a positive sense of self while using such materials has mean value of $x=3.2$, it helps library users to develop understanding and respect for other people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds has mean value of $x=3.4$, it helps library users make cross-cultural connections and develop the skills necessary to function in a culturally pluralistic society has mean value of $x=2.9$ while it empowers library users to function in a global society has mean value of $x=3.3$.

The above data shows that the major positive impacts indicated were that it helps library users to build bridges of cultural understanding and to develop understanding and respect for other people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds with mean value of $x=3.4$ respectively.

Table 3: To what extent has your acquired library resources and its services helped in integrating cultural diversity and inclusiveness?

<i>S/N</i>	<i>The extent acquired Library Resources and its Services helped in Integrating Cultural Diversity and Inclusiveness</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>MEAN</i>
1.	It has helped in cultural awareness	5	14	1	0	3.2
2.	<i>It has helped in cultural knowledge of different cultures</i>	7	11	2	0	3.3
3.	It has helped in cultural understanding among library users	4	15	1	0	3.2
4.	It has helped in cultural sensitivity towards other peoples' culture	6	11	3	0	3.2
5.	<i>It has helped in cultural interaction among library users</i>	2	16	2	0	3.0
6.	<i>It has helped in cultural skills and communication</i>	8	10	2	0	3.3

Table 3 shows the extent acquired library resources and its services helped in integrating cultural diversity and inclusiveness. At the criterion mean value of 2.5, the respondents agreed the their acquired library resources and its services have helped in integrating cultural diversity and inclusiveness as all the items have mean value above 2.5. The respondents indicated that it has helped in cultural awareness with mean value of $x=3.2$, it has helped in cultural awareness has mean value of $x=3.3$, it has helped in cultural understanding among library users has mean value of $x=3.2$, it has helped in cultural sensitivity towards other peoples' culture has mean value of $x=3.2$, it has helped in cultural interaction among library users has mean value of $x=3.0$, while it has helped in cultural skills and communication has mean value of $x=3.3$.

The above data shows that the acquired library resources and its services has helped in cultural knowledge of different cultures and in cultural skills and communication with the highest mean value of $x=3.3$ respectively.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study shows that in promoting integration of cultural diversity and inclusiveness through acquisition of library resources and services, polytechnic libraries develop a working library policy that includes cultural diversity and inclusiveness. The policy indicates the type of indigenous resources to acquire and how library services will be carried to accommodate different cultures. Naidoo (2014) asserted that many libraries across the nation have responded in kind, developing culturally responsive library programs, activities, and events as a way to stimulate dialogue about issues of ethnicity, class, and culture. The findings also indicate that the positive impacts of integrating cultural diversity and inclusiveness in the acquisition of library resources to library users includes helping library users to build bridges of cultural understanding and to develop understanding and respect for other people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Walter (2023) collaborated with the findings as he posited that the benefit of integrating cultural diversity and inclusiveness is broadly socioeconomic or cultural rather than strictly educational. He stated that diverse library collections can bring students into contact with topics and perspectives that are unfamiliar to them – ideas and ways of life they may not have encountered otherwise. The findings further show that the acquired library resources and its services have helped in cultural knowledge of different cultures, also in cultural skills and communication. That is to say that the polytechnics libraries acquired resources and carried out services that have helped students to get knowledge of different cultures.

Conclusion

The study examined integrating cultural diversity and inclusiveness in the acquisition of library resources and services in Federal Polytechnic Libraries in Edo State, Nigeria. It revealed that developing a library policy that includes cultural diversity and inclusiveness is how federal polytechnic libraries in Edo State promote integration of cultural diversity and inclusiveness through acquisition of library resources and services. The major positive impacts of integrating cultural diversity and inclusiveness in the acquisition of library materials and services to library users were that it helps library users to build bridges of cultural understanding and also to develop understanding and respect for other people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The extent at which acquired library resources and its services helped in integrating cultural diversity and inclusiveness are that it has helped in cultural knowledge of different cultures and in cultural skills and communication.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on findings of the study:

1. *It is not enough to only develop a library policy that includes cultural diversity and inclusiveness but the policy should be strictly implemented with the help of the management of both polytechnics.*
2. *The communities around the polytechnics should form part of the policy formulators as it concerns cultural diversity and inclusiveness so that all and sundry will be represented in the formulation of the policy.*
3. *The libraries should sustain the positive impacts of integrating cultural diversity and inclusiveness in the acquisition of library materials and services to library users.*

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INTEGRATING CULTURAL DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN RESOURCE ACQUISITION, SERVICES AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION (TECHNICAL) LIBRARY, OMOKU, RIVERS STATE.

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Abstracts

The study examines the integration of Cultural Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Resource Acquisition, Services and Management Practices in Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku, Rivers State, Nigeria. Three objective and three research questions were formulated to guide the study. The population of the study was (187) students and (10) Librarians making it a total of (197) from Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku. Descriptive survey was adopted for the study. Total enumeration was used to include all the students and staff in the population as respondents for the study. The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled “Integrating Cultural Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Resource Acquisition, Services and Management Practices (ICDEIRASMP)”. The instrument was validated by experts' opinion using face validity. The reliability of the instrument was established through test re-test, mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. The findings revealed that there is a strong positive way of integrating cultural diversity, equity and inclusion in acquisition of library resources, services and management practices which include Drafting a collection development statement amongst others. The study also reveal that increased creativity is one of the benefits and lack of commitment as one of the challenges amongst others. Based on the findings, the study recommended amongst others that; there should be an implementation on the various ways of integrating cultural diversity, equity and inclusion in the acquisition of library resources, services and management practices. Academic libraries should be encouraged to integrate cultural diversity, equity and inclusion in the acquisition of library resources, services and management practices as this will increase creativity and accelerate the attainment of education for all goals.

Keywords: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Library, Management, Global Age

Introduction

Integrating diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is a crucial aspect of academic libraries. Hence, it is very important to identify, appreciate, differentiate and cultivate an inclusive culture that provides equitable literacy and access to resources. Libraries are known to be welcoming environments and a place for intellectual freedom, having diverse collections, facilities and staff allows patrons to see the library as a safe place to be, and at the same time facilitate more cultural awareness to the community as a whole. Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is how we create culture which is considered, imperative for students, staff and the broader community to see themselves reflected in the programmes and collections of the library, with a window into other cultures. The Association of College and Research Libraries (2012) developed a professional standard around cultural awareness and diversity which emphasized that “Librarian and Library staff shall develop collections and provide programmes and services that are inclusive of the need of all persons in the community which the library serves”.

While looking at cultural diversity, equity and inclusion in the acquisition of library resources, it is also necessary to understand that the issue of diversity in management practices is very important in a modern academic library because of the possibility of having diverse workforce. Moreover, globalization has also made it very possible for different people from different countries to come together in the academic libraries with their expertise to provide cutting edge services to its patrons for sustenance of the university or college system and business opportunities. In order to achieve the benefits of diversity, equity and inclusion, the management of workforce diversity is therefore very important to the success of any academic library that is determined to remain successful and have competitive advantage against its counterpart (Barak 2016).

Again, efforts to promote diversity in academic libraries tend to focus on two goals which are; the recruitment and retention of personnel and the introduction or reconfiguration of library services to meet the needs of diverse populations (Frederick & Wolff-Eisenberg 2021). In today's reasoning, it has become a known knowledge that the world is undergoing a rapid process of change which is ascribed to the emergent of globalisation. Currently, in this 21st century, diversity in the acquisition of library resources and management practices is a crucial option to be embraced by modern academic libraries in Nigeria and in the world at large. With the current situation, academic libraries can no longer afford to restrict its ability to recruiting talented employees of diverse workforce because of the nature of their expertise (Barak 2016).

Cultural diversity, in every sense, is about the heterogeneity found in the composition of the workforce, collections and community. Diversity as a concept has different meanings and applications depending on the context in which it is being considered and also seen as very strategic because it has the ability to determine the success or failure of an academic library. According to Rogers (2016) diversity refers to a workforce or resources made up of people with different human qualities or who belong to various cultural groups or background including individuals with variety of physical or psychological abilities. Diversity is generally defined as acknowledging, understanding, accepting, valuing and celebration of differences among people with respect to age, class, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental ability, race, sexual orientation, spiritual practice and public assistance status (Hu, & Ho, 2016). Cultural diversity in the acquisition of library resources and management process requires some efforts such as recruitment, training, mentoring of existing personnel, event programming, space management, library instruction, technical services work such as cataloging and acquisitions, collection development and other domains to function effectively (Cruz 2019). Cultural diversity is an important aspect of DEI in the library because it involves recognising and respecting the diversity of cultures and religions within the community and providing resources and services that reflect this diversity. This includes acquiring materials in various languages, offering programmes and events that celebrates different cultures and religions, as well as providing access to resources that support the spiritual and cultural needs of library users. By promoting cultural diversity, library can help foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of different cultures and religions.

According to Olson and Eoyang (2001) diversity brings a rich tapestry of experience, backgrounds, insights and cultures which are essential to maintain a lively mix of agent activity in the work place environment. Non-diverse workforce may hinder the promotion of innovation and divergent ideas because too much similarity reduces the ability to adapt and learn, since a closed system will increasingly develop a homogenous view. Diversity is, therefore, created by opening academic library boundaries to accommodate ideas and views that will offer a rich pool of talents useful for solving complex problem of highly competitive and uncertain environment.

Consequently, the concept of cultural diversity encompasses acquiring diverse materials, acceptance and respect for its workers, it also means to understand that each individual is unique and recognising the individual differences. These can be achieved along the dimension of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs or other ideologies. It is the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive and nurturing environment that brings about the understanding of each other moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimension of diversity contained within each individual in the work environment.

Therefore, the need to recognise that each individual is raised differently in different environments and are exposed to different cultures is key to the success of any academic library leadership in managing diversity of library resources and workforce in the age of globalization. In workplace, it is fundamental to note that people are taught different values and beliefs, and our life experiences are unique because workers are different culturally, religiously, educationally, gender wise, ethnicity, and in abilities/disabilities.

It is imperative to note that academic libraries and staff require adequate training to serve users in an equal and culturally competent ways. In 2020, the American Library Association (ALA) formed the Building Cultural Proficiencies for Racial Equity Framework Task Force, demonstrating the significance of cultural competence to Library and Information Science (LIS) Profession, with the main aim of a fair process and ultimately a fair outcome. Equity recognises that some groups were and are disadvantaged in accessing educational and employment opportunities and are therefore, underrepresented or marginalised in many organisations and institutions. Equity simply means increasing diversity by ameliorating conditions of disadvantaged groups, (American Library Association, 2020). Again, equity is giving access to all member of the academic community the right to use the information or book they need regardless of their ability to afford them or without undue influence or prejudice from others who may wish them not to have access.

Inclusion can mean different things to different people. An inclusive library is a vital community resource, addressing the diverse information needs of all members in the community. It is creating and actively sustaining an organisation and community in which all can participate fully, be respected and treated in an equitable manner. Inclusion or inclusivity denotes a practice or policy of including people, member or participants who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised due to their gender, race, class, sexuality, physical disabilities or such challenges ("Inclusivity, 2012").

According to Grassi (2013), Inclusion is an approach to library service that involves patrons with disabilities in an equitable way. He further stated that if the library does everything to meet the varied needs of users with special needs, they are truly being inclusive.

The idea of diversity in management practices in the academic libraries within the Nigerian context borders on the promotion of culture, value systems as well as the support for inclusion and equity for all. Diversity management in the academic libraries in Nigeria could make it very important to identify some peculiar characteristics that applies to people especially in this global age with a major one as the social characteristics. Social characteristics is a dominant factor that stresses that an individual's social identity establishes him/her in a social group where other individuals of his/her kind exhibit similar social characteristics (Burke 2006). Worldwide, there are basic social characteristics that categorise individuals within the workplace environment with similar cultural features such as age, gender, ethnicity, nationality and some other like education, qualification, employment status and disability.

However, it is important to note that these social characteristics could also vary from one location to another. According to Afolabi and Omole (2011) diversity management practices in academic libraries in Nigeria must take into cognisance the social characteristics of the workforce such as personality and other dimension of diversity issues which could affect employee behavioural outcomes towards rendering services to users or patrons. As a result, heads of libraries need to understand a wide range of diversity management practices in order to meet the behavioural need of the workforce to bring out the best out of the distinctive competences of the workforce. Librarians and other library staff ought to recognise that the survival of their academic libraries is crucial and instrumental to the strategic positioning of their academic library among others.

Hence, Heads and Managers of Libraries who understand that the task of surviving in today's world is an enormous one, are most likely to ensure that suitable people are selected and maintained for the optimum performance of their academic libraries. If and when these suitable hands come into the academic libraries, how well the various dimension of diversity are consciously understood and managed leaves much to be desired, since diversity management practices issues abound in academic libraries and it is expedient that they are proactively identified and appropriately addressed (Ugwuzor, 2014).

The term “globalisation” comes from the English word, used by Beck (2015), which refers to the emerging of an international network belonging to an economic and social system. Todd (2015) affirmed that one of the earliest uses of the term “globalisation” was in 1930 while Bhatia and Chaudary, (2008) went further to state that the idea of “diversity” emerged when globalisation came into the picture 1990s. As globalisation began to affect academic libraries, there has been a coverage of diverse information resources and workforce from diverse countries, culture, values and styles that present tremendous opportunities as well as challenges to the success and growth of old and emerging academic library (Emeh, Njoku & Ukenna, 2017). Also, globalisation and the pursuit of effective competition makes it imperative for librarians of academic libraries to device plans, objectives, activities and programmes for acquisition of library resources and management practices. The ability of a librarian in an academic library to manage a diverse workforce will be a major determinant for the continued survival and success in becoming a global corporation.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the extent of integrating cultural diversity, equity and inclusion in the acquisition of library resources, services and management practices in a global age in Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku Rivers State. Specific purposes are to:

1. determine ways in which cultural diversity, equity and inclusion can be integrated in the acquisition of library resources, services and management practices in Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku, Rivers State, Nigeria
2. ascertain the benefits of integrating cultural diversity, equity and inclusion in the acquisition of library resource, services and management practices in Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku, Rivers State, Nigeria
3. examine the challenges of integrating cultural diversity, equity and inclusion in the acquisition of library resources, services and management practices in Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku. Rivers State, Nigeria

Research Questions

1. What are the ways of integrating cultural diversity, equity and inclusion in the acquisition of library resources, services and management practices in Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku, Rivers State, Nigeria?
2. What are the benefits of integrating cultural diversity, equity and inclusion in the acquisition of library resources, services and management practices in Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku, Rivers State, Nigeria?
3. What are the challenges of integrating cultural diversity, equity and inclusion in the acquisition of library resources, services and management practices in Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku, Rivers State, Nigeria?

Literature Review

According to (Koury et al. 2018) the perspective on diversity has changed considerably over the past few decades, as discuss on diversity has shifted from usual dimensions (gender and race) towards more subtle ways of identifying people on the basis of their ethnicity, race, ability, language, gender, sexual orientation, religion and national origin as recognised by the Association of Research Libraries. In his landmark work beyond race and gender, Roosevelt Thomas has pointed out that contrary to earlier emphases on gender and race, diversity implies visible and non-visible characteristics such as “personality traits, internal and external qualities and formal and informal organisational roles” (Kreitz, 2008). The U.S Government Accountability Office (GAO) has developed a list of nine preferred best practices for managing diversity. Among these practices include, making diversity a part of a strategic plan, engaging leadership, recruitment, training, employee involvement and other generic approaches. Best practices for academic libraries mirror the Government Accountability Office (GAO) practices because they face similar pressures with other added responsibilities such as collection development in support of multicultural studies. Diversity also takes into account the abilities and perspectives of the users regardless of subject matter (Kreitz 2008). More recently, there has been yet another model for integrating diversity in libraries.

Albarillo (2018) has addressed super-diversity among foreign students with multiple identities. “A super-diversity approach involves a shift away from studying only one variable (such as ethnicity, language, use, gender, or the like) and looks instead at the effects of multiple variables on an issue, in this case library use”. In fact, the study points out that foreign students are actively using academic and public libraries. According to Riley-Reid (2017). He said a significant emphasis on workplace diversity has fallen on recruiting and retaining individuals of colour through incentivizing and promotion, and that overt and covert manifestations of racism have placed and maintained implicit and explicit barriers and shaped the careers and workplace experiences of affected librarians. Also, Riley-Reid (2017) cites a considerable statistical gap between the majority to minority ratio among students and same ratio among librarians. Again she listed a number of helpful tools to make workplace more friendly to librarians from diverse backgrounds, which include a welcoming climate, balance of work and life, communication channels, networking, mentoring, professional development, support for research, and among these tools, networking and communication are vital components of collaboration across campus units. Some diversity initiative include library collection and recruitment (Koury, 2018).

Contrary to general understanding of diversity, there are two side to diversity: the one that shows the organisation's quantifiable efforts to boost diversity through resources, staffing and leadership; and the more subtle side characterised by perception and approachability of librarians. Bonnet and Mc Alexander (2012) associated approachability with demographic characteristics of librarians which is an important manifestation of diversity in libraries. In the context of their study, approachability is a measure of how the diverse community perceives librarians and prevailing social attitudes to librarians, not just the services and resources which are available for library users to become more informed about diversity, hence, their own cultural attitudes. “whereas recent library literature have emphasised that the growth of ethnicity and racially diverse populations on college campuses and academic libraries interventions have tended to focus on outreach opportunities and library instruction for traditionally underserved populations and not on issues of approachability or reference service.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey. The population of the study comprises of one hundred and eighty seven (187) registered students and ten (10) Librarian of Federal college of Education (Technical), Omoku, Rivers State, Nigeria. A purposive sampling techniques was used for the study. The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled “Integrating Cultural Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Resource Acquisition, Services and Management Practices (ICDEIRASMP). The instrument was validated by experts in Library and information science for face validation of the instrument. The instrument was designed on four-point likert rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA)=4, Agree (A)=3, Disagree (D)=2, Strongly Disagree (D)=1. The reliability of the instrument was determined through test-re-test method. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Thus $4+3+2+1=10=2.5$ 44

Therefore, the mean value of 2.5 was referred as criterion mean (mean cut-off point: Decision point to accept or reject).

- 1) *What are the ways of integrating cultural diversity, equity and inclusion in the acquisition of library resources, services and management practices in Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku?*

S/N	Items	4 SA	3 A	2 D	1 SD	N	Total	Mean	Std	Remark
1.	Draft a collection development statement	100	60	22	15	197	639	3.2	31.2	Accepted
2.	Assemble a DEI committee	85	80	20	12	197	632	3.2	29.5	Accepted

3.	Treat complaints of favoritism or discrimination seriously	92	65	25	15	197	628	3.2	29.6	Accepted
4.	Think beyond your collections	90	57	30	20	197	611	3.1	28.5	Accepted
5.	Diverse materials are not promoted in many ways	40	20	37	100	197	394	2.0	14.8	Rejected
	Average mean							2.94		

Table 1 reveals that items (1,2,3,4) were accepted because their criteria mean was above 2.5, the cut off point for decision, while item (5) was rejected because of the mean score was below 2.5 of the criteria mean. The table also reveal that item (1,2 and 3) has the highest mean score of (3.2) while item (5) has the lowest mean score of (2.0). Again, average mean of (2.94) was gotten which indicates that there are positive ways of integrating cultural diversity, equity and inclusion in the acquisition of library resources, services and management practices in a global age in Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku, Rivers State, Nigeria.

2) *What are the benefits of Integrating Cultural Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Acquisition of Library Resources, services and management practices in Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku?*

S/N	Items	4 SA	3 A	2 D	1 SD	N	Total	Mean	Std	Remark
1.	Increased creativity	100	70	15	12	197	652	3.3	32.0	Accepted
2.	Accelerate the attainment of education for all goals	80	70	27	20	197	605	3.0	27.3	Accepted
3.	Having more resources to solve problems	95	65	27	10	197	639	3.2	30.4	Accepted
4.	Building support structures that better address diverse staff and users need.	90	60	37	10	197	624	3.2	28.9	Accepted
5.	Does not create new work and management styles	30	20	100	47	197	427	2.2	17.3	Rejected
	Average mean							2.98		

Table 2 reveals that items (1,2,3,4) were accepted because their criteria mean was above 2.5, the cut-off point for decision, while item (5) was rejected because of the mean score was below 2.5 of the criteria mean. The table also reveals that item (1) has the highest mean score of (3.3) while, item (5) has the lowest mean score of (2.2). Again an average mean of (2.98) was gotten, which indicates that there are benefits of integrating cultural diversity, equity and inclusion in the acquisition of library resources, services and management practices in Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku.

3) *What are the challenges of integrating cultural diversity, equity and inclusion in the acquisition of library resources, services and management practices in Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku?*

S/N	Items	4 SA	3 A	2 D	1 SD	N	Total	Mean	Std	Remark
1.	Professional communication can be misunderstood or misinterpreted across cultures and languages	80	80	20	17	197	617	3.1	28.4	Accepted

2.	Lack of funds does not hinder DEI	25	20	52	100	197	364	1.8	12.9	Rejected
3.	Lack of leadership or management support	100	50	27	20	197	624	3.2	30.5	Accepted
4.	Lack of commitment	495	42	30	30	197	596	3.0	30.9	Accepted
5.	Lack of awareness does not hinder DEI	30	20	110	37	197	437	2.2	18.3	Rejected
	Average mean							2.74		

Table 3 reveals that item (1,3,4) were accepted because their criteria mean was above 2.5, the cut-off point for decision, while item (2,5) was rejected because the mean score was below 2.5 of the criteria mean. The table also reveals that item (3) has the highest mean score of (3.2) while item (2) has the lowest mean score of (1.8). Again, an average mean of (2.74) was gotten, which indicates that there are challenges hindering the integration of cultural diversity, equity and inclusion in the acquisition of library resources, services and management practices in Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku.

Findings

The study reveals that there are strong positive ways of integrating cultural diversity, equity and inclusion in the acquisition of library resources, services and management practices in a global age in Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku, which are; Assembling of DEI committee, drafting of collection development and treating of complaints of favoritism or discrimination seriously amongst others. This finding is in line with Ciszek and Young (2010) which states that “providing rules and guidance for creating a well-balanced collection is based on users' needs and the mission of the institution”.

The finding also reveals that increase creativity, having more resources to solve problems and building support structures that better address diverse staff and users' needs, among others were some of the benefits of integrating cultural diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in the acquisition of library resources, services and management practices in a global age in Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku, Rivers State, Nigeria.

Again, the study reveals that lack of leadership or management support and lack of commitment amongst others are some of the challenges of integrating cultural diversity, equity and inclusion in the acquisition of library resources, services and management practices in a global age in Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku, Rivers State, Nigeria.

Conclusion

Integrating cultural diversity, equity and inclusion is essential to the success of academic libraries and is a goal for many academic librarians. Librarians and library professionals continue to advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion which leads to intellectual freedom and addition of resources that address diverse culture, discipline and religions in an academic library. Diversity management practice is fundamental to the success story of multinational academic library.

Recommendations

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

1. There should be an implementation on the various ways of integrating cultural diversity, equity and inclusion in the acquisition of library resources and management practices in Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku, Rivers State, Nigeria, as this will help boost the information resources and services rendered in the academic library.
2. Academic Libraries should be encouraged to integrate cultural diversity, equity and inclusion in the acquisition of library resources and management practices as this will increase creativity and accelerate the attainment of education for all goals.
3. Funds should be provided to enable the libraries to acquire information resources of diverse kind and awareness should be created on the integration of cultural diversity, equity and inclusion in the academic library.

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KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TECHNOLOGIES AMONG ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

This research investigates the knowledge and perceptions surrounding artificial intelligence technologies among librarians in Rivers State of Nigeria. Using a descriptive approach and questionnaire, the study entails a survey involving 39 randomly selected participants. The findings unveiled a generally positive and encouraging perception among academic librarians on artificial intelligence. However, there were concurrent concerns about the potential displacement of librarians' roles and the prevalent obstacles to the adoption of artificial intelligence technologies within libraries in Rivers State. The study suggests that libraries should give due consideration to the insights derived from this study before embarking on the implementation of artificial intelligence, specifically on technological infrastructure and resources, the competence of librarians in artificial intelligence, and the leadership roles within artificial intelligence initiatives. The research's outcomes can serve as a valuable resource for library boards and associations in formulating policies for the integration of artificial intelligence within academic libraries. Additionally, it fills a critical gap in research within developing nations like Nigeria, shedding light on the knowledge levels of university libraries and their receptiveness to leveraging artificial intelligence.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, Knowledge, academic librarians, perception.

Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) endeavours to create machines capable of performing tasks traditionally reliant on human intelligence, such as problem-solving, decision-making, and natural language processing. These AI systems are designed to learn from data and adapt to new situations, progressively improving their performance. However, it is essential to recognise that AI is still in its early stages, and numerous challenges must be addressed before it is fully integrated into libraries and information services. These challenges include privacy, security, and ethical concerns. As AI technologies evolve, it is crucial for libraries and information services to stay updated and tailor their offerings accordingly (Lund et al., 2020). ExLibris (2019) noted that machines possess superior intelligence capacity due to their efficient recognition and assimilation of patterns on a larger scale than humans. This heightened the ability of intelligent machines to learn and improve their task execution without explicit programming, impacting many routine computing tasks.

Traditionally, libraries have been seen as champions of information and knowledge access. However, the adoption of automation and digital technologies in libraries has been slower compared to other industries, sparking criticism that libraries need to modernize and leverage digital opportunities. Nevertheless, libraries face unique challenges in digitization, such as limited budgets, concerns about preserving physical collections, and ensuring access for patrons with varying digital literacy levels (Awamleh and Hamad, 2022). Additionally, librarianship prioritizes preservation and access over profit, which may explain the gradual progress in digitalization. Despite these challenges, libraries are actively addressing them and innovating to provide information and knowledge access through digital technologies (Alenezi, 2023; Meng et al., 2023).

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has made a substantial impact on libraries and information services, revolutionizing various aspects of their operations. It has automated repetitive tasks such as cataloging and data entry, substantially enhancing efficiency. Moreover, AI has transformed search capabilities, enabling patrons to access more accurate and relevant results. AI-powered chatbots have emerged as valuable tools, aiding patrons in research and answering queries promptly. Also, machine learning algorithms have taken center stage in analyzing vast datasets and providing personalized recommendations to library users. Nevertheless, the integration of AI in libraries also raises important concerns, encompassing issues related to privacy, security, and the ethical handling of data (Asemi et al., 2020).

AI is a rapidly advancing field that is transforming our interactions with technology. It encompasses the creation of intelligent computers capable of perception, reasoning, and emulation of human behavior (Hassani et al., 2020). As AI becomes increasingly prevalent in libraries, there is a growing need for data and AI literacy among library professionals (Mani et al., 2021). The roles and responsibilities of library and information science (LIS) professionals are evolving in response to the changing landscape of AI. For

instance, the integration of AI into scholarly research processes will impact scholarly communication and support methods. Therefore, library staff must develop a solid understanding of AI technologies and their practical applications in their work.

Many libraries and information services are already leveraging AI in various aspects of their operations (Hussain, 2023; Owolabi et al., 2022). Machine learning technologies, for example, are utilized for tasks such as automatic resource categorization and classification, collection recognition and management, automated cataloging and data entry, and providing personalized recommendations based on user search and borrowing histories, among other relevant data (Cordell, 2020; Yang, 2022). Additionally, voice assistants, virtual assistants, and chatbots are increasingly integrated into library services in educational institutions, enhancing user engagement and support (Mckie and Narayan, 2019).

Moreover, as AI's role in libraries expands, it becomes crucial to ensure that these technologies are employed ethically and responsibly. LIS professionals bear the responsibility of ensuring that AI enhances access to information rather than limiting it. Furthermore, they must work diligently to ensure that AI-powered systems promote inclusivity and equity, without perpetuating biases or discrimination. Libraries have embraced AI to harness the potential of big data and facilitate data analysis across various operational and service-oriented domains. However, the effective implementation of AI in libraries hinges on LIS professionals acquiring the requisite knowledge, skills, and ethical wisdom. The dearth of research in the LIS field in Rivers State of Nigeria regarding AI's utilization in libraries presents an opportunity for gaining insights into library professionals' perceptions of AI and how it can be effectively adopted. Such research could aid library administrators and tech-savvy professionals in promoting the responsible integration of AI technology in libraries, ultimately enhancing the quality of services offered to patrons.

Objectives of the Study

The paper sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. *To examine the AI-related knowledge of Academic Librarians in Rivers State*
2. *To explore the perception of Academic Librarians towards AI in Rivers State.*
3. *To identify the competencies and skills that are essential for AI possessed by Academic Librarians in Rivers State.*

Literature Review

Numerous conceptual papers have delved into the realm of Artificial Intelligence (AI) within libraries, with a notable focus on its application in enhancing library service delivery within academic institutions in Nigeria. Yusuf et al. (2022) underscore the transformative impact of AI technology on academic libraries, elevating the standards of effectiveness and efficiency in service provision. AI empowers libraries to offer dynamic services, particularly in information retrieval, and guides and augments library activities. However, the study also highlights the persistent challenges hindering seamless AI implementation in many African academic libraries, encompassing issues like unreliable power supplies, growing skills gaps, concerns regarding job displacement, and inadequate infrastructure. Massis (2018) suggests that while AI may pose a perceived threat to conventional library institutions, it possesses substantial potential to enhance library services significantly. Emphasizing that AI's integration and development in libraries are still in their infancy, the author asserts that its full acceptance and integration hold the promise of substantial improvements in various library services.

Tait and Pierson (2022) posit that there are promising prospects for Library and Information Science (LIS) education to establish itself at the crossroads of human information behavior, information ethics, and the ethical development and utilization of AI and robots. They advocate for the inclusion of AI and robotics education in LIS programs, equipping LIS professionals with a comprehensive understanding of the implications of these technologies and their responsible and ethical application. Cox et al. (2018) identify numerous domains where AI could prove instrumental, including supporting machine-readable collections, information retrieval tools, research generation, scholarly communication, and teaching and learning. McKie et al. (2022) underscore the pivotal role of perceived personalities and human-like attributes in voice assistants, influencing user interactions and information retrieval. Yao et al. (2015) demonstrated the adaptability of AI-based smart talking robots like Xiaotu, showcasing their potential to cater to diverse library requirements and facilitate the provision of virtual reference services. Kaushal and Yadav (2022) highlight the synergy between chatbot technology and existing library information systems, offering a spectrum of services that bolster scholarly communication and research. Modiba (2021) identifies the challenges in effective records management due to the absence of a robust records management system and advocates for the implementation of AI technologies such as automated digitization, classification, rapid retrieval, and disposal, all of which can substantially enhance records management services.

Furthermore, Massis (2018) posits that while AI may be perceived as a potential threat to traditional institutions like libraries, it also carries the profound potential to significantly enhance library services. Mogali (2014) delineated various facets of AI, encompassing pattern recognition, expert systems, robotics, and natural language processing. The author underscored the promising application of expert systems in

library functions such as cataloguing, categorization, and reference services, highlighting its potential to greatly augment library productivity.

Grbin et al. (2022) underscore the pivotal role of librarians in the development and exploration of automation solutions. They advocate that as information professionals, librarians should be actively supported and encouraged to collaborate with researchers, contributing their unique set of skills and knowledge to machine learning initiatives. Harisanty et al. (2022) discovered that approaching AI from multiple perspectives, including those of leaders, practitioners, and scientists, offers a comprehensive understanding of the awareness levels among library stakeholders and the essential knowledge required for AI initiatives. Their study delineates the advantages, practicality, as well as the necessary knowledge and skills about AI.

Oyetola et al. (2023) reveal a divergence in the opinions of librarians regarding the feasibility of incorporating AI technology into university library operations and services. While they argue that AI integration can enhance library functions by reducing human errors in repetitive tasks, they also unearth librarians' apprehensions about potential job displacement. Wood and Evans (2018) found that a majority of their respondents believed that AI would exert a significant impact on libraries in the next three decades, with resource discovery and referencing being the most susceptible areas. Honghai (2020) elucidates that AI does not supplant reference librarians but rather aids them in delivering services aligned with consumers' technological expectations. Honghai contends that AI efficiently processes extensive data from both internal and external repositories to cater to consumers' specific needs. The author also discusses the deployment of AI-powered 'knowledge assimilation agents' to generate knowledge through machine learning from library materials and user-system interactions, offering support to researchers dealing with copious data and ensuring a library's relevance within its organization.

Nevertheless, academic librarians harbor certain concerns regarding AI, including fears of job displacement, perceived lack of AI breakthroughs relevant to libraries, and apprehensions regarding privacy and data security. They firmly advocate for libraries to ensure that AI is harnessed for societal benefit rather than impeding access to information (Cox et al., 2018). Garcia-Febo (2019) emphasizes the proactive role libraries should assume in addressing these concerns by formulating policies and procedures that guarantee the ethical and responsible use of AI. Furthermore, she advocates for investments in AI technologies aligned with libraries' missions and goals, thereby reinforcing their role as guardians of knowledge and information.

Methodology

A descriptive approach was employed for this study. Rivers State of Nigeria was the focus of this study because this kind of inquiry has not yet been conducted in the State. The target population was academic librarians who are members of the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) of Rivers State Chapter of Nigeria. Questionnaire was validated by senior colleagues in the Department of Library and Information Science, River State University, Port Harcourt and used to collect data. To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, copies of the questionnaire were administered to 10 selected librarians who were outside the study area, and consequently, an overall coefficient value of 0.86 was produced using Cronbach Alpha which indicates that the instrument was reliable. The participants were selected using a random sampling technique, and data were collected using an online survey questionnaire. Thirty-eight statements were distributed to the 45 participants via Google Forms to collect primary data. However, only 39 participants responded to the structured questionnaire. Mean values below 2.5 were disregarded, while those surpassing 2.50 were considered valid as a benchmark for analysis. Literature such as published articles, books and websites were reviewed to gather secondary data. The researchers utilized SPSS 23 version for data analysis and to address the research questions.

Results

The following are the findings from the primary data obtained through the administration of the questionnaire. Table 1 provides data on the awareness of AI technologies among academic librarians. Data shows that respondents were aware of AI in libraries. The conclusion from the data revealed that respondents agreed that AI is essential for the effectiveness and efficiency of library service delivery, enabling libraries to enhance and offer dynamic services for their users.

Table 1: AI-related Knowledge of Academic Librarians in Rivers State

S/n	Statements	Mean	SD
1.	AI is used to find articles	2.84	0.90
2.	AI is used in optical character recognition and the preservation of documents	2.73	1.11
3.	AI is used in indexing	2.88	1.00

4.	AI is used in reference services in libraries	3.83	1.06
5.	AI predicts readers' book search trends	3.61	0.89
6.	AI is used in the acquisition of library materials	3.74	1.06
7.	AI is used in library decision support systems	3.51	0.97
8.	AI is used in language translation	2.95	0.80
9.	AI is used in the writing of systematic literature reviews	3.46	1.11
10.	AI is used in search engines	3.34	0.68
11.	AI is used in library databases	3.55	1.13
12.	AI is used in library security and surveillance	3.05	0.96
13.	AI is used in bibliographies and anthologies	3.10	0.93
14.	AI is used to find citations	3.56	0.94
15.	AI is used in research data management	3.26	0.93
16.	AI is used in content summarization	3.09	0.96

Table 2: perception of Academic Librarians towards AI in Rivers State.

S/n	Statements	Mean	SD
17	AI robots can work alongside librarians in the future	2.51	1.07
18	AI can bridge librarian performance gaps	2.58	1.02
19	AI makes library staff lazy	3.59	0.90
20	Budgeting is an issue in adopting AI in libraries	3.20	0.94
21	The lack of academic librarians' skills and knowledge is the reason for not adopting AI in libraries	3.30	1.09
22	AI is a threat to librarians' employment	3.82	1.20
23	AI robots can fill librarian shortages	3.13	1.18
24	Librarian roles can be performed more effectively by AI robots	3.00	1.04
25	The scarcity of vendors specializing in AI is the reason for not adopting AI in libraries	3.28	0.91
26	The high energy demand for AI technology is the reason for not adopting AI in libraries	3.55	0.82

Table 2 indicates the attitude and perspectives of AI among academic librarians. Data indicated that AI made academic librarians lazy and threatened their employment. The respondents also indicated barriers to the adoption of AI in libraries, such as the high energy requirements, lack of LIS professionals' skills in AI, scarcity of vendors specializing in AI and budgetary constraints.

Table 3: Competencies and Skills Possessed by Academic Librarians that are Essential for AI in Rivers State.

S/n	Statements	Mean	SD
27.	Internet applications	3.50	0.88
28.	Programming skills	3.49	0.85
29.	Computing and networking	3.63	0.84
30.	Cyber security and network management	3.75	0.74
31.	Data quality control	3.78	0.69
32.	Electronic communication	3.75	0.78
33.	Hardware and software	3.81	0.71
34.	Data mining	3.14	1.00
35.	Data curation	3.73	0.67

36.	Database management systems	3.51	0.88
37.	Designing AI mechanisms	2.88	1.13
38.	Data analysis and algorithms	3.36	1.00

Table 3 provides data on the competencies and skills required by academic librarians in the AI era. The indicated that hardware and software, data quality control, electronic communication, cyber security and network management, data curation, computing and networking, database management systems, Internet applications, programming skills, designing AI mechanisms, data analysis and algorithms and data mining are the skills and competencies required by LIS professionals for them to operate in the AI era.

Findings

Regarding the awareness of AI among academic librarians, indicated that AI was advantageous for libraries, particularly in terms of its use for routine library tasks such as reference services, acquisitions, predicts readers' book search, and find citations among others. This validates the findings of Chaoying (2021) who found that AI technology may be used to catalogue and classify library resources. By implication, AI can be useful for research support by providing expertise on study subjects and facilitating the quick and accurate retrieval of relevant information. AI can also analyse large data sets, identify patterns and trends, and make predictions, aiding the research process. Additionally, research has shown that AI can be used in libraries for a variety of purposes, including cataloguing, classification, indexing, referencing and acquisition processes (Mogali, 2014), search engines in digital libraries (Wu et al., 2015), information literacy (Honghai, 2020; Yueh et al., 2020), library marketing (Omehia and Mmejim, 2020) and content creation (Hilt, 2017).

Also, findings on the attitudes and perceptions of academic librarians towards AI indicated that librarians highly value the ease that AI brings. By implication, AI has the potential to address performance disparities among librarians, as they believed it could simplify tasks. This corroborates the findings of Chen and Shen (2020) and Yu et al. (2019) which found that libraries can benefit from the increased adaptability, efficiency and creativity resulting from the application of AI. However, findings from the survey further indicate that barriers to the adoption of AI in libraries, such as the high energy requirements, lack of LIS professionals' skills in AI, scarcity of vendors specializing in AI and budgetary constraints. This also validates the studies of Nguyen (2020) and Oladokun et al. (2023).

Finally, findings concerning the competencies possessed by academic librarians in the AI era indicated that AI has the potential to be used in libraries. Findings indicated that respondents must be proficient in AI, including having an understanding of data quality control, electronic communication, data analytics, library management, computing and networking, cybersecurity and networking and programming. In addition to these competencies, Internet applications and data mining skills are required by library professionals to remain relevant in the AI era. In agreement with the findings of this study, studies have discovered evidence of information and communication technology proficiency (Oyedokun et al., 2018), professional competence in digital libraries (Khan and Bhatti, 2017), and librarians' professional abilities, such as communication, presentation, marketing and leadership skills (Kulkarni et al., 2017). This implies that AI skills are not only essential but also requirements that modern LIS professionals should possess to remain relevant.

Conclusion

In this research, the survey participants, who were academic librarians in the field of Library and Information Science (LIS), often displayed characteristics of early technology adopters and demonstrated a considerable openness to incorporating artificial intelligence (AI) into library operations. The study revealed that these academic librarians possessed awareness of the necessary skills for embracing AI technologies, fueling their enthusiasm and readiness to assume a leading role in its implementation. However, it also unveiled a concern among these professionals regarding the potential threat AI posed to their job security. There was a prevailing apprehension that AI might replace many of their traditional roles with automation. The study strongly indicates that academic librarians recognize the significant role AI play in various aspects of library services, as evidenced by its favorable outcomes in diverse library-related contexts.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that this study focused specifically on academic librarians in Rivers State, Nigeria. Consequently, the sample used may not be sufficiently representative to derive overarching conclusions from the findings. As a result, this research serves as a valuable preliminary foundation for future investigations in this field, emphasizing the need for more comprehensive studies with broader samples to offer a more robust understanding of AI and its applications within the realm of LIS.

This study was crafted with the primary aim of collecting statistical insights into the knowledge, perceptions, and skill levels of academic librarians. Its overarching objective was to provide policymakers and stakeholders within the librarianship profession with empirically grounded information derived from

the study's outcomes. The findings of this research reveal that academic librarians possess a keen awareness of the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in libraries. They affirm that AI is integral to the enhancement and optimization of library service delivery, empowering libraries to offer dynamic and efficient services to their users. Additionally, these professionals acknowledge that AI has the potential to address performance disparities and streamline tasks. Nevertheless, there are concerns among them that the presence of AI may lead to complacency among academic librarians and pose a threat to job security.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

1. AI Should be integrated into LIS school programmes in Nigeria.
2. The findings derived from this study should serve as valuable information for policymakers and LIS professionals in facilitating improvements in library service delivery, and enhancement of libraries' overall effectiveness and efficiency.
3. The contribution of this research in growing the body of knowledge on AI in LIS should be built upon by further studies.

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LEADERSHIP STYLES AS AN IMPETUS FOR FOSTERING DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION AMONG PERSONNEL OF PUBLIC ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

This study investigated leadership styles as an impetus for fostering diversity, equity and inclusion among personnel of public academic libraries in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey design. Its population were the professionals, para-professionals and non-professional personnel of four (4) public academic libraries in Kwara State. Convenience sampling technique was used to select the respondents. Questionnaire was used to collect data from 69 respondents. Data were analysed with,

frequency counts, percentages and mean (\bar{x}). Findings revealed that leadership styles practiced in public

academic libraries in Kwara State allowed personnel to engage in activities they will be useful, it created a culture that embrace, respect, it accepts and value the diversity of the library personnel, it allowed personnel to apply their experience in supporting the library to achieve its goals and allowed them to demonstrate their expertise. It was further revealed that democratic leadership, visionary leadership, transformational leadership, strategic leadership, purposeful leadership and distributed leadership were the leadership styles fostering diversity, equity and inclusion among personnel of the public academic libraries in Kwara State. Diversity, equity and inclusion is being fostered by library leaders who have interest in their personnel, have the ability to manage team, passionate about their works, and are visionary leaders. The study concluded that there is a strong presence of leadership practices in the public academic libraries in Kwara State. The leadership styles have enabled the library leaders to create a culture that embrace, respect, accept and value the diversity of the library personnel. The study recommended that leadership styles practiced in public academic libraries in Kwara State should be modified and tailored towards allowing people of minority groups to be hired.

Keywords: Academic libraries, diversity, equity, inclusion, Kwara State, leadership, leadership styles, personnel

Introduction

The terms diversity, equity and inclusion can be used to identify and parse systemic inequities. Diversity, equity and inclusion are interconnected concepts that are sometimes treated as one; however, they are distinct. Equity is where people are treated according to their diverse needs in a way that enables them to participate, perform, and engage to the same extent (Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion [CCDI], 2023), while diversity is about individuals and the variety of unique characteristics and experiences they each possess (CCDI, 2023). Diversity may be expressed through race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, economic status and physical abilities, but is not limited to those characteristics (CCDI, 2023). Inclusion is a mindful and equitable effort to create a culture that embraces, respects, accepts, and values diversity (CCDI, 2023).

Diversity, equity and inclusion have become core values and top priorities of contemporary libraries (Leong, 2023). The American Library Association [ALA] (2023) asserted that diversity, equity and inclusion are fundamental values used in driving social justice framework to ensure the inclusion of diverse perspectives. Diversity, equity and inclusion promotes the fair treatment and full participation of all people,

especially populations that have historically been underrepresented or subject to discrimination because of their background, identity, disability, etc (American Psychological Association [APA], 2023).

Diverse literature teaches one acceptance of differences and spreads the message of an alliance to the library personnel (Levin, 2021). The value of diversity, equity and inclusivity for library personnel are essential to a personnel's perceptions of their works and their understanding of the need to be a part of the library success. Diversity includes cultural awareness and topics such as identity, race, ethnicity, disability, gender, class, religion, and types of family (Chelaru, 2023). Diversity is a fundamental value for libraries as it helps students develop critical thinking and analytical skills while advancing in different literacies.

Leadership is a contextual term with distinct definitions and meanings in different environments (Martin, 2019). Fisher (2018) pointed out that leadership style research lacks realism and the constructs are ambiguous, whereas the proliferation of misleading leadership styles in practice makes the practitioners disinclined to consider a more realistic picture of organizations, work, management, tasks, and objectives (Alvesson, 2020). Nonetheless, all kinds of leadership training, seminars, presentations, and courses seem to have a homogeneous prescription that successful leadership is based on a community-shared recipe for leadership studies (Alvesson, 2020).

The over reliance on managerial approaches with little or no regards for instilling quality leadership skills in both the budding and practicing librarians has become a clog in the wheel of progression of libraries (Olarongbe, et al., 2023). Though, the success of leadership approaches in libraries is disputed due to ambiguous constructs and a lack of empirical support (Yang, 2023). One of the area in which lack of quality leadership has affected the progress of most libraries is the failure to engender diversity, equity and inclusion among the library personnel.

The concept of leadership has not been widely accepted in the library as it has been observed that the concept of 'headship' has traditionally dominated the concept of leadership in librarianship (Hernon, 2017; Wong, 2017). The word 'leadership' is encapsulated by an individual who guides, influences, encourages, empowers, handles change, and sets examples for achieving shared goals. Noting that the styles of leadership in libraries can play a crucial role in the involvement of library personnel justifies the designing of this study to investigate leadership styles as an impetus for fostering diversity, equity and inclusion among personnel of public academic libraries in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The 21st century is associated with many technological, environmental and social factors having a great potential of changing the library and information landscape. Identifying the reality and adjusting to its demands to drive progress and development and ultimately harnessing the potential is hinged on embracing leadership practices that will recognise the diversity, equal representation and inclusion in libraries.

It has been observed by Yang (2023) that libraries have been stuck with the traditional roles that had failed to meet the needs and expectations of modern library personnel and patrons. Leaders with knowledge and understanding of different leadership styles are highly needed for libraries of the future to thrive and grow. Awan and Mahmood (2010) reported that 93% of library directors, manager or most senior librarians practice autocratic style and 7% implement laissez- faire leadership style. This shows that library leaders seem unwelcomed, unapproachable and find it difficult to create and facilitate a library environment where every personnel can feel valued, appreciated and encouraged to perform their duties without discrimination on any grounds.

It is based on the above points that this study was carried out to investigate leadership styles as an impetus for fostering diversity, equity and inclusion among personnel of public academic libraries in Kwara State.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to investigate leadership styles as an impetus for fostering diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) among personnel of public academic libraries in Kwara State, Nigeria.

The specific objectives are to:

- i.* identify the DEI practices fostered by leadership styles in public academic libraries in Kwara State, Nigeria;
- ii.* examine the leadership styles fostering DEI among personnel of public academic libraries in Kwara State, Nigeria;
- iii.* examine the leadership qualities fostering DEI among personnel of public academic libraries in Kwara State, Nigeria; and,
- iv.* examine how leadership styles foster DEI among personnel of public academic libraries in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

This study sets to answer the questions below:

1. What are the DEI practices fostered by leadership styles in public academic libraries in Kwara State, Nigeria?

2. What are the leadership styles fostering DEI among personnel of public academic libraries in Kwara State, Nigeria?
3. What are the leadership qualities fostering DEI among personnel of public academic libraries in Kwara State, Nigeria?
4. How do leadership styles foster DEI among personnel of public academic libraries in Kwara State, Nigeria?

Literature Review

Leadership is a complex and multifaceted concept that has been studied by scholars for decades. There is no one definition of leadership that is universally accepted, and the concept is often interpreted differently in different contexts and sectors. As a result, leaders can face challenges in leading effectively and ethically in their roles (Yang, 2023). No doubt at all that leadership is one of the most important elements of an organization but few studies have been conducted regarding dynamic and successful leadership in academic libraries while leadership has always been given a top priority for all types of organizations (Aslam & Aslam, 2019).

A library leader is a person who encourages and motivates library professionals to actively engage with their modern users and try to meet their needs. The library leadership has a key role to play in managing transitions and keeping the libraries relevant in the current scenario by fostering creativity and vision (Ashiq, Rehman, Safdar & Ali, 2021). The development of library leadership skills has been a comparatively neglected area in the library profession especially for junior and mid-career library professionals. Library leaders needed to be visionary and innovative with effective communication and social skills to encourage a collaborative and agile culture in academic institutions (Ashiq et al., 2021).

A shared vision is key to leadership in libraries that prepares employees for organizational change and reduces resistance. For instance, transformational leadership is a style of leadership in the academic library that inspires followers to develop a high level of confidence by offering strong support for an excellent performance (Aslam & Aslam, 2019). Leadership styles have evolved in different dimensions which library leaders can deploy in different contexts to achieve their set goals. Laissez-faire, autocratic, democratic, transactional, strategic, agile, distributed, followers-focused, purposeful and visionary leadership styles are highly driving the achievement of results in libraries (Olarongbe et al., 2023; Aslam & Aslam, 2019). These leadership styles empower library leaders to collaborate, advocate, communicate, motivate, share passion and determination, innovate, socialise, transform and instill values and work ethics.

The research on library leadership has not come to a consensus on the leadership skills needed to be successful. A study by Martin (2018) about academic librarians' perceptions of leadership shows that future library leaders are expected to be, in order, people-first, visionary, change agents, experienced librarians, role models, and communicators (Yang, 2023). In a similar vein, Johnson and Potluri (2021) asserted that successful leadership needs a set of skills such as effective communication, self-confidence, ability to manage team, willingness to accept change, vision, integrity and honesty, collaboration, management and communication skills.

The act of fostering diversity, equity and inclusion in the library can begin from increasing library school enrolment diversification, diversity-related training opportunities, mentorship programmes, targeted hiring of minority librarians, and financial support (Li, 2023). A diverse and inclusive library leader is one that supports the needs of all library personnel, creates a supportive and inclusive environment in which diversity of personnel is valued and respected, and where no-one feels excluded (Band, 2021). Successful library leaders encourage and motivate their colleagues to achieve more than expectation and boost confidence level of the workers by offering assistance to build high level standards and values (Aslam & Aslam, 2019).

There are numerous professional associations and institutes in developed countries that offer leadership development programmes but only a small number of library professionals can join these training because of organizational policies and financial crisis. Library leaders face challenges in leading effectively and ethically in their roles (Yang, 2023). The challenge of leading effectively revolves around ensuring that the right things must be done in order to achieve the library's objectives, while the ethical challenge centers on ensuring the right thing must be done and sustained.

Li (2023) examined the leadership roles held by Chinese Canadian librarians and their perceptions of inclusivity of work climate, job satisfaction, and race as a career barrier. Their encounters with racial micro aggressions and mentorship experience were also explored. Of the 38 respondents, 79% (n=30) were in non-management positions. 82% (n=31) felt very satisfied or satisfied with their jobs; however, their work climate was not found to be inclusive to all respondents. 87% (n=33) indicated that race was a barrier to their career.

Ashiq, Rehman and Batoool (2018) explored the perceptions of academic library leaders of Pakistan about library leadership. Major challenges found were identity crises followed by communication issues, financial constraints and administrative issues. The most challenging aspects of being an academic library leader were identified as trying to create awareness, lack of self-development culture and technological issues. The required leadership skills were communication, vision, social interaction, team building,

organisational understanding and knowledge sharing. The findings of the study are helpful for current, young and future chief librarians to understand the challenges they may face and to develop the leadership skills needed to cope with these challenges.

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive survey design because it gives the researcher the opportunities of questioning the respondents' opinions on how leadership styles serve as an impetus for fostering equity, diversity and inclusion among them. Its population are the professional, para-professionals and non-professional personnel of libraries of University of Ilorin, Kwara State University and Kwara State Polytechnic and Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin, Kwara State. Convenience sampling technique was used to select respondents based on their proximity, availability at the time of conducting the study and their willingness to participate in the study. Eventually, only 69 personnel of the public academic libraries understudied adequately filled and submitted the questionnaire used to obtain responses from them. The questionnaire was subjected to face validity where two experts peruse it and make necessary corrections. The copies of the questionnaire were administered by the researchers and three research assistants. Data obtained were analysed with tables, frequency counts, percentages and mean (\bar{x}).

Data Analysis

Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Options	F	%	
Library of respondents	UNILORIN Library	27	39.1
	KWASU Library	13	18.8
	Kwara Poly Library	23	33.3
	Kwara COED Library, Ilorin	6	8.7
	Total	69	100
Gender	Male	33	47.8
	Female	36	52.2
	Total	69	100
Age range	21 – 30 years	13	18.8
	31 – 40 years	22	31.9
	41 – 50 years	24	34.8
	51 – 60 years	8	11.6
	61 and above years	2	2.9
	Total	69	100
Category of staff	Professional	43	62.3
	Para-professional	16	23.2
	Non-professional	10	14.5
	Total	69	100
Academic qualification	“O” Level	4	5.8
	NCE	3	4.3
	ND	17	24.6
	HND	11	15.9
	BLIS	24	34.8
	MLIS	8	11.6
	Ph.D.	2	2.9
	Total	69	100

Work experience	1 – 5 years	23	33.3
	6 – 10 years	15	21.7
	11 – 15 years	18	26.1
	16 – 20 years	8	11.6
	21 and above years	5	7.2
	Total	69	100

Table 1 reveals that majority of the respondents were from University of Ilorin 27(39.1%), followed by Kwara Poly Library 23(33.3%), Kwasu Library 13(18.8%), while Kwara COED Ilorin Library has just 6(8.7%). Female respondents were majorly represented with 36(52.2%), while their male counterparts had 33(47.8%). Also, majority of the respondents' 24(34.8%) were within the age range of 41 – 50 years.

More so, 43 (62.3%) of the respondents were professionals, followed by para-professionals 16(23.2%) and non-professionals 10(14.5%). Furthermore, 24 (34.8%) respondent were BLIS holders, followed by ND 17(24.6%), HND 11(15.9%) and MLIS 8(11.6%). Finally, 23(33.3%) of the respondents had 1 – 5years work experience, followed by 11 - 15 years 18(26.1%), 6 – 10 years 15(21.7%) and 16 – 20 years 8(11.6%).

Table 2: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion practices fostered by leadership styles in public academic libraries in Kwara State, Nigeria

Options	Yes		No		M
	F	%	F	%	
Leadership styles practiced in my library allow people of minority groups to be hired	54	78.3	15	21.7	1.22
Leadership styles practiced in my library provide training opportunities for all personnel regardless of our discipline	59	85.5	10	14.5	1.14
Leadership styles practiced in my library allow me to participate in activities of my libraries	61	88.4	8	11.6	1.12
Leadership styles practiced in my library allow me to perform assigned activities without unnecessary influence	63	91.3	6	8.7	1.09
Leadership styles practiced in my library allow me to be treated according to my diverse needs	64	92.8	5	7.2	1.07
Leadership styles practiced in my library consider and respect my unique identities	64	92.8	5	7.2	1.07
Leadership styles practiced in my library allow me to demonstrate my expertise	65	94.2	4	5.8	1.06
Leadership styles practiced in my library allow me to apply my experience in supporting the library to achieve its goals	66	95.7	3	4.3	1.04
Leadership styles practiced in my library create a culture that embrace, respect, accept and value the diversity of the library personnel	66	95.7	3	4.3	1.04
Leadership styles practiced in my library allow me to engage in activities I will be useful	67	97.1	2	2.9	1.03

Table 2 reveals that majority of the respondents 67(97.1%) agreed that leadership styles practiced in my library allow me to engage in activities I will be useful, followed by 66(95.7%) who agreed that leadership styles practiced in my library create a culture that embrace, respect, accept and value the diversity of the library personnel and leadership styles practiced in my library allow me to apply my experience in supporting the library to achieve its goals, 65(94.2%) agreed that leadership styles practiced in my library allow me to demonstrate my expertise, 64(92.8%) agreed that leadership styles practiced in my library allow me to be treated according to my diverse needs and leadership styles practiced in my library consider and respect my unique identities, while leadership styles practiced in my library allow me to perform

assigned activities without unnecessary influence has 63(91.3%). However, leadership styles practiced in my library allow people of minority groups to be hired has the lowest frequency and percentage with 53(78.3%).

Table 3: Leadership styles fostering Diversity, Equity and Inclusion among personnel of public academic libraries in Kwara State, Nigeria

Options	SA		A		U		D		SD		M	Remark
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Democratic leadership style	38	55.1	22	31.9	3	4.3	4	5.8	2	2.9	4.30	SA
Visionary leadership style	34	49.3	27	39.1	3	4.3	4	5.8	1	1.4	4.29	SA
Transformational leadership style	30	43.5	30	43.5	6	8.7	3	4.3	0	0.0	4.26	SA
Strategic leadership style	28	40.6	31	44.9	7	10.1	3	4.3	0	0.0	4.22	SA
Purposeful leadership style	27	39.1	30	43.5	8	11.6	3	4.3	1	1.4	4.14	SA
Distributed leadership style	23	33.3	32	46.4	8	11.6	3	4.3	3	4.3	4.00	SA
Follower-focused leadership style	21	30.4	32	46.4	7	10.1	8	11.6	1	1.4	3.93	A
Agile leadership style	15	21.7	35	50.7	10	14.5	9	13.0	0	0.0	3.81	A
Transactional leadership style	16	23.2	32	46.4	8	11.6	9	13.0	4	5.8	3.68	A
Laissez-faire leadership style	15	21.7	35	50.7	6	8.7	4	5.8	9	13.0	3.62	A
Autocratic leadership style	9	13.0	33	47.8	4	5.8	14	20.3	9	13.0	3.28	A

Decision Rule: If mean (\bar{X}) is 1.0 – 1.74 = Strongly Disagree (SD); 1.75 – 2.49 = Disagree (D); 2.50 – 3.24 = Undecided (U); 3.25 – 3.99 = Agree (A); 4.0+ = Strongly Agree (SA).

Table 3 points out that the respondents strongly agreed that democratic leadership ($\bar{X} = 4.30$), visionary leadership ($\bar{X} = 4.29$), transformational leadership ($\bar{X} = 4.26$), strategic leadership ($\bar{X} = 4.22$), purposeful leadership ($\bar{X} = 4.14$) and distributed leadership ($\bar{X} = 4.00$) are the leadership styles fostering diversity, equity and inclusion among personnel of public academic libraries in Kwara State. This implies that democratic, visionary, transformational strategic, purposeful and distributed leaderships foster diversity, equity and inclusion among personnel of public academic libraries in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Table 4: Leadership qualities fostering Diversity, Equity and Inclusion among personnel of public academic libraries in Kwara State, Nigeria

Options	SA		A		U		D		SD		M	Remark
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
My library leaders have interest in library personnel	36	52.2	32	46.4	0	0.0	1	1.4	0	0.0	4.49	SA
My library leaders have the ability to manage team	40	58.0	24	34.8	3	4.3	1	1.4	1	1.4	4.46	SA
My library leaders are passionate about their works	37	53.6	29	42.0	1	1.4	1	1.4	1	1.4	4.45	SA
My library leaders are experienced librarians	39	56.5	23	33.3	3	4.3	4	5.8	0	0.0	4.41	SA
My library leaders are visionary leaders	31	44.9	35	50.7	2	2.9	1	1.4	0	0.0	4.39	SA

My library leaders know how to manage the library activities	32	46.4	30	43.5	7	10.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.36	SA
My library leaders are communicators	31	44.9	32	46.4	5	7.2	1	1.4	0	0.0	4.35	SA
My library leaders are honest	37	53.6	23	33.3	5	7.2	2	2.9	2	2.9	4.32	SA
My library leaders have confidence in themselves	31	44.9	28	40.6	7	10.1	2	2.9	1	1.4	4.25	SA
My library leaders have integrity	32	46.4	28	40.6	4	5.8	3	4.3	2	2.9	4.23	SA
My library leaders are change-agents	27	39.1	33	47.8	7	10.1	1	1.4	1	1.4	4.22	SA
My library leaders are role models	32	46.4	24	34.8	6	8.7	7	10.1	0	0.0	4.17	SA

Decision Rule: If mean (\bar{X}) is 1.0 – 1.74 = Strongly Disagree (SD); 1.75 – 2.49 = Disagree (D); 2.50 – 3.24 = Undecided (U); 3.25 – 3.99 = Agree (A); 4.0+ = Strongly Agree (SA).

Table 4 reveals that the respondents strongly agreed that the leadership qualities fostering diversity, equity and inclusion among personnel of public academic libraries in Kwara State are my leaders have interest in library personnel (\bar{X} = 4.49), have the ability to manage teams (\bar{X} = 4.46), passionate about their works (\bar{X} = 4.45), leaders are experienced librarians (\bar{X} = 4.41), leaders are visionary leaders (\bar{X} = 4.39), library leaders have the knowledge of managing library activities (\bar{X} = 4.36) leaders are communicators (\bar{X} = 4.35).

Table 5: How leadership styles foster Diversity, Equity and Inclusion among personnel of public academic libraries in Kwara State, Nigeria

Options	SA		A		U		D		SD		M	Remark
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
My library leaders encourage and motivate me to achieve more than my expectations	39	56.5	29	42.0	1	1.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.55	SA
My library leaders motivate me to be actively engaged with the users and try to meet their needs	38	55.1	29	42.0	2	2.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.52	SA
My library leaders share their vision with us in order to solicit our cooperation and support	36	52.2	30	43.5	2	2.9	1	1.4	0	0.0	4.46	SA
My library leaders create a supportive and inclusive environment in which our diversity is valued and respected	32	46.4	35	50.7	0	0.0	2	2.9	0	0.0	4.41	SA
My library leaders support the needs of all library personnel	36	52.2	28	40.6	3	4.3	0	0.0	2	2.9	4.39	SA
My library leaders set examples for all of us and allow us to participate in the achievement of the library shared goals	33	47.8	31	44.9	2	2.9	3	4.3	0	0.0	4.36	SA

My library leaders foster the culture of creativity and innovation regardless of our disciplines	34	49.3	29	42.0	3	4.3	2	2.9	1	1.4	4.35	SA
My library leaders boost my confidence level by offering assistance to build high level standards and values	27	39.7	31	45.6	10	14.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.25	SA

Decision Rule: If mean (\bar{X}) is 1.0 – 1.74 = Strongly Disagree (SD); 1.75 – 2.49 = Disagree (D); 2.50 – 3.24 = Undecided (U); 3.25 – 3.99 = Agree (A); 4.0+ = Strongly Agree (SA).

Table 5 indicates that the respondents strongly agreed that the ways leadership styles foster diversity, equity and inclusion among personnel of public academic libraries in Kwara State are through; encouragement and motivation to achieve more than expectations ($\bar{X} = 4.55$), motivation to be actively engaged with the users and trying to meet their needs ($\bar{X} = 4.52$), sharing of vision in order to solicit library personnel cooperation and support ($\bar{X} = 4.46$), creating a supportive and inclusive environment in which diversity is valued and respected ($\bar{X} = 4.41$), supporting the needs of all library personnel ($\bar{X} = 4.39$) and setting examples for all library personnel and allowing participation in the achievement of library shared goals ($\bar{X} = 4.36$).

Discussion of Findings

John C. Maxwell, a famous leadership coach says, “Everything rises and falls on leadership.” This shows the indispensability of leadership in every activity of all organisations. With respect to libraries, the results of Table 2 showed that leadership styles practiced in the public academic libraries understudied allow the respondents to be treated according to their diverse needs, consider and respect their unique identities and create a culture that embrace, respect, accept and value their diversity. This means that the leadership of the public academic libraries in Kwara State are conscious of protecting the dignity of their personnel by promoting and enhancing fair treatment and full participation of all of their personnel (APA, 2023).

Furthermore, it is interesting to discover that leadership styles practiced in public academic libraries in Kwara State are fostering different diversity, equity and inclusive missions. Since the value of diversity, equity and inclusivity for library personnel are essential to their perceptions of their works and their understanding of the need to be a part of the library success (Chelaru, 2023), this becomes unsurprising that the leadership styles practiced in the libraries in Kwara State allowed personnel to engage in activities they will be useful, demonstrate their expertise and apply their experience in supporting the library to achieve its goals.

Findings from the study substantiated the practices of leadership styles in public academic libraries in Kwara State. It affirmed that the leadership styles proposed by Olarongbe et al (2023), Aslam and Aslam (2019) as leadership approaches essential to the achievement of library goals in the 21st century are being deployed in public academic libraries understudied. By practicing these leadership styles, library leaders are collaborating, advocating, innovating, transforming, communicating, motivating, sharing their passion and transmitting it into their personnel and instilling values and work ethics in them.

A leadership style that is important to discuss its correlation with the results of Table 2 is distributed leadership. Sulyman, Taiwo and Abdulrahman (2023) argued that distributed leadership allow every library personnel to be regarded as leaders once they possess the expertise or qualities of contributing towards the achievement of the library goals. The results that leadership styles practiced in public academic libraries in Kwara State allow personnel to engage in activities they will be useful, demonstrate their expertise and apply their experience in supporting the library to achieve its goals, thus, revealed a strong practice of distributed leadership in the public academic libraries in Kwara State.

Findings from the study in such as my library leaders have the ability to manage team, my library leaders are visionary leaders and my library leaders are communicators are consistent with the views of Johnson and Potluri (2021) who stated that library leadership hinged on fostering diversity, equity and inclusion in the 21st century should be weaved around communication skills, ability to cast visions, galvanise the right resources and collaborate with the right people to achieve that vision.

Library leaders must see their personnel as the vehicles to building a diverse, equitable and inclusive library environment. The points that my library leaders are passionate about their works, my library leaders have interest in library personnel and my library leaders are passionate about their works affirmed the points of Martin (2018) and Yang (2023) who asserted that the future library leaders are expected to be people-first, visionary, change-agents, experienced librarians, role models and communicators.

The choice of the respondents that their library leaders encourage and motivate them to achieve more than their expectations indicate that transformational leadership style is in practice in the public academic libraries understudied. Among the leadership styles, transformational leadership is the most prominent for encouraging and motivating the personnel by allowing library leaders to create an intellectually stimulating working environment for their personnel by influencing the qualities of their ideas through individualized concentrations and using inspiration motivation to drive the productivity of their personnel.

Furthermore, some results of this Table are consistent with the respondents' choice in Table 4 that their library leaders have interest in library personnel. It affirms that the respondents desire leaders that is highly concerned about their welfare. A diverse, equitable and inclusive library leader is one that supports the needs of all library personnel, creates a supportive and inclusive environment in which diversity of personnel is valued and respected, and where no-one feels excluded (Band, 2021; Ashiq et al., 2021). Successful library leaders encourage and motivate their colleagues to achieve more than expectation and boost confidence level of the workers by offering assistance to build high level standards and values (Aslam & Aslam, 2019).

Conclusion

Leadership has become an essential element of all growing and developing libraries because it reflects the values of the people at the helms of affairs of those libraries and helps in building the libraries' credibility. This study confirms a strong presence of leadership practices in public academic libraries in Kwara State. The leadership styles have enabled the library leaders to create a culture that embrace, respect, accept and value the diversity of the library personnel to engage in activities they will be useful, demonstrate their skills and apply their experience in supporting the library to achieve its goals.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, this study, thus, recommend that:

1. *Leadership styles practiced in public academic libraries in Kwara State should be modified and tailored towards allowing people of minority groups to be hired. This can be achieved by making it a requirement in the recruitment of library personnel. Ensuring that the people of minority groups are hired in public academic libraries would reflect the sensitivity and intentionality of the library leaders to the building a diverse, equitable and inclusive library.*
2. *Agile leadership style should be harnessed by leaders of public academic libraries in Kwara State. This leadership style will drive a diverse, equitable and inclusive library by allowing people of diverse background to be in a library's team, entrusting the teams to organise themselves and make decisions that will contribute towards the achievement of the library's goals, mission and vision.*

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LEADERSHIP STYLE FOR INCLUSIVE LIBRARY SERVICE DELIVERY AMONGST UNIVERSITIES IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated Leadership Style for Inclusive Library Service delivery amongst Universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. Three objectives guided the study. The Study adopted a descriptive research design. The population of the study consists of Librarians and Library staff of the studied universities which is five hundred and seventy six (576). A Sample size of two hundred and thirty (230) was obtained using the Taro Yamani technique for determining sample size. The study revealed that inclusiveness is brought about by the sub variable of leadership style as indicated by the adjusted variable R^2 57% (0.57). Also, the study shows that the multiple regression analysis result for leadership style on inclusive library services indicates that transformational leadership which is the first variable has a positive effect on the inclusiveness of library service ($\beta=0.200$, $P=0.004<0.050$). It can also be seen that transactional leadership which is the second variable has a positive effect on the inclusiveness of library services ($\beta =0.007$, $P=0.004<0.050$). Finally, the last variable which is Laissez-affaire leadership doesn't have a significant effect on the inclusiveness of library services ($\beta=0.018$, $P=0.792 >0.050$). The study concluded that there is a need for the transactional leaders. The study thereby recommended that transactional leadership style should be adopted for inclusive library services among universities in Anambra State, Nigeria, since the leadership style focuses on the day-to-day operations of an organization, emphasizing structure, order, and the exchange of rewards and punishments to achieve specific goals which can be applicable in the library.

Keywords: Leadership Style, Inclusive Library Services Delivery, Universities, Anambra State

Introduction

The behavioral approaches used by leaders to inspire, motivate, and direct their subordinates can be described as Leadership Style. Also, putting into consideration how leaders carry out their plans and strategies to achieve certain goals while taking into stakeholder expectations as well as their team's well-being and security in the organization, firm or corporate environment. Leadership has long been a topic of interest among scholars, politicians, and others. The emergence of social institutions like government and organized religion, as well as the importance of individual leaders, suggests that there may be a social value in having 'leaders' who fulfill basic social functions (Zagoršek, 2020). It therefore implies that leadership is the process of influencing and guiding individuals or groups toward the achievement of common goals. Effective leaders inspire and motivate others, foster collaboration, and provide direction. Leadership is not solely based on authority but involves qualities such as vision, integrity, communication skills, and the ability to make sound decisions. Leadership styles can vary, ranging from authoritative and transactional to transformational and servant leadership.

Opeke (2018) also defined a leader as someone who looks beyond self-actualization and focuses on the perceived quality of dynamic connections between subordinates and supervisors. A leader is capable of shaping and sharing relationships that will allow libraries to provide high-quality services. Service delivery in Nigerian libraries is frequently judged by the quality of leadership. According to Ikonne, Madukoma, Akanmidu, (2021) Personal leadership attributes that drive inclusive leadership include self-awareness, self-control, motivation, empathy, and emotional intelligence. Leadership best practices are categorized into six zones: reflection, society, diversity, ingenuity, people, and business. Service delivery in Nigerian libraries is frequently judged by the quality of leadership. Several elements have been identified as influencing service delivery in libraries. These elements include the availability and accessibility of

information resources by users, technological adaptation, financial resources, and infrastructure. However, the philosophy, mission, and functions of these libraries have a significant impact on access to information resources and related services required for teaching and research. They have an impact on students and faculty's capacity to discover and successfully search for the most relevant information to their needs (Weiner, 2020).

Several studies have found variables contributing to inclusiveness and library engagement. Supervisor-subordinate communication, teamwork, unjust treatment, bad working circumstances, role clarity, motivation and reward system, ineffective leadership, and organizational culture used to enhance library inclusiveness. Inclusive leadership aims to treat individuals and groups fairly based on their unique features, rather than relying on stereotypes. Leadership involves setting a purpose and motivating others to follow suit with skill and dedication (Muhammad, 2017).

Adebayo (2015), identified major challenges to service delivery in the National Library of Nigeria and other library institutions in the country, including a lack of infrastructure, a lack of e-resources equipment, an insufficient number of qualified librarians, an erratic power supply, and a lack of funds, among many others. These characteristics may not be effective without a good organizational culture and leadership style in libraries. As a result, library leadership style may be a key element influencing service delivery in an institution. Several studies have found variables contributing to inclusiveness and library engagement. Research suggests that library users often struggle with ways and matter to use the library services for their academic pursuits. Supervisor-subordinate communication, teamwork, unjust treatment, bad working circumstances, role clarity, motivation and reward system, ineffective leadership, and organizational culture used to enhance library inclusiveness (Ogbah, 2018).

University libraries in Nigeria may not be immune to this negative condition based on leadership style. The foregoing highlights the need for excellent supervisor subordinate communication, team spirit, fair treatment, motivation, and effectiveness. A lack of effective leadership style can lead to lower library usage (Germano, 2020). Leadership and services are two interconnected concepts that play crucial roles in various aspects of organizations, communities, and societies. Effective leadership is essential for organizations to achieve their goals and objectives. This involves influencing employees to act in a way that increases their commitment to the organization. According to Wakabi (2016), effective leadership involves motivating and aligning subordinates to achieve organizational goals and vision. Effective leadership in the university library can impact employee performance.

Leadership style refers to how a leader provides guidance, implements plans, and motivates others. Services refer to the actions or activities performed to meet the needs and desires of others. In various contexts, services can be provided by individuals, organizations, or governments to address specific requirements, solve problems, or enhance the well-being of a community. Different leadership styles exist, including autocratic, democratic, transactional, transformational, and laissez-affaire. However, transformational, transactional and laissez-affaire are chosen for the study.

Problem Statement

The challenges and issues surrounding the accessibility, representation, and relevance of library resources and services for diverse and marginalized communities cannot be overemphasized. Libraries play a crucial role in providing information, education, and cultural enrichment, and it is essential that they cater to the needs of all members of the society. Libraries need to ensure that their collections, both physical and digital, represent the diversity of their communities. This includes materials that reflect different cultures, ethnicities, genders, abilities, and perspectives. Lack of representation can lead to a limited understanding of various experiences and can contribute to the marginalization of certain groups. Libraries leadership should be aware of cultural sensitivities and provide materials and programs that respect and reflect the values and traditions of diverse communities. This involves training library staff to be culturally competent and aware of potential biases in the selection and presentation of materials. Libraries should actively engage with their communities to understand their unique needs and preferences.

However, addressing these issues requires a commitment from library administrators, staff, and the broader community to foster an inclusive and welcoming library environment. This involves ongoing education, policy development, and collaboration with diverse community groups to ensure that libraries serve as accessible and supportive spaces for everyone which is anchored on leadership style. Inclusive services has been overlooked in terms of its relationship to employee outcomes, particularly employee engagement, despite the fact that inclusive leadership is critical in today's globalized world with very diverse workplaces. Therefore, upon this premises the study seeks to investigate leadership style and inclusive services in library among universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Study Objectives

The study is designed to examine the Leadership Style and Inclusive Library Services Among Universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. While specifically the purposes of the study are:

1. *To investigate the significance of transformational leadership style on inclusive library services in universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.*

2. *To evaluate the importance of transactional leadership style on inclusive library services in universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.*
3. *To examine the challenges of laissez-affaire leadership style on inclusive library services in universities in Anambra State, Nigeria.*

Research Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant difference between leadership style and inclusive library services in universities in Anambra State, Nigeria

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Drucker (2020) defines leadership as the raising of a man's vision to higher sights, or the rising of a man's performance to a higher standard by expanding his personality beyond its regular bounds. In librarianship, leadership refers to influencing and motivating subordinates to achieve specific goals. Opeke (2018) emphasizes the importance of achieving organizational goals at a low cost and on schedule. Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2014), effective leadership can impact employee trust and happiness, as well as organizational citizenship. Therefore, leadership is particularly crucial in institutions such as libraries. Leadership in Nigerian libraries should focus on setting a vision and sharing it with others, as well as delivering services using innovative technologies to meet users' information demands. Adopting a certain leadership style could help achieve this goal. This can be achieved through outreach programs, surveys, and partnerships with local organizations. By involving the community in decision-making processes, libraries can better tailor their services to diverse populations.

Managers in all businesses, regardless of size, must be accountable for ensuring effective operations. Incorporating an inclusive management style can improve employee motivation, engagement, and decision-making. However, it should not be used as an excuse for inaction (Herold, 2020). While inclusive leadership can enhance management effectiveness, it is not a substitute for excellent human resource management. Inclusive leadership is not an automatic process. Individuals who excel at building collaborative relationships, optimizing diverse talent, and influencing diverse stakeholders perform better. Inclusive services rendering style are strong advocates for diversity, recognizing the administrative case and championing initiatives that prioritize inclusion (Jacobs, 2015).

Increased heterogeneity can lead to disharmony in any administrative system. Managing diverse teams can be challenging, and if people fail to collaborate, they risk isolation. Organizations often want diversity among their target audience. Incorporating inclusive leadership can be challenging for library administrative leaders. According to Oladipo (2018), library leadership style plays a significant role in the success or failure of library administration.

Incorporating an inclusive leadership style can improve employee motivation, engagement, and decision-making. However, it should not be used as an excuse for inaction. While inclusive library services can enhance leadership effectiveness, it is not a substitute for excellent human resource management. Leadership style that deals with inclusive library services enhances diversity and fosters a sense of belonging for all. A forward-thinking executive recognizes the value of diversity and inclusion as a competitive advantage. Inclusive library services are essential in all universities or academic communities. A diverse team can approach a problem from multiple perspectives, reducing the time it takes to find a suitable solution and reducing recruitment on emerging innovation diversity (Dikko, Abdul., & Ghazali, 2017). Inclusive services are expected to increase employee engagement by fostering an ethical culture of respect, fairness, cooperation, accountability, ownership, and trust. Oyelude and Oladele (2014) stated that this turbulent global and national environment, inclusive leaders get the best out of their workers to contribute to the success of their enterprises. Inclusive services improve the organization's innovation and success by demonstrating adaptability, fostering relationships, and developing talent even in the library.

Daramola and Amos (2016), opined that the performance of the Nigerian university system is determined by its leadership and administration. The Nigerian government is working through accreditation agencies and other higher education groups to improve the quality and performance of Nigerian higher education institutions. Transformational leadership enhances employee loyalty to the business as well as services. Transformational leadership is strategic and entrepreneurial in nature, with a strong impact on individual employee innovation (Marmolejo, 2018).

Transactional leadership involves motivating and directing followers primarily through appealing to their own self-interest. The power of transactional leaders comes from their formal authority and responsibility in the organization. The main goal of the follower is to obey the instructions of the leader (Dayaram, 2020). Transactional leadership motivates and directs followers primarily by appealing to their self-interest. Transactional leaders have official authority and responsibilities within the organization, which gives them power (Elbaz, 2017). This leadership style may be effective in situations where organizational problems are straight forward and well-defined. Such leaders do not praise or disregard ideas that do not align with established plans and goals (Ikegune, & Awujola, 2017). Transactional leaders have been found to be quite

effective in guiding efficiency decisions that aim to reduce costs and increase productivity. Transactional leaders are very directive and action-oriented, and their relationships with followers are temporary and do not rely on emotional attachments (Ogbah, 2018).

The laissez-faire leadership style is characterized by a lack of responsibility and decision-making. Laissez-Faire does not contribute to the unit's work. This leadership style is tough to defend unless the subordinates are highly driven specialists, such as scientists. "Leaders let group members' make all decision "Laissez-faire leadership was found to be the only negative predictor of work satisfaction over a two-year timeframe (Wong & Giessner, 2018).

Laissez-faire leadership takes a hands-off attitude to leadership, allowing others to make decisions. While leaders continue to give their teams with the resources and tools they require to succeed, they are mostly removed from day-to-day operations. The term "laissez-faire" comes from French and means "letting people do whatever they want." This leadership approach is the polar opposite of micromanaging. Laissez-faire leaders empower their followers to make their own decisions and control their own workspaces (Al-Malki, & Juan 2018).

Empirical Review

Adebara & Okeoghene (2018) The Influence of Leadership style, Organizational justice and Human capital development on Employee commitment in university libraries in South-West Nigeria. The study used a survey research design. The survey included 684 librarians from 43 universities across six states in South-West Nigeria. A total enumeration was conducted to include all professional and para-professional library personnel. Data were collected using a validated questionnaire. A return rate of 72% was obtained. The data was examined using descriptive and inferential statistics, including linear and multiple regression. The study found that leadership style, organizational justice, and human capital development all had a substantial impact on employee commitment in university libraries ($F(3,488) = 82.89$, Adj $R^2=.333$, $p<0.05$). The study found that librarians' commitment to university libraries was impacted by obstacles such as unclear organizational policies (42%), lack of supervisor support (41%), denial of promotion and entitlements (39%), and limited career options (34%). The study found high levels of dedication among employees in university libraries. The study suggests that university library management can improve employee retention by offering benefits such regular promotions, salary increases, and career prospects.

Ikegune & Owojola (2017) empirically to investigated job satisfaction and leadership effectiveness among librarians in universities in South-west Nigeria. A questionnaire was utilized to collect information from 233 Academic Librarians, with 188 (80.7%) copies completed and returned. The acquired data was analyzed using frequency count, percentage, and analysis of variance (ANOVA) at the 0.05 threshold of significance using SPSS Version 21. The study found that there was low leadership effectiveness on job satisfaction of librarians at university libraries in South-west Nigeria ($Df= 186$, $N= 188$, $r= -.153$, $P<0.05$). Job duties, compensation, working environment, ability to conduct research, and so on all appear to be unfavourable. This deficiency is reflected in the inadequate leadership of the librarians, whose performance appears to be fair. The study also found no significant association between librarian job performance and leadership effectiveness in universities in South-West Nigeria. The null hypothesis was so accepted. To reduce the incidence of low leadership effectiveness on librarian job satisfaction in university libraries, the study recommended improving levels of adequate management support for librarians, adequate government funding, and organized training programs to acquire needed skills.

Methodology

The Study adopted a descriptive research design. Descriptive research is a type of study "aimed at casting light on current issues or challenges through a process of data collection that enables them to describe the situation more completely than was possible without employing this method." Descriptive studies, at their core, describe many features of a phenomenon. Descriptive research is commonly used to characterize the features and/or behaviors of a sample population (Manjunatha, 2018). The instrument of the study was structural designed questionnaire which serves as a tool for data collection. The population of the study consist of Librarians and all library staff in all the state and federal government owned universities in Anambra State which is about five hundred and seventy six in population size (576)(Field Survey, 2024). The study adopted the Taro Yamani Sampling technique which was formulated in 1967 (Adam, 2020).

$$\text{The formula: } n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n = Corrected sample size

1 = Constant

N = Population size

e = Acceptable margin of error

Note that:

N=567; and e=5% (0.05)

$$\text{Therefore, } n = \frac{576}{1 + 576 (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{576}{2.44}$$

=236.06

n=230 approximately

Out of the 230 questionnaire that was administered 214 was retrieved and valid for the analysis. Data collected for the study was analyzed using descriptive statistic; mean scores 2.50 benchmark which implies if responds in the table are less than mean score value 2.50 it was rejected hence insignificant while the hypotheses was tested with the help of correlation analysis using SPSS

The data from the distributed questionnaire was coded before analyzed using descriptive statistic; mean scores 2.50 performing regression and correlation analysis with SPSS software version 23. Regression analysis was used to determine the relationship between two or more variables and made predictions about one variable based on the other(s), whereas correlation was used to measure the strength.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1. Representing the Descriptive Statistic Mean Distribution of the Respondents

Descriptive Statistics Mean

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Leadership Style	2.68	1.419	214
Transformational leadership	3.80	1.456	214
Transactional leadership	3.53	1.691	214
Laissez-affaire leadership	1.33	1.047	214

The table 1 represents the mean distribution of each variable based on the respondent outcome in the structural distributed questionnaire. It was observed that the mean value obtained from leadership style is 2.68 is above the mean benchmark of 2.50 which shows that leadership style have significant effect on inclusiveness of library service in universities in Anambra State. While the mean value obtained from transformational leadership is 3.80 is higher than 2.50 mean benchmarks it therefore implies that is significant. Also, the mean value obtained from IS 3.53 which above 2.5 mean benchmark which indicates that it is significant. Furthermore, laissez-affaire leadership style mean value is 1.33 which is less than 2.50 mean benchmark, it therefore signifies that is not significant on inclusiveness of library service among tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

Table 2. Model Summary for Regression Analysis

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.203 ^a	.041	.57	1.399	.041	2.994	3	210	.032

a. Predictors: (Constant), Transformational leadership, Transactional leadership, Laissez-affaire leadership
Table 2 shows the extent to which the independent variable accounted for change on the dependent variable as shown on the model summary. It shows that inclusiveness is brought about by the sub variable of leadership style as indicated by the adjust variable R²57% (0.57).

Table 3. Analysis of Variance for the Regression

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	17.585	3	5.862	2.994	.032 ^b
	Residual	411.167	210	1.958		
	Total	428.752	213			

a. Dependent Variable: Leadership Styleb. Predictors: (Constant), Transformational leadership, Transactional leadership, Laissez-affaire leadership

Table 3 indicated F-Ratio if the overall regression model is good fit for the data or not. The table shows that leadership style variables predict inclusiveness of library services in tertiary institution in Anambra State, Nigeria. $F(3, 210) = 2.994$, P value is 0.032 which < 0.05 this implies that the regression model is good for the data.

Table 4 Multiple Regression Analysis of Leadership Style and Inclusive Library Services

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.112	.343		6.152	.000
	Transformational leadership (TFL)	.195	.067	.200	2.926	.004
	Transactional leadership (TSL)	.059	.057	.007	-1.028	.305
	Laissez-affaire leadership (LAL)	.024	.092	.018	.264	.792

a. Dependent Variable: Leadership Style

Table 4 shows the multiple regression analysis result for leadership style on inclusiveness of library services. The table shows that transformational leadership which is the first variable has positive effects on inclusiveness of library service ($\beta = 0.200$, $P = 0.004 < 0.050$). It can also be seen that Transactional leadership which is the second variable has positive effect on inclusiveness of library service ($\beta = 0.007$, $P = 0.004 < 0.050$). Finally, the last variable which is Laissez-affaire leadership doesn't have significant effect on inclusiveness of library service ($\beta = 0.018$, $P = 0.792 > 0.050$).

Table 5. Correlation Analysis of the Dimension of Library Leadership Style for Inclusive Library Services among Universities.

Dimensions		LS	TFL	TSL	LAL
Leadership Style	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (1-tailed) N	214			
Transformational leadership (TFL)	Pearson Correlation	.190**	1		
	Sig. (1-tailed) N	.003 214	214		
Transactional leadership (TSL)	Pearson Correlation	.044	.130*	1	
	Sig. (1-tailed) N	.263 214	.028 214	214	
Laissez-affaire leadership (LAL)	Pearson Correlation	.003	-.065	.030	1
	Sig. (1-tailed) N	.484 214	.172 214	.333 214	214

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed). In Table 5, the correlation analysis involved the indicators of leadership styles for inclusive library services in tertiary universities in Anambra State. The result of the correlation study reveal a substantial positive link between leadership style variables for inclusive library services universities in Anambra State. The findings indicated that Transformational leadership (TFL) correlate positively with inclusiveness of library service ($r=0.190, 0.01$).

The second variable also indicate that there is a positive correlation between Transactional leadership (TSL) with inclusiveness of library services ($r=0.044, 0.01$) and lastly with Transactional leadership (TSL) ($r=0.013, 0.01$)

Findings from the third variable Laissez-affaire leadership (LAL) shows that there was no positive correlation with inclusiveness of library service since value obtained from the result is $r = -0.065, 0.01$ and there was a positive correlation with Transactional leadership (TSL) ($r=.030, 0.01$).

Discussion of findings

The study found out that transformational leadership can be very effective for inclusiveness of library services since there was positively correlated which is in agreement with Bass & Riggio (2020), stated that transformational leadership explores different models, conceptualizations, and measures of leader interpersonal and influence "soft skills" that are so necessary for effective leadership. These include the communication skills, persuasion skills, political savvy and emotional abilities used by leaders to inspire, motivate, and move followers toward the accomplishment of goals. According to classic transformational leadership literature, transformational leaders guide and support employee awareness by enunciating a vision that raises employees' attention and consideration for the significance of company values, goals, and performance. Transformational leadership has the capability to improve the ability of psychological empowerment, also known as intrinsic motivation (Saleem Ali & Akhtar, 2016). Also, the second variable stated that there is a positive correlation between transactional leadership styles with inclusiveness of library service which is in support with Schoemaker, Heaton, & Teece, (2018), transactional leadership promotes efficiency with high performance in changing contexts which necessitates leaders in resolving company's basic contradiction between flexibility and efficiency that can be applicable in the library.

Also, on laissez-affaire leadership there was no positive correlation with inclusiveness for library services. Also, one of the primary disadvantages of laissez-faire leadership is a lack of clear direction and guidance. Without sufficient oversight, team members may lose focus or fail to match their activities with the organizational goals. Managers' leadership behaviors are crucial for successfully implementing workplace changes and minimizing their negative impact on employee well-being. However, the literature on leadership and organizational change management offers diverse perspectives on the potential effects of managers' laissez-faire leadership styles. Yang (2015) suggests that laissez-faire leadership can be viewed as an approach that respects and allows for others' ability in a given setting. In uncertain situations, a leader's negative capability, or ability to refrain from intervening, may be pose negative effects on the organization.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study was designed to investigate library Leadership Style for inclusive library services in universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study developed three (3) variables of leadership style: transformational leadership, transactional leadership and laissez-faire leadership. It was observed that the first two (2) can be highly effective for Inclusive library services in universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. While laissez-faire leadership was found to lack role clarity hence, can be applicable for Inclusiveness of Library Services among Universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. Therefore, the study recommend as follows:

1. *That transactional leadership should style be adopted for inclusive of library services in universities in Anambra State, Nigeria, since the leadership style focuses on the day-to-day operations of an organization, emphasizing structure, order, and the exchange of rewards and punishments to achieve specific goals which can be applicable in the library.*
2. *Transformational leadership style should be adopted as it provides clear expectations and guidelines for their team members. This helps create a structured work environment where everyone understands their roles and responsibilities*
3. *To avoid the potential of adding to library users and staff stress during library restructuring, tertiary institution must be mindful of laissez-faire leadership style.*

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LEVEL OF INCLUSIVENESS IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES TO THE DIFFERENTLY ABLED USERS IN AFRICAN LIBRARIES: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

For a long time, international organizations, professional library associations and national libraries have been advocating for equality and inclusive services to all. However, the level of inclusiveness in library and information services to users with disabilities in Africa and other developing countries is not well established. We conducted a systematic literature review to examine the extent to which library and information services are inclusive to people with disabilities in African libraries. The findings reveal some efforts to render services to people with different kinds of disabilities such as the use of assistive technologies, braille, easy-to-read materials and physical access to library buildings and facilities. However, the level of inclusiveness in library and information services to differently abled users in Africa is still low. Library and information services to some disabled groups such as persons with reading difficulties and cognitively disabled were less reported. In addition, the literature was biased in favor of academic libraries, particularly university libraries. These identified knowledge gaps call for more research towards advocating inclusiveness in library services to all groups of disabled users.

Keywords: Differently abled, especially abled, specially enabled, handicapped users; disabled users, user with disabilities, library services, information services

1. Introduction

One fundamental issue of an inclusive education and by extension an inclusive society is an inclusive library, which is made possible by the degree of accessibility of the library and information resources (Moirangthem & Phuritsabam, 2022). It is the role of the library to safeguard the right of every user including people with disabilities and provide them with equal access to information resources of their choice without bias (Gaur & Bhatt 2016). This agrees with Dr. S. R. Ranganathan's Second Law of Library Science "Every reader his/her book". And if truly the library is for all, there is then the need for the provision of equal access to information resources in the library to all users. In doing this, the disabled users are given a deep sense of belonging devoid of discrimination. This inclusiveness will assuage any agitations that might arise from the users with disabilities.

However, the disabled users have been shown to be a group of library users whose clientele had for a long time been untapped but recently receiving attention (Ayoung et. al, 2021). Findings have shown that the problem of physically accessing the library building is the major challenge to handicapped users (Bigdeli, 2009; Hill, 2013; [Momodu, 2013](#)) because most libraries are designed in a way that does not permit access to the handicap. Bigdeli (2009) went further to state that the interior design of the library does not offer the handicapped freedom of free movement even when they managed to get into the building.

This is especially so in Africa where many libraries are not accessible to handicapped user beyond the library's entrances, library staff have not acquired the relevant knowledge to address handicapped issues in library and information resources access in addition to lack of diverse media information for the handicapped users (Ayoung et. al, 2021). Echezona et. al, (2011) further listed the challenges librarians face in the provision of information services to disabled user to include:

- *The absence of inclusive library services: This means the inclusion of the peculiarities of the handicap users need in the planning of the library building.*
- *The perpetual negative mentality of librarians about the handicap users. Some librarians most times see handicap library users as a liability to the library. This very wrong belief makes it difficult for such librarians to render adequate and effective services to the users with disabilities.*
- *The challenge of library staff specifically and professionally trained to meet the information requirements of disabled users using kind words and observing empathy and patience in their services.*

The study focused on answering the main question as: what African libraries are doing to provide inclusive services to people with disabilities. Thus, the study is undertaken therefore to investigate on the various efforts made by the librarians to render equitable services to the library users with disabilities starting from the planning stages of the library building to the type of services rendered and attitude of library staff to the handicapped in the course of rendering such services.

2. Literature review

The library as an information store house should be available for every user and the librarian as a trained information professional with the requisite knowledge to search and deliver information resource materials to users is expected to serve all library users without bias. For equity and fairness all library users deserve equal treatment in the process of sourcing for information in the library.

The differently abled library users are special group of users with different types and degrees of impairment that require additional considerations to enable them fully access the library facilities like the able-bodied users. Since one of the main objectives of an inclusive library is the promotion of every user's right including disabled people need to access information, then every aspect of the library operations and services necessary to make the accessing of information easy and safe for people with disabilities should be put in place (Irvall & Nielsen, 2005). This starts from drawing a favorable policy, planning and designing the library building, access to library materials and services, acquisition of special library resources and the adoption of technologies that are friendly to specially enabled people (Hill, 2013).

The library administrative policy is important in shaping the operations and services of the library. A well-articulated policy lays a good foundation for the library and if duly implemented will enhance the inclusiveness of the library in the provision of information. Moirangthem and Phuritsabam (2022) agrees that the library administrative policy is necessary to streamline the library's role in providing the relevant services to different categories of library user. In a study, they discovered that out of sixteen libraries studied, only two (12.5%) has a drawn policy addressing the special peculiarities of the handicapped.

Apart from the policy, the planning of the library building should be done with the need of the differently abled users in mind, e.g. the inclusion of ramps for the crippled-on wheel chair to easily enter the library building not just from the outside but also ramps/elevators within the library building to enable them navigate/access other parts of the building if it is a storey building. Gaining physical access to the library is of fundamental importance since it precedes the actual library usage. Thus, the easy and safe accessibility to the library must be guaranteed for users (Machado & Oliveir, 2021). A study by Moirangthem and Phuritsabam (2022) found that out of sixteen libraries studied, 62.5% have doors wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs, 56.3% have doorstep ramps, 50% has hand rails, 25% has special packing space for the handicapped close to the library, 31.25% has elevators, only four (25%) have special toilets for the handicapped and 62.5% have CCTV camera. However, they reported that none of the libraries are "totally easily accessible overall.

It is also important to consider how the handicapped can access library materials and services e.g. access/retrieval of books/information materials from the shelf, especially from the upper part of the library shelf, e.g. for the crippled-on wheelchair. If there is no structure in place to assist them, then the library staff should be on hand to assist those that require such help. The problem of disabled users in accessing the library is worsened by the absence of these facilities and equipment necessary for accessing library materials. (Chaputula & Mapulanga, 2017). The work of Moirangthem & Phuritsabam (2022) confirmed the poor access to library resources by reporting that out of sixteen libraries studied, only five (31.25%) have wheelchair friendly adjustable tables and chairs, only six libraries (37.5%) have "clear and large print signage with pictograms for easy visibility, only one library (6.25%) "show signage label in Braille for the virtually challenged" and seven libraries (43.7%) has a separate area allocated for providing services to the differently abled.

The differently abled library users need information in special format. However, most libraries, especially in the developing countries do not provide information resources in these special formats for disabled people thereby making the access to information difficult (Chaptula and Mapulanga, 2017; Rugara, et.al. 2016; Majinge and Stilwell, 2014). A study of sixteen libraries by Moirangthem & Phuritsabam (2022) shows a poor special information resources collection where only seven libraries (43.7%) have few Braille books, three libraries (18.75%) have audio books or talking books and only one library (6.25%) has large print book (for the virtually challenged), Only four libraries (25%) provide a collection of sub-titles DVD and Videos for the hearing impaired and none of the libraries provides any resource for the speech impaired. For special services, they reported that only two libraries (12.5%) provide computer training for the special abled, two libraries (12.5%) provide sign language facility for speech impaired.

The peculiarities of people with disabilities also necessitates that the library staff should show empathy and willingness to attend to their needs in the library. However, in most cases, library staff sees special abled users as a burden and thus not willing to freely render assistance to them. There is thus the need to expose professional librarians to trainings on how to attend to the users with disabilities. To achieve an inclusive library service, there is an urgent need to create the necessary awareness among library professional on the standard recommended guidelines for equitable accessibility for the disabled user. Ayoung & Baada (2021) reported that while Upper East Region of Ghana libraries have made some provisions for the differently abled users, they are yet to implement the norms of the ratified Persons with disability Act of Ghana. Moirangthem and Phuritsabam (2022) discovered that out of sixteen libraries under study, only five (31.25%) followed some IFLA recommended standard guidelines for people with disabilities and only two libraries (12.5%) have staff trained specially to guide disabled people.

Information services provided by libraries to the special unabled have also not been effectual as a result of the lack of proper format of information and assistive equipment (Majinge and Stilwell, 2014). This

observation was confirmed by Moirangthem and Phuritsabam (2022) who stated that the sixteen libraries studied have little collection or no collections at all handicapped users friendly/assistive technological devices.

Understandably libraries are facing challenges in the process of providing inclusive library services that takes care of the special needs of the disabled users. Moirangthem & Phuritsabam (2022) listed some of these challenges as financial constraints, the lack of user with disabilities friendly/assistive technologies, lack of trained professional librarians to handle the needs of the disabled users. In addition, Echezona, Osadebe and Asogwa (2011) mentioned the negative mentality of librarians about the users with disabilities. A major problem of the failure of libraries to meet the peculiar needs of the disabled users is finance. Meeting the requirements of all calibers of the special enabled users is expensive and requires a firm financial commitment. Moirangthem and Phuritsabam (2022) reported that out of a total of sixteen libraries studied, only one (6.25%) has a special budget created for the provision of special services to disabled people.

3. Methodology

The researchers used PRISMA, a systematic review methodology and evidence-based guideline for conducting systematic studies (McKenzie et al., 2020). The researchers identified reliable databases and conducted an extensive literature search in Wiley Online Library, Science Direct, Google Scholar, and Web of Science. The aim was to search for recent research articles to be included in this study. In relation to the research question, the study parameters applied for search include quality, type, and year of the publication for the item to be included. Therefore, only peer-reviewed journal articles were selected for analysis. Gough et al. (2017), ascertained that selection of peer-reviewed works ensures quality and level of confidence for systematic review studies. We used Boolean operators for search as shown in Table 1. The test search terms include (“handicapped users” OR “disabled users” OR “user disabilities”) AND “library services” AND Africa. We applied quotation marks to each of the keywords in some databases to adopt different search engine characteristics. However, the search string could not yield good results in some databases. The search was conducted in March, obtained, and imported a total of 806 articles to Mendeley Desktop reference manager software (<https://www.mendeley.com>, accessed on 19 March 2024).

The researchers used search filter functionalities of the databases to narrow the search to articles published from 2013 to 2024 and peer-reviewed journal articles. Therefore, the exclusion criteria used in this study include year of publication below 2013, articles without full text or not written in English language. We filtered the duplicated articles using duplicate function in Mendeley desktop reference manager software. The following inclusion criteria were applied, (1) all groups of disabilities, (2) all types of library and information centers, and (3) all countries in Africa. Finally, the researchers selected 16 articles from seven African countries namely Nigeria, Tanzania, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Kenya, and Ghana. Table 1 below presents the selection process under PRISMA guidelines.

Table 1. Reviewed literature under PRISMA guideline

Country	Author(s)	Targeted disabled group	Targeted type of library	Key issues addressed by the article
Nigeria	(Ekwelem, 2013)	Visual impaired and physical disabilities	Academic library	The use of electronic resources by users with disabilities. The findings revealed that electronic resources favored visual impaired users than other disabled groups.
	(Igwebuike & Agbo, 2015)	Physical disabilities	All types of libraries	The role of information professionals in creating user-friendly environment for easy access and use of library by disabled library users.
	(Nkiko et al., 2020)	Physical disabilities	Public, national, and academic libraries	It investigated library facilities accessibility to users in wheelchair. The study found that library facilities were significantly inaccessible by physically challenged users.
	(Olanike Alabi & Christopher Okiki, 2023)	Visual impaired	Academic library	It assessed the preferred assistive technologies as a tool for accessing information by visual impaired users. COBRA, ZoomText, Supernova and Dragon Naturally Speaking were the most preferred assistive technologies (software). While handheld scanners and braille keyboards were preferred hardware assistive technologies.
	(Majinge & Stilwell, 2014)	Visual impaired and physical disabilities	Academic library	The study examined the physical layout of the library facilities and information resources available for visual impaired and users in wheelchairs. Despite the availability of services to these disabled groups, the services were neither inclusive nor universal.

Tanzania	(Majinge & Stilwell, 2015)	Visual impaired and physical disabilities	Academic library	The paper presents an investigation of library access to visual impaired and users in wheelchairs in academic libraries. Library facilities were inaccessible by users in wheelchairs and eventually hinder access to library resources
	(Kavishe & Isibika, 2018)	Physical disabilities	Academic library	It examined the accessibility of the library building by users in wheelchairs and concluded that the selected academic libraries were not accessible by the mentioned disabled group.
	(Onsinyo, 2018)	Visual impaired, hearing impaired and physical disabilities	Academic library	The study explored the challenges of accessing library and information services to people with disabilities and propose practical solutions for the problems.
Kenya	(Kaaria & Namande, 2021)	Physical disabilities	National library	It assessed information sources offered to physical challenged users, evaluate their needs, and level of satisfaction. The study observed that services provided to physical disabled users need to be improved.
	(Gikunju et al., 2023)	Visual impaired and physical disabilities	Academic library	The paper examined the status of library spaces and facilities available for serving disabled users in academic libraries. It was revealed that libraries provide services to people with disabilities, however, all stakeholders should play the role to meet their diverse needs.
South Africa	(Phukubje & Ngoepe, 2017)	All groups of disabilities	Academic library	It assessed the accessibility of library services to the university students with disabilities. Despite the availability of the special standard unit for disabled, the students with disabilities were not satisfied with the services.
	(Kaunda & Chizwina, 2021)	Visual impaired	Public library	The study focused on the potential of mini-libraries (mini-libs) as a solution for library users with print disabilities. The mini libs were found to be a solution, but training is required for both library staff and patrons.
Country	Author(s)	Targeted disabled group	Targeted type of library	Key issues addressed by the article
Ghana	(Addai-Wireko et al., 2020)	Visual impaired, hearing impaired and physical disabilities	Academic library	The paper investigated the challenges and availability of adoptive technologies in supporting people with disabilities. It revealed that there was a section and staff dedicated to serve disabled groups and some adoptive technologies that helped disabled to access some library services.
	(Ayoung et al., 2021)	Visual impaired, hearing impaired and physical disabilities	Academic library	This study examined the access to library services and facilities by disabled users following IFLA checklist of the standard and disability-friendly libraries.
Zimbabwe	(Rugara et al., 2016)	Visual impaired, hearing impaired and physical disabilities	Academic library	The paper assessed the extent to which academic libraries fulfill the standards of inclusive information services as the right to people with disability. The libraries hardly meet the standards of inclusivity in library and information services to disabled users.
Malawi	(Chaputula & Mapulanga, 2017)	Visual impaired and physical disabilities	Academic library and special library	It generally investigated the provision of library services to people with disabilities at a country level. The paper revealed poor access to library and information services to disabled users due to lack of equipment and less efforts to by the library to identify and meet their needs.

Table 2 above presents the most recent research published in the last 10 years (from 2013 to 2024) on the access to library and information services to people with disabilities in African libraries. Based on the selection criteria mentioned in the methodology, the researchers found 16 papers from seven African countries eligible for the review. These include four (4) papers from Nigeria, three (3) each from Tanzania and Kenya, two (2) each from South Africa, and Ghana, and one (1) each from Zimbabwe and Malawi.

4.2 Disabled persons inclusiveness in library and information services

The findings reveal that the research conducted on inclusiveness of disabled users in library and information services are biased to some disabled groups. Therefore, some disabled groups were much represented than others. Meanwhile, some disabled group such as people with reading difficulties and cognitively disabled were less presented in the research. However, some services to visually impaired such as easy-to-read, text-to-voice and others can help people with reading difficulties. Figure 1 shows the representation of disabled groups in research conducted in African libraries.

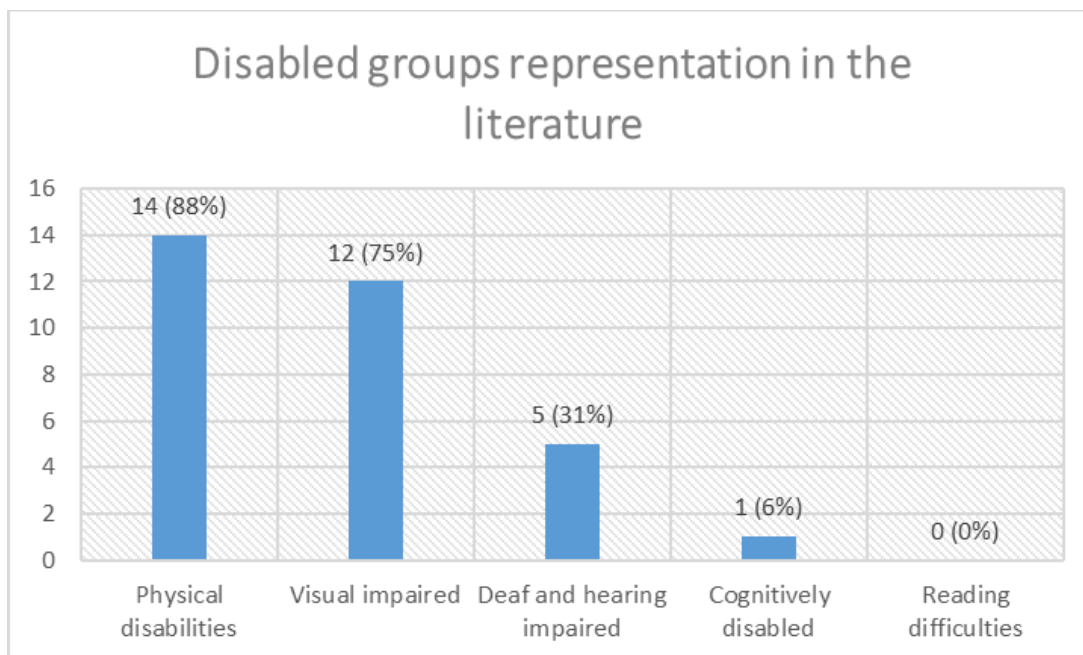


Figure 1. Disabled group representation in the analyzed literature

Figure 1 above shows that physical disabilities was the most represented group by 88% followed by visual impaired (75%). The deaf and hearing impaired, cognitively disabled, and people with reading difficulties were less represented by 31%, 6%, and 0% respectively. The findings implies that research studies conducted for inclusive library and information services were not inclusive.

4.3 Types of libraries and services to people with disabilities

The researchers also analyzed types of libraries represented in the selected literature. The selected research studies conducted could not equally represent all types of libraries. Figure 2 below shows that academic libraries particularly university libraries were highly represented by 63%. Other types of libraries were less represented as public and national libraries were represented by 14% each while special libraries were represented by 9%.

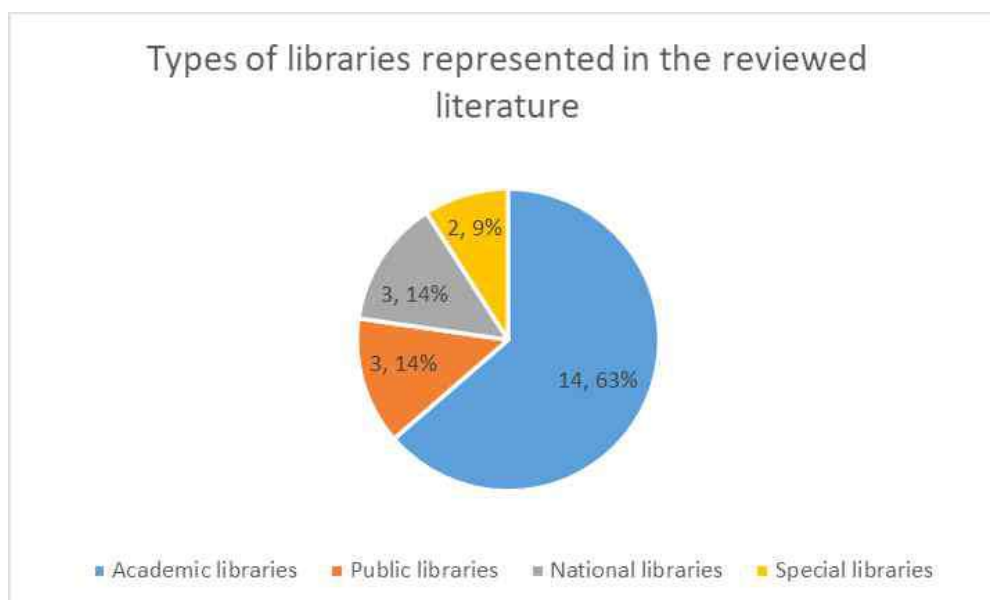


Figure 2. Types of libraries representation in the reviewed literature

The findings reveal that special, national, and public libraries were less covered in the research on the inclusiveness of people with disabilities in library and information services in Africa. Therefore, the situation on the facilities, services and needs of disabled users in special, national, and public libraries are not well established.

4.4 Library and information services to people with disabilities in Africa

The analyzed literature explored various needs of disabled users in Africa and the means to improve their inclusiveness in library and information services. The study found that only a few academic libraries

reported to have achieved inclusiveness and fulfill the standards of library services to disabled patrons based on IFLA checklist. However, the people with disabilities in those libraries were unsatisfied with the services for some reasons (Phukubje & Ngoepe, 2017). Many other libraries in Africa face various challenges of providing inclusive services to users with disabilities. The challenges reported include lack of equipment, insufficient budget to improve services to disabled groups, under staffing, lack of trained library professionals on service provisions to people with disabilities and lack of library commitment to identify and meet the needs of different disabled groups and address their challenges (Chaputula & Mapulanga, 2017; Kaunda & Chizwina, 2021). Moreover, various studies reported the challenge of physical access to library facilities and resources by people in wheelchairs or other mobility disabilities (Kaaria & Namande, 2021; Kavishe & Isibika, 2018; Majinge & Stilwell, 2015; Nkiko et al., 2020). The visual impaired were the favored group in library and information services in terms of resources and technology availability that meet their needs (Addai-Wireko et al., 2020; Ekwelem, 2013; Olanike Alabi & Christopher Okiki, 2023).

5. Discussion of the findings

In meeting the needs of disabled people, all types of impairment should be considered in all types of libraries. However, the study showed that the physical disability and the visual impaired were more represented than the deaf and hearing impaired, cognitively disabled and the reading difficulties (Kaaria & Namande, 2021; Kavishe & Isibika, 2018; Majinge & Stilwell, 2015; Nkiko et al., 2020). This bias may be due to fact that the physical disabilities and visual impaired are easily noticed physically and thus considered more serious and attract greater attention.

Libraries, be it public, academic, special or national are expected to cater for all categories of users without bias. The inclusiveness of people with disabilities in the use of libraries is for equity to all users regarding their information needs (Rugara et al., 2016). However, much awareness through research to the special needs of the disabled users in the sourcing of information was observed more in academic libraries than other types of libraries. This is understandable as the academic community is expected to create a level playing ground for all categories of students/users in their academic pursuit.

The analysed literature on the inclusiveness of the users with disabilities in library and information services showed a general low level of compliance among the various types of libraries with regards to the standards of library services to the disabled patrons based on IFLA checklist. The low level of inclusiveness ranges from lack of management policies to the planning/structure of the library buildings, to the lack of special library materials and services, to the lack of information in special format (Chaptula and Mapulanga, 2017; Rugara, et.al. 2016; Majinge and Stilwell, 2014). Furthermore, some libraries lacked proper format of information and assistive equipment (Moirangthem & Phuritsabam, 2022; Addai-Wireko et al., 2020).

Though a few academic libraries reported to have achieved the inclusiveness of disabled people, the special abled in these libraries were unsatisfied with their services indicating that these services do not meet their needs (Phukubje & Ngoepe, 2017). For example, there are situations where a library building is constructed with ramps for the crippled-on wheelchair to easily enter the library, but after some years when the foundation of the ramp has been ravaged by erosion, exposed and becomes inaccessible by handicapped library users on wheelchair, these ravaged ramps remain unattended to for years without repair making it difficult for the handicapped on wheelchair to enter the library. The desperate ones among them will have to beg another library user to help carry them into the library.

The failure of these libraries to meet the need of the disabled users may be attributed to the various challenges facing the libraries which include among others the financial constraint (Moirangthem & Phuritsabam, 2022), and the lack of trained professional librarians with the right attitude to cater for the information need of people with disabilities (Igwebuikwe & Agbo, 2015).

6. Conclusion

Disabled groups of people (physical disability, visually impaired, deaf and hearing impaired, cognitive disabled and reading difficulties) deserve all the right to full access to the library and information services. To achieve this, and based on their impairments, they need special attention around physical access to the library, special resources and services in useable formats, and special assistive technologies, in all types of libraries (public, academic, special and national) in addition to trained professional librarian with the right attitude. For the libraries to achieve the above, the library management need to articulate a well-drawn and implementable policy tailored to meeting the needs of the disabled users. This policy which should be implemented judiciously and sustained must be backed by adequate funding. Until this is done, there may not be a true inclusiveness of users with disabilities in library and information services in Africa

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LEVERAGING ON INCLUSION OF DIVERSITIES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF MICHAEL OKPARA UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE LIBRARY, UMUDIKE AND IMO STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, OWERRI.

By

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Abstract:

This pilot study investigates the strategy of inclusion of diversities in the management of academic libraries, for improved organizational performance, focusing on two selected universities; Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, and Imo State University, Owerri, libraries. The study aimed at assessing the current level of diversities in the selected universities, identifying the perceived benefits and challenges of inclusion of such for the management of the selected libraries, and explored strategies for leveraging the diversities to enhance management and improve organisational performance of academic libraries. A mixed- method was used to collect data through questionnaire, interviews, and observations. Descriptive statistics such as mean score, simple percentages and frequency counts were used to analyse the data. The findings reveal among others, that inclusion of diversity increases employee engagement/satisfaction, enhances the learning environment, and promotes better service delivery. It also found the early career librarians (55%) more inclusive with little support from mid-career (35%) and the late career librarians (10%). Identified challenges among others include stereotype/prejudice, and resources constraints. The researchers recommend strict implementation of the identified strategies for the inclusion of diversity, to harness and improve the benefit of diversity in the management of academic libraries.

Keywords: Diversities, Inclusion, Academic Libraries, Management of Libraries, Organisational performance

INTRODUCTION

Diversity is a natural human phenomenon, which naturally occurs in all spheres of human societies, including formal and informal workspaces, such as academic libraries. Diversity according to Gomez-Mejia, Balkin, and Cardy as cited by Inazu, Itsekor, Omonori, Olalere. Owansuan and Sulaiman, (2021) is human characteristic that makes people different from one another. ALA as cited by Bell (2021) defined diversity as the sum of the ways that people are both alike and different. In academic libraries, diversities occur within both the workforce populations and the user populations. Academic libraries are meant to serve primarily, the communities of the parent organization, which include the staff, (faculty, administrative and support), students (primary and linkage students), as well as other remote and authorized members of the university community. It is not farfetched to expect some level of diversity among such a heterogeneous community of users.

Inazu, Itsekor, Omonori, Olalere. Owansuan and Sulaiman, (2021) view diversity as an asset that managements of organizations could harness to benefit from the differences in age, gender, culture, ethnicity, educational background, sexual orientation and disability of individual members of the organization, to maximise the competitive advantage for accomplishment of organizational goals. According to Napp and Sabharwal (2020), diversity is an essential component of any civil society. It is more than a moral imperative; it is a global necessity; a natural occurrence, and to achieve diversity in substance as well as in form, libraries have to open their arms to all perspectives and experiences.

The concept of diversity in the management of academic libraries encompasses various dimensions beyond race and gender. Language differences, professional backgrounds, and ability diversity can all be harnessed to contribute to the advancement of knowledge and better service delivery. Each dimension of diversity brings unique viewpoints and insights that can enrich decision-making processes, foster innovation and improve service delivery. In the words of Kung, Fraser, and Winn (2020), although diverse groups may initially experience more conflict, they are usually better than homogeneous groups at recognizing issues and providing more creative solutions to problems.

The role of academic libraries has evolved significantly over the years, shifting from traditional information repositories, to dynamic hubs of learning, research, and community engagement. Central to this evolution, is the recognition of the importance of diversity and inclusion in library management, to reflect the diverse needs and perspectives of the academic community. Recognizing and harnessing the value that diverse perspectives, backgrounds and experiences bring to library operations and services is a strategic approach to enhancing organisational effectiveness and relevance. Academic libraries serve diverse user populations, with varied needs and expectations; embracing diversity in library management will position them for greater productivity.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) have become a core professional value in academic library management due to their nature of diverseness in collections, users' expectations and workforce. Following the mandate of academic libraries to serve the internal and external communities of their parent bodies, it is necessary to understand and develop a framework for the inclusion of diversities within the staff populations of the academic libraries, to improve the management of the libraries. This study explores the concept of leveraging the inclusion of diversity in the management of academic libraries, with focus on a pilot study conducted at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, and Imo State University, Owerri, Libraries. The two universities are both public universities (federal and state, respectively), located in Abia and Imo states respectively. The selection of the universities, was to adequately examine the levels of diversity in Federal and State established University Libraries.

Problem Statement

Despite efforts to promote inclusion of diversities in various sectors, including academic libraries, there remains a lack of comprehensive understanding and template, regarding the effective inclusion or integration of diversities of academic libraries, to enhance organisational effectiveness and promote equity and inclusion. This study seeks to address this gap. Some of the key issues are: to assess the extent of diversities in the staff populations in academic libraries, the perceived benefits of inclusion of existing diversities for management of academic libraries for improved library operations and performance, and adoptable strategies for inclusion of diversities.

It is important to address these issues, to develop an empirical template that can be both adopted and adapted to integrate diversities for efficient management of academic libraries.

Study Objectives:

The study aims to determine and promote the extent, benefits, challenges, and strategies of leveraging on inclusion of diversities of staff populations in the selected libraries, for the management of the libraries. More specifically, the study has the following objectives;

1. *To assess the extent of diversities within the staff population of MOUAU and IMSU libraries*
2. *To identify the perceived benefits of inclusion of the existing diversities, in the management of MOUAU and IMSU libraries*
3. *To determine challenges that mitigate the inclusion of diversities, in the management of MOUAU and IMSU libraries*
4. *To highlight strategies for inclusion of diversities in the management of MOUAU and IMSU libraries*

Literature Review

Diversity is a natural human phenomenon which predates formal communication or knowledge based study. As far back as the ages BC, the book of Genesis 4:5-7, records that humans attempted to build a tower of Babel to assess the Almighty God, and were rewarded with the diversification of their languages. The Bible posits that the essence of this act of God (linguistic diversity) was to effectively disable the humans from accomplishing their quest. This bible record is in fact, the very opposite of the direction in which diversity is viewed in the 21st century.

The concept of diversity refers to the presence of variety of personal and personality differences found among human populations. It is the variety of identities, backgrounds, perspectives, beliefs and experiences within a given context. Diversity is found among individuals in any demographic group or society such as the formal and informal work place. It encompasses differences in demographic characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, orientation, socioeconomic status, religion, disability status and cultural background. Given that diversity is inevitable among population groups, it becomes necessary that they be recognised and understood, with a view to harness them for societal good.

Inclusion is an organizational effort and practice in which different groups or individuals with different [diverse] backgrounds are culturally and socially recognised, accepted welcomed and equally treated. It is the intentional effort to aggregate diversities, by creating an environment or circumstances that enables individuals from diverse backgrounds to have a sense of value, respect and appreciation for themselves, as well as for one another. (Shore, Chung-Herrera, Dean, Ehrhart, Jung, Randel, and Singh, G. 2009). Inclusivity is a deliberate process of collaborations and partnerships among sets of special interests, and capacities which need to be recognized and protected, if they are to be harnessed. In Nigeria, government projects and efforts such as the Quota System, is viewed as an intentional inclusivity strategy to recognise and harness the socio-geographical diversities among citizens of the country.

Management is a global, multi-faceted concept which cuts across multiple disciplines. Management encompasses all the processes taken to apply the resources of an organization to achieve productivity. The processes include planning, organizing, directing, and controlling of economic resources (capital, labour, materials and information), with a view to achieve the goals and mission of the given organization. In the

context of academic libraries, management encompasses the functions of planning, budgeting, staffing, collection development, organization, dissemination, conservation and preservation of information sources.

Diversity and Inclusion in Academic Libraries

Libraries of all types, are pools of individuals of diverse gender, nationalities, ethnic, and cultural peculiarities, economic and social status, languages, perspectives, experiences, etc. The interesting phenomenon in relation to libraries is that diversities are present among both the user and staff populations. The academic library is a knowledge society comprised of complex landscape of human, information and other material resources. (Hathcock, 2015). This necessitates a diverse workforce to meet their diverse needs effectively (Robbins & Judge, 2018). Research has shown that diverse teams (work populations that are inclusive, rather than exclusive of diversities), are more creative, adaptable, and better equipped to solve complex problems (Page, 2018).

Diversities among staff members predisposes a range of perspectives, skills, and experiences that enrich organizational culture and enhance service delivery (Jaeger & Given, 2011). For example, librarians with diverse language skills can better serve linguistically diverse user communities, while staff members from different subject backgrounds can contribute to the development of inclusive programming and collections (Hoffmann & Ward, 2013).

Benefits of diversities in the management of academic libraries

Findings from previous studies on the subject, have indicated that the inclusion of diversity for the management of organizations is linked to numerous benefits for organizations, including academic libraries (Hong & Page, 2014). Morrison (2014) found that diverse leadership teams in academic libraries are more likely to adopt innovative practices, foster creativity, and make informed decisions that reflect the diverse perspectives of their user communities. Additionally, a diverse workforce can enhance the library's ability to connect with and serve a broader range of users, leading to improved user satisfaction and engagement (Smith, 2017).

Strategies for Inclusion of Diversities

In academic libraries, several strategies can be employed to leverage diversity in management effectively. Some of them include:

Diverse Recruitment and Hiring Practices: The inclusion of diversities in an organization begins with the enactment and Implementation of inclusive recruitment and hiring policies and practices to attract a diverse pool of candidates. The deliberate liberalization of employment criteria, to include diverse subject specializations, is a strategy that would yield a robust work force in the library.

Inclusive Leadership Development: A strategy to leverage inclusivity of diversities for the management of organizations is the provision of opportunities for leadership development for staff from underrepresented or minority groups, among the staff populations. Furthermore, the cultivation of inclusivity in planning the succession line, in organizations would create equity in the line of within the organization.

Promotion of Inclusive Organizational Culture: In a diverse work force, it is important to create a culture of inclusion through policies, procedures, and communication practices that are aimed to promote respect, equity, and belonging for all staff members. The essence is to to enhance organizational productivity.

Diversity Training and Education: Diversity and inclusivity are two sides of the same coin which when properly harnessed, create high level of organizational productivity. It is therefore beneficial to educate members of organizational populations of the concept, operationality, benefits, and challenges of inclusion of diversities for management in an organization.

Establishment of Diversity Committees or Task Forces: Given the inevitability of diversities among a work force, it is considered important to have a dedicated or specific team to manage and harness such diversities.

By adopting, adapting, and implementing any combinations of these strategies, academic libraries can create inclusive environments where diverse staff members are enabled to contribute their unique perspectives and talents to the organization's success.

Challenges of inclusivity for the management of academic libraries

Notwithstanding the potential benefits, achieving inclusivity, which is the inclusion and harnessing of diversities, in academic libraries can be challenging (Bach, 2016). Challenges to effective inclusivity to in the management of academic libraries cut across human resource, social, environmental, infrastructural,

and financial factors. Some of the challenges include: implicit bias, discrimination, and systemic inequalities. Gonzales, 2018, reiterates that factors such as resistance to change, lack of awareness or understanding of diversity issues, limited resources, and institutional barriers can hinder progress. Other

Poor organizational communication structure: This may be as a result of poor organizational policies and practice, linguistic factors, personal social idiosyncrasies, organizational illiteracy, which results in the neglect or negation of inclusivity initiatives.

Inherent Bias and Stereotypes: Diversities among individuals in diverse communities naturally come with inbuilt or ingrained perspectives that may present as biases and stereotypes. Such idiosyncrasy, if not well harnessed, can influence decision-making processes, including recruitment, hiring, promotion, and performance evaluation negatively, leading to inequitable outcomes for staff from underrepresented groups.

Lack of Diversity at Leadership Levels: Diversities among individuals in an organization, cuts across all strata of staff populations, including the leadership or management cadre of such organizations. The absence, or limited representation of diverse staff members in leadership positions can breed and perpetuate inequalities, limitations, marginalization of some diversities. (Herring, 2009).

Resistance to Change: Members of an organizational work force may prefer to hold on to personal perspectives and principles, and display an unhealthy resistance to inclusion initiatives from staff members, who may perceive them as threatening or unfair, as well as from institutional leaders who may be reluctant to allocate resources or prioritize diversity efforts.

Tokenism and Marginalization :: Tokenism, is a practice of formally making perfunctory or symbolic efforts to achieve a goal (of inclusivity) by making small, token gestures, especially to hire a minimal number of people from ethnically diverse or disadvantaged groups in order to give the appearance of equality or inclusivity within a workforce. (Oxford University Press, 2024). Marginalization is the act of placing a person in a position of lesser importance, influence or power; the state of being placed in such a position (Bruce, 2022). Flanagan, 2018, defines marginalization as the relegation or neglect of a specific group of people to the fringes of a given society.

Organizational Culture and Climate: Some Organizational cultures are stereotyped to prioritize homogeneity or perpetuate status quo along ethnic, tribal, religious, social or other lines and micro echelons. Such entrenched organizational template can create hostile environments for diverse staff members, hindering their professional growth and well-being (Nishii, 2013).

Lack of Resources and Support: Organizational Inclusivity initiatives require resources, including human, financial and materials. Limited resources, including funding, staff, and training opportunities, can pose barriers to implementing and sustaining inclusivity initiatives. (Thomas and Plaut, 2018).

To conclude, the inclusion of diversities in the management of academic libraries is a complex and multifaceted endeavour that requires intentional efforts to address systemic inequalities, promote inclusive practices, and leverage the full potential of diverse perspectives and experiences. By recognizing the benefits of diversity, understanding the challenges, and implementing effective strategies, academic libraries can create inclusive environments where all staff members are valued, empowered, and supported to contribute to organizational success.

Methodology

Scope of study

The scope of the study is the level, perceived benefits, challenges and strategies for leveraging existing diversities to enhance and improve the management of MOUAU, and IMSU libraries. Geographically, the study is limited to the selected libraries, and demographically to the Management cadre of librarians in the selected libraries.

Data Collection

The researchers adopted a mixed-methods approach, involving qualitative and quantitative designs. The location of the study is Abia, and Imo states, South East Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 20 management cadre librarians the selected libraries, 10, in each library, such as Heads of Units/ Sections/Divisions/Departments, and a total of which were purposively sampled. This group of respondents was deemed fit for the study, given that they are directly involved in the management of the selected libraries. A Four-point likert-type questionnaire rating scale was used for data collection. The collected data was analysed using mean score, frequency counts, and simple percentages. The decision rule

was to set mean score of 2.5 as criterion mean. Therefore every mean score of 2.5 and above was accepted, and mean scores below 2.5, were rejected.

Findings and Discussion

Current level of diversity in the management of academic libraries in IMSU and MOUAU.

Table 1: Summary of simple percentage of the current level of diversity in the management of academic libraries in IMSU and MOUAU?N=20

Diversity in Qualification	IMSU(%)	MOUAU (%)	Total (%)
NCE/ND	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
BLS/BSC	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
MLS/MSC	8(40)	4(20)	12(60)
Ph.D.	2(10)	6(30)	8(40)
Total			20(100)
Work Experience			
1-10 years	9(45)	2(10)	11(55)
11-20 years	1(5)	6(30)	7(35)
21 and above	0(0)	2(10)	2(10)
Total			20(100)
Gender			
Male	4(20)	5(25)	9(45)
Female	6(30)	5(25)	11(55)
Total			20(100)
Age			
18-25	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
26-35	5(25)	0(0)	5(25)
36-50	3(15)	4(20)	7(35)
50 and above	2(10)	6(30)	8(30)
Total			20(100)
State of Origin			
Abia	2(10)	5(25)	7(35)
Benue	0(0)	1(5)	1(5)
Enugu	1(5)	2(10)	3(15)
Imo	6(30)	2(10)	8(40)
Oyo	1(5)	0(0)	1(5)
Total			20(100)

Source: Field Survey 21/03/2024

Table 1 shows the current level of diversity in the two selected academic libraries. The data shows a well-diversified management team based on educational qualifications (MLS/MSC 60%, PhD 40%); experience (1-10 55%.11-20 35%, 21 & above 10%), gender (male 45%, female 55%); and age (26-35 25%, 36-50 35%, 50 & above 30%). A diversified team brings innovation, although they may have their differences but it is a ready tool for optimal organisational performance. This finding supports Inazu et.al (2021) who reported diversity as an asset that management could harness its benefits through differences in age, gender, cultural, ethnicity and educational background to maximise the competitive advantage for the accomplishment of library goals.

Perceived benefits of inclusion of diversity in the management of academic libraries for accomplishment of library goals

Table 2: Summary of mean statistics and simple percentage of perceived benefits of diversity in the management of academic libraries N=20

Decision Rule: Accept mean score of 2.5 and above as a factor; reject mean 2.5 below.

The data on Table 2 affirms that all the listed items were positively indicated as benefits of including diversity in the Management of academic libraries having each yielded mean scores above the accepted criterion mean of 2.5. However, increased employee engagement/satisfaction (3.6), enhanced learning environment (3.6), and better service delivery (3.6) were most indicated, as benefits of inclusion of diversity in the management of academic libraries. This finding reveals that inclusion of diversity in an academic library has a capacity to bring about a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning with personnel willing to deliver better and optimal services to users which is a primary goal of an academic library. It supports Inazu et.al (2021) who view diversity as an asset that management could harness to maximise the competitive advantage for accomplishment of library goals

S/N	Perceived Benefits	SA(%)	A(%)	D(%)	SD(%)	\bar{x} =	Remark
1	Increased employee engagement and satisfaction	11(55)	9(45)	0(0)	0(0)	3.6	Accepted
2	Enhanced learning environment	13(65)	6(30)	1(5)	0(0)	3.6	Accepted
3	Better service delivery	12(60)	8(40)		0(0)	3.6	Accepted
4	Enhanced problem-solving	11(55)	8(40)	1(5)	0(0)	3.5	Accepted
5	Enhanced reputation and image of the library	10(50)	8(40)	2(10)	0(0)	3.4	Accepted
6	Better understanding of diverse user needs	9(45)	11(55)	0(0)	0(0)	3.5	Accepted
7	Enhanced creativity and innovation	10(50)	10(10)	0(0)	0(0)	3.5	Accepted
8.	Broader Talent Pool	9(45)	10(50)	1(5)	0(0)	3.4	Accepted

Challenges of inclusivity for the management of academic libraries

Table 3: Summary of mean and simple percentage scores of challenges of inclusion of diversity in the Management of academic libraries? **Decision Rule:** Accept mean score of 2.5 and above as a factor; reject mean 2.5 below.

The data presented in table 3 shows that resistance to change (3.1), implicit bias (3.1), limited pool of diverse candidates (3.1), Lack of mentorship (3.0) and communication barriers (3.3) were all identified as challenges to diversity in the management of academic libraries. Stereotyping/prejudice (3.5), and resources constraints were the most accepted challenges to diversity in management of academic libraries. These challenges hinder the inclusion of diversity especially in the Management of the selected libraries. Managers of academic libraries must see these challenges as a stumbling block to the benefits of inclusion of diversity and embrace intentional strategies to overcome them. Gonzales(2018) reiterates that factors such as resistance to change, lack of awareness or understanding of diversity issues, limited resources, and institutional barriers can hinder progress. Gibney, Paris and Wells(2022) also stated that the primary obstacles to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in academic institutions include not only individual biases and interpersonal discrimination, but also unjust structural and systemic power structures.

S/ N	Challenges of diversity in management	SA(%)	A(%)	D(%)	SD(%)	\bar{x} =	Remark
1	Resistance to change	5(25)	12(6)	3(15)	0(0)	3.1	Accepted
2	Implicit bias	4(20)	14(7)	2(10)	0(0)	3.1	Accepted
3	Limited pool of diverse candidates	5(25)	13(6)	1(5)	1(5)	3.1	Accepted
4	Stereotyping and prejudice	10(50)	10(5)	0(0)	0(0)	3.5	Accepted
5	Resources constraints	8(40)	11(5)	1(5)	0(0)	3.4	Accepted
6	Lack of awareness and understanding by library managers	5(25)	11(5)	4(20)	0(0)	3.1	Accepted
7	Lack of mentorship, support and opportunities for growth of diverse talents	6(30)	10(3)	2(10)	2(10)	3.0	Accepted
8	Communication barriers	11(55)	5(25)	3(15)	1(5)	3.3	Accepted

Strategies for Inclusion of Diversities

Table 4: Summary of mean and simple percentage of strategies for leveraging on inclusion of diversity in the management of academic libraries

Decision Rule: Accept mean score of 2.5 and above as a factor; reject mean 2.5 below.

Table 4 shows results of the data analysis of collected for the strategies for leveraging inclusion of diversity in the Management of academic libraries. It can be deduced from the data, that all items on the table were positively indicated as strategies to leverage on the inclusion of diversity in the Management of academic libraries. This finding supports that of Inazu et.al (2021) that highlighted training and appropriate policies as way forward to handle diversity issues in academic libraries.

S/N	Strategies for leveraging diversity	SA(%)	A(%)	D(%)	SD(%)	\bar{x}	Remark
1	Inclusive hiring practices	7(35)	13(65)	0(0)	0(0)	3.4	Accepted
2	Diverse leadership representations	5(25)	12(60)	3(15)	0(0)	3.1	Accepted
3	Creating inclusive policies	5(25)	12(60)	3(15)	0(0)	3.1	Accepted
4	Collaboration and partnership	11(55)	9(45)	0(0)	0(0)	3.6	Accepted
5	Mentorship and support programs	9(45)	9(45)	2(10)	0(0)	3.6	Accepted
6	Cultural competence development	7(35)	13(65)	0(0)	0(0)	3.6	Accepted
7	Diversity training	8(40)	9(45)	1(5)	2(10)	3.2	Accepted

CONCLUSION

There is high level of inclusion of identified indices of diversity; educational qualification, work experience, gender, age, and state of origin, in the Management of MOUAAU and IMSU libraries.

Increased employee engagement/satisfaction, enhanced learning environment, and better service delivery are among the most indicated benefits of inclusion of diversity in the management of academic libraries.

Results indicated that resistance to change, implicit bias, limited pool of diverse candidates, lack of mentorship, and communication barriers are identified as challenges to leveraging on the inclusion of diversity in the Management of academic libraries. Others are, stereotyping/prejudice, and resources.

It can be deduced from the results of data analysis, that mentorship, and support programs, collaboration and partnerships, and development of cultural competencies are the most positively indicated strategies to leverage on the inclusion of diversity in the Management of academic libraries. The findings of the study have contributed to, and expanded the frontiers of knowledge on the subject of inclusivity and diversities for enhanced management of academic libraries.

Diversity is a global natural phenomenon and asset management tool that can be used to harness diverse potentials for effective service delivery in academic libraries, through inclusion. Inclusivity makes a work team feel accepted, and valued, and this can increase their work input, and satisfaction, creativity and innovation which in turn increase organisational performance.

Recommendations

The researchers recommend that the Managements of MOUAAU, and IMSU libraries should consolidate on the diversities present in the libraries with a view to expanding them.

The Managements of MOUAAU and IMSU libraries should also make concerted efforts to harness the identified benefits of inclusion of diversities among their workforce.

They should adopt and implement the workable strategies of inclusion, in order to mitigate the challenges.

Specifically, the Managements of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike and Imo State University, Owerri libraries, should leverage on the following strategies to improve and harness the management of the libraries;

- 1) Organizing mentorship, and support programs;
- 2) Initiating collaboration and partnerships among diverse staff;
- 3) Developing the cultural competencies of the diverse staff
- 4) Practicing inclusive hiring practices.

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LIBRARY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION INITIATIVES: THE LIBRARIANS AS DRIVING FORCE TO EQUITY

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Abstract

Libraries serve as vital spaces for intellectual exploration, education, and community engagement, with diversity and inclusion initiatives playing a crucial role in shaping equitable and inclusive environments within these institutions. This study investigated the roles of librarians as drivers of diversity and inclusion initiatives within Nigerian libraries, aiming to explore their motivations, challenges, strategies, and perceived impacts. Through a quantitative survey method, data were collected from 102 librarians across the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria, to gain insights into the drivers of diversity efforts, perceived impacts on library users and staff, strategies employed, challenges faced, and support systems needed by librarians. The findings revealed that professional ethics, personal growth, and a commitment to reflecting community diversity are the key motivators for librarians to engage in diversity and inclusion initiatives. Despite facing challenges such as administrative resistance and resource constraints, librarians employ strategies like diverse collection development and training to sustain diversity initiatives. Recommendations include the development of comprehensive diversity policies, resource allocation for support systems, increased awareness, collaboration with community organisations, and fostering an inclusive organisational culture. This study provides valuable directions for practitioners, policymakers, and stakeholders seeking to create more equitable and inclusive library environments in Nigeria and beyond.

Keywords: Diversity and Inclusion, Equity, Librarians, Libraries, Nigeria

Introduction

Libraries play pivotal roles as citadels of intellectual exploration, education, cultural preservation, and social integration. Due to the evolution of the landscape of information dissemination and knowledge acquisition, libraries have become catalysts for transformational changes, manifested through collections, activities, programmes and initiatives that emphasize inclusion and engagement with the diverse communities served. The imperative for diversity and inclusion in libraries arises from the recognition that libraries should reflect the rich sociocultural fabrics of the communities they serve; serving as multicultural hubs where individuals from diverse backgrounds converge for intellectual enrichment. Johnson (2018) notes that libraries serve as the connective tissue of a community, reflecting the varied interests and identities of its constituents. This underscores the urgency of understanding, developing programmes and addressing issues related to diversity and inclusion within library settings. According to the American Library Association (ALA), one of the cardinal functions of a good library is to create spaces that cater for the diversity of communities and foster inclusivity in library collections, services, and programmes (ALA, 2019).

Hathcock (2015) states that a diverse and inclusive library environment fosters a sense of belonging for patrons from various backgrounds, thereby enhancing accessibility to information and promoting equitable learning opportunities. As libraries embrace this ethos, librarians emerge as crucial agents of change, leading the charge towards a more equitable and inclusive information landscape. Librarians have gradually become actors whose commitment to equity is pursued through new and/or revised diversity and inclusion statements (Fu & Mahony, 2023). Through these statements, librarians have equipped themselves to act when community members experience bigotry or violence and promised to stand against phenomena that undermine respect for diversity and inclusion, such as ableism, racism, misogyny, and xenophobia (Bresnahan, 2022).

Librarians, as the primary architects of library spaces and custodians of information, are uniquely positioned to champion diversity and inclusion initiatives. Beyond traditional boundaries, the roles of librarians include advocacy, community engagement, and the curation of resources that reflect diverse perspectives. Librarians, through intentional efforts, hold a central place in providing equitable learning and work environment in which all voices, perspectives, and selves are valued, and reshaping the narrative by addressing bias in collection development, advocating for marginalized voices, and creating an environment where patrons from all backgrounds feel welcome (Ridenour, Hill, Waldman & Adkins, 2022; Farkas, 2017; Lee & Higgins, 2018). Thus, librarians are considered catalysts for change, propelling libraries toward a future characterized by equity and inclusivity. This research paper investigates the roles of librarians as driving forces for equity, particularly in engendering library diversity and inclusion initiatives in library institutions.

Statement of the Problem

Libraries play a crucial role in shaping the intellectual landscape of a society by providing access to diverse information resources and fostering an inclusive learning environment. In the Nigerian context, where there are diverse cultures, languages, and perspectives, the need for diversity and inclusion initiatives within libraries becomes significant. Moreover, there is an increased global awareness of the importance of diversity and inclusion in various sectors of human endeavours, including libraries. However, the extent to which the changes ushered in by this awareness are reflected and actively promoted within library settings remains under-explored. Despite the recognized importance of diversity and inclusion initiatives in fostering equity, there is a gap in understanding the specific role of librarians as driving forces behind such activities. Understanding the factors that influence the success or failure of diversity and inclusion initiatives undertaken by librarians is crucial for creating a more inclusive library environment that mirrors the diverse nature of Nigerian society.

The dearth of research addressing the intersection of library diversity and inclusion initiatives, particularly focusing on the librarians as agents of change, creates a vacuum for intellectual exploration. Existing literature provides limited insights into the availability, strategies, challenges, and successes that Nigerian librarians encounter in promoting diversity and inclusion within their institutions (Johnson, 2018; Adebayo et al., 2020). This research aims to address this gap by exploring the specific contributions of librarians to the development and implementation of diversity and inclusion initiatives within Nigerian libraries. Therefore, this study specifically seeks to examine the motivations, challenges, and strategies employed by librarians in Nigeria in spearheading diversity and inclusion initiatives within their libraries.

Research Questions

1. What motivates librarians in Nigerian libraries to champion diversity and inclusion initiatives within their institutions?
2. How do librarians perceive the impact of diversity and inclusion initiatives on library users, staff, and overall organisational culture in Nigerian libraries?
3. What strategies do Nigerian librarians employ to implement and sustain diversity and inclusion initiatives in their libraries?
4. What challenges do Nigerian librarians face in promoting diversity and inclusion in libraries?
5. What professional development opportunities and support systems do librarians in Nigeria need to enhance their effectiveness as advocates for diversity and inclusion?

Research Objectives

The main objective of this research is to critically examine how library diversity and inclusion initiatives are undertaken and promoted by librarians in Nigeria. The research is further guided by the following objectives:

1. Identifying what motivates librarians in Nigerian libraries to champion diversity and inclusion initiatives within their institutions;
2. Ascertaining how librarians perceive the impact of diversity and inclusion initiatives on library users, staff, and overall organisational culture in Nigerian libraries;
3. Finding out the strategies employed by Nigerian librarians to implement and sustain diversity and inclusion initiatives in their libraries;
4. Identifying the challenges faced by Nigerian librarians in promoting diversity and inclusion in libraries; and
5. Finding out the professional development opportunities and support systems needed by Nigerian librarians to enhance their effectiveness as advocates for diversity and inclusion.

Literature Review

Diversity and inclusion have become central themes in contemporary library discourse, reflecting a commitment to fostering equitable access to information and services for diverse user populations. As information hubs and community spaces, libraries play a crucial role in collecting and showcasing resources on different sociocultural backgrounds and perspectives within their user communities. The importance of diversity and inclusion in library settings is underscored by the foundational principles of intellectual freedom, equitable access, and the recognition that libraries should be welcoming spaces for everyone (Owusu-Ansah, 2005; American Library Association, 2014).

In recent years, there has been a growing acknowledgement of the need for intentional efforts to address inequalities and create inclusive environments within libraries in developed and developing societies. This recognition is grounded in the understanding that diverse and inclusive libraries better serve their communities and also contribute to the broader social goal of promoting equity and justice. This is one of the reasons why initiatives such as diverse collection development, culturally responsive programmes, and inclusive community engagement are increasingly seen as essential components of effective library services (Arroyo-Ramírez & Dennison, 2018; American Library Association, 2021). Moreover, the library

profession has undergone significant transformations, responding to societal changes and challenges which have necessitated the incorporation of diversity initiatives in library policies and the establishment of multicultural collections that provide insight into the progression of equity in libraries (Siegler, 2018).

The complexities that characterize diversity and inclusion initiatives globally require unique perceptual shifts in libraries, particularly as librarians and information professionals are crucial to informing the development, implementation, and assessment of equitable practices. The understanding and practical demonstration of concepts such as critical librarianship, intersectionality, and cultural competence serve to form the bedrock for pursuing and addressing equity issues within libraries (Hathcock, 2015; Jaeger & Subramaniam, 2018). Critical librarianship, for example, underscores the proactive role of librarians in identifying and challenging oppressive structures within their profession while advocating for broader social justice aims (Garcia & Grandbois, 2019). This concept emphasizes critical reflection on the power dynamics inherent in library systems and encourages librarians to actively engage in dismantling inequitable practices.

In the context of libraries, understanding intersectionality—which underscores the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, gender, class, and sexuality, and how these intersect to shape individuals' experiences and identities, can help to recognize and address the unique challenges faced by individuals from marginalized and underrepresented groups, ensuring that diversity and inclusion initiatives are truly inclusive and equitable (Crenshaw, 1991; Mays & Tomlinson, 2021; Carbadó, Crenshaw, Bilge, 2021; Nash, 2022; Hancock, & Neal, 2020). Cultural competence is yet another valuable concept which refers to the ability of librarians to understand, respect, and effectively interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds (American Library Association, 2018). By fostering cultural competence among library staff, libraries create environments that are welcoming and responsive to the needs of diverse communities, thereby promoting inclusivity and equity.

As libraries evolve to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse and interconnected society, the role of librarians in driving diversity and inclusion becomes paramount. As information custodians and community leaders, librarians wield substantial influence in shaping library policies, programmes and services that advocate diversity and inclusion, and manifestation of relevant initiatives in the library environment. Aguilar and Chávez (2019) state that librarians, through their multifaceted roles as educators, community connectors, and information providers, have the intellectual base and professional backgrounds to implement policies, programmes, and services that prioritize equity.

There are various factors motivating librarians to champion diversity and inclusion initiatives, providing valuable insights into the dynamics that drive their commitment to equity. Some of the motivating factors stem from a sense of social responsibility, a dedication to intellectual freedom, or a desire to reflect the diversity of the community served (Antonucci, 2014; Burke, 2020). A study by Collins and McCready (2016) identifies a sense of professional responsibility as a primary motivator, with librarians recognizing their role in promoting social justice within their profession. Similarly, findings from Dali et al. (2019) highlight the intrinsic value placed by librarians on creating inclusive spaces that reflect the diversity of their user communities as a motivation. Moreover, personal experiences such as individual encounters with discrimination or marginalization influence the drive by librarians to advocate and promote diversity and inclusion activities in libraries (Johnston & Henriksen, 2019).

However, librarians equally face challenges that inhibit the efforts to drive equity in engendering diversity and inclusion in the library environments; such as administrative resistance to change, resource constraints, and navigating complex institutional structures. Empirical evidence suggests that organisational resistance or lack of institutional support presents a significant barrier to diversity initiatives within libraries (Dali et al., 2019). Johnston and Henriksen (2019) indicate that navigating cultural competency and confronting implicit biases pose challenges for librarians engaged in diversity and inclusion advocacy. Additionally, the intersectionality of identities among librarians themselves leads to complexities, as individuals negotiate their positionalities while advocating for diverse representation and equitable practices (Collins & McCready, 2016); Zaid (2018) identifies other challenges faced by librarians including the lack of enabling policies on diversity and inclusion, budgetary constraints, inadequate capacity building plans, inappropriate design and layout of library buildings, and the lack of assistive technologies for library patrons with visual impairment.

Despite the challenges, the importance of embedding diversity and inclusion in the organisational culture of libraries cannot be overstated, especially through the proactive integration of diversity-related and inclusion goals into library mission statements and strategic plans (John & Yan, 2020). Smith et al. (2018) highlight the significance of leadership commitment and accountability in driving diversity efforts within libraries, emphasizing that both should practically be demonstrated through intentional recruitment and retention strategies in building diverse library teams. Furthermore, Garcia and Garcia (2017) identify inclusive hiring practices, targeted outreach programmes and mentorship initiatives as effective strategies for diversifying library staff. According to Gibson (2019), the dedication of library management to ongoing support and professional development opportunities is crucial to establishing and retaining diverse talent within library institutions.

Furthermore, the adoption of culturally responsive strategies and community collaborations has been identified as valuable mechanisms to strengthen library diversity and inclusion initiatives. Chen and Hsiao (2021) note that culturally tailored outreach efforts and multilingual services are effective in enhancing library relevance and accessibility to marginalized populations. Similarly, community partnerships and collaborative programmes aimed at creating inclusive library spaces are catalysts for diversity and inclusion (Wang & Warani, 2019).

The promulgation of diversity and inclusion initiatives by librarians stimulates enhanced user satisfaction and engagement, improved staff morale and productivity, and higher access and equity. A study by Kim and Lee (2021) found that libraries offering diverse collections and culturally responsive programmes have reported higher levels of user satisfaction among diverse patron groups. Similarly, there are indications that libraries implementing inclusive outreach activities have experienced increased user engagement and participation from marginalized communities. Also, when diversity and inclusion initiatives are practically reflected as an organisational culture, staff morale and productivity within libraries become significantly impacted. Rodriguez and Boyd (2018) highlight the positive correlation between inclusive organisational cultures and staff job satisfaction and retention rates. This underscores that libraries that foster diverse and inclusive work environments experience greater staff collaboration, innovation, and productivity.

Diversity and inclusion initiatives equally contribute to enhancing access and equity within library services and resources. Dali et al. (2020) demonstrate in their study that libraries offering inclusive services, such as accessible technologies and language assistance programmes, promote greater equity in information access for diverse user populations. Additionally, a library environment that comprises diverse library staff facilitates more inclusive and culturally sensitive interactions with users, thereby improving access for marginalized communities (Kim & Lee, 2021). Meanwhile, there is a knowledge gap in understanding the peculiarities of the librarians' experiences in Nigeria vis-à-vis how they drive equitable access to library and information services through diversity and inclusion activities.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a survey design of quantitative research methodology. A quantitative approach has been chosen for its suitability to provide systematic and numerical data that can be analysed to get valuable insights into patterns, trends, and relationships within the dataset vis-à-vis the motivations, challenges, and contributions of librarians to fostering equity through diversity and inclusion initiatives in libraries (Bryman, 2016). Questionnaire serves as the primary data collection instrument, which allows the researchers to systematically gather data from a geographically dispersed population of participants, i.e., librarians. Moreover, the questionnaire is more cost-effective and includes both closed-ended of Likert-scale format questions to facilitate quantitative analysis, as well as open-ended options to allow respondents to provide detailed responses and insights where necessary. The copies of the questionnaire were administered to librarians working in different library settings across Nigeria through online platforms, professional networks, and direct outreach. The questionnaire, administered electronically within 21 days, allows participants to complete it at their convenience. Some related studies have equally adopted the questionnaire survey for data collection, for example, in the exploration of leadership and advocacy for library services in diverse communities (Aguilar & Chávez, 2019); and in the examination of diversity and inclusion in libraries, with a focus on strategies for success (Budd, 2019).

The study adopts a descriptive analysis technique due to its alignment with the exploratory nature of the research, its ability to facilitate clear data presentation and interpretation, and its suitability for summarizing data from diverse respondents. Descriptive analysis allows for the examination of patterns and relationships within the data set, which according to Creswell and Creswell (2017) enhances the validity and reliability of study findings. Moreover, the descriptive analysis facilitates the concise presentation of findings, enabling the researchers to systematically organize and interpret the results. Given the diverse audience of this study, this analysis method allows for findings to be easily comprehended and applied in practice, contributing to the advancement of diversity and inclusion efforts within library settings. Therefore, this adoption of this method utilizes simple and straightforward statistical measures such as frequencies and percentages to make it easier for readers to understand the results (Aguilar & Chávez, 2019).

Research Findings

Demographic Information

The questionnaire was administered electronically and elicited 102 responses from librarians across the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. A breakdown of the response rates as shown in Figure 1 reveals that the South-South region has the highest response rate, 44 respondents (43.1%), while the North-East region has the lowest, 5 respondents (4.9%). Most of the respondents, 91 (89.2%), are librarians working in academic libraries, and the majority 53 (52%) have worked for more than 11 years.

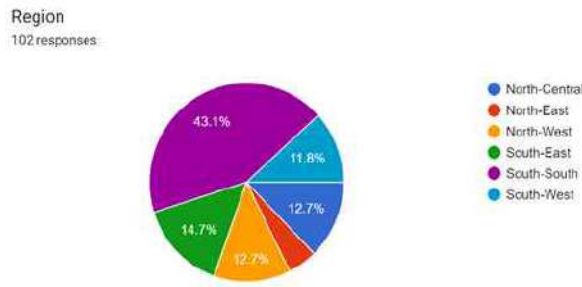


Figure 1: Respondents by geopolitical zones

Motivations for Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives in Libraries

Findings from the data collected also revealed that the three topmost factors that motivate librarians to be involved in diversity and inclusion initiatives were: professional ethics and values – 44 (43.1%), personal and professional growth, and personal values and beliefs – 43 (42.2%), respectively (Figure 2). Apart from some other personal views from respondents, the least motivating factors were legal and regulatory compliance – 14 (13.7%), positive organizational culture and professional recognition – 27 (26.5%), and commitment to social justice – 28 (27.5%)

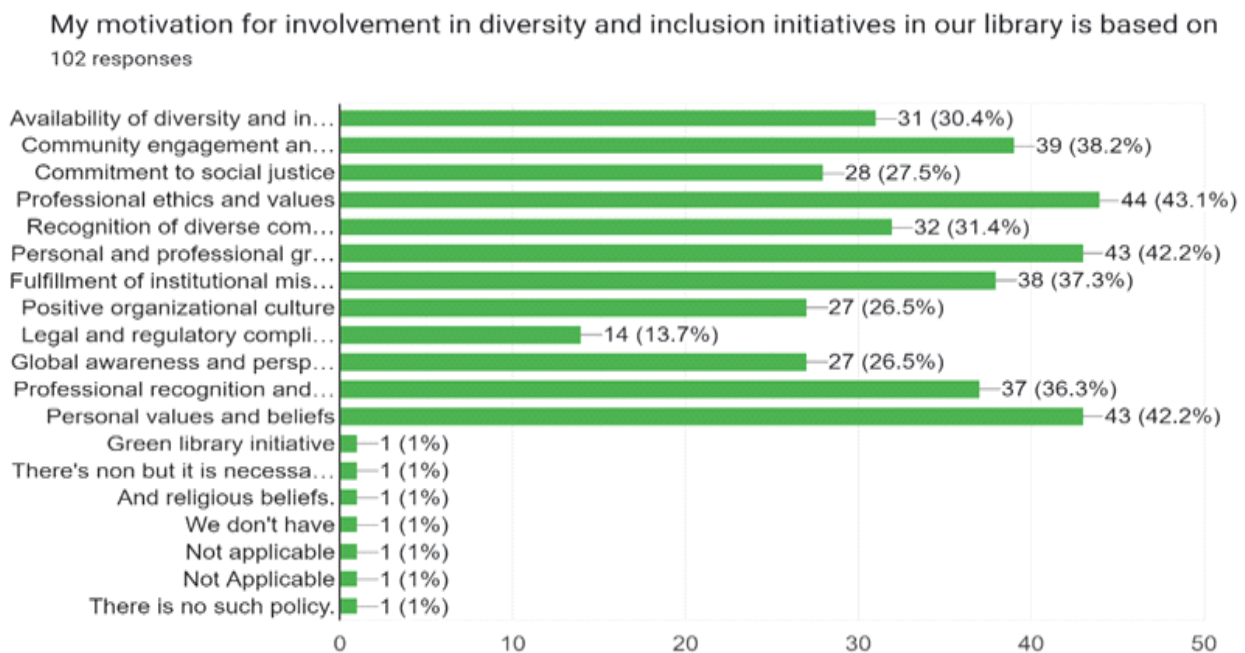


Figure 2: Factors motivating librarians to engage in diversity and inclusion initiatives in libraries

Perceived Impact of Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives on Library Users, Staff, and Organisational Culture in Nigerian Libraries

The impact of diversity and inclusion initiatives on meeting the diverse needs of users in Nigerian libraries was considered 'effective' by the majority of the respondents, 55 (53.9%); although 12 (11.8%) respondents were neutral, more than those who perceived the impact to be either 'ineffective' or 'very ineffective', 9 (8.8%) as shown in Figure 3.

The influence of diversity and inclusion initiatives on staff collaboration, communication, and overall teamwork within my library is

102 responses

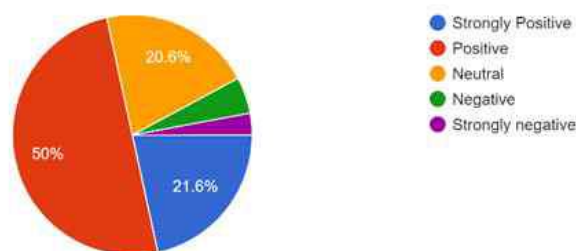


Figure 3: Impact of diversity and inclusion on staff

Also, half of the respondents, 51 (50%), agreed that the initiatives have a 'positive' influence on staff collaboration and teamwork, while 3 (2.9%) disclosed that the influence was 'strongly negative' (Fig. 4). Moreover, the study findings showed that while most respondents, 46 (45.1%) and 57 (55.9%), believe that the initiatives contribute 'to a moderate extent' in engendering an inclusive work environment and 'moderately' shape organisational culture in libraries, other 8 (7.8%) respondents believe it was 'to a small extent' or 'not at all' (Figure 5).

The impact of diversity and inclusion initiatives on meeting the diverse informational and cultural needs of users in my library is
102 responses

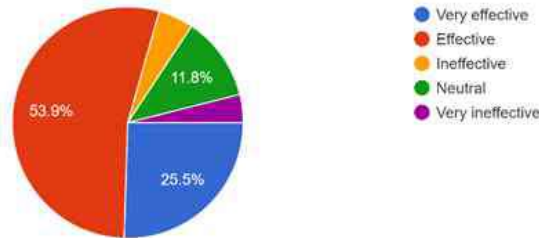


Figure 4: Influence of diversity and inclusion on staff collaboration

I perceive the impact of diversity and inclusion initiatives on the level of satisfaction and engagement of users from different demographic backgrounds in our library to be
102 responses

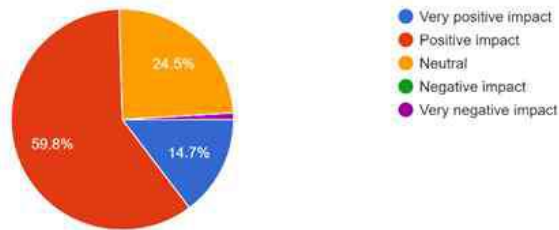


Figure 5: Contribution of diversity and inclusion to inclusive work environment

Additionally, the perception of most respondents, 61 (59.8%), was that diversity and inclusion initiatives had a 'positive' impact on the satisfaction and engagement of users from different backgrounds; only 1 (1%) respondent stated that it had 'very negative impact' (Figure 6).

I believe diversity and inclusion initiatives contribute to a positive and inclusive work environment for our library staff
102 responses



Figure 6: Perceived impact of diversity and inclusion on user's satisfaction and engagement

Strategies Employed to Implement and Sustain Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives

The research found that the three topmost strategies in the implementation and sustainability of diversity and inclusion initiatives were: diverse collection development – 56 (54.9%), training and professional development – 53 (52%), and accessibility to library settings and resources, including for persons with disabilities – 51 (50%). However, apart from respondents who had no specific strategies, only 21 (20.6%) of the respondents used 'celebration of diversity month/week' as a strategy to sustain diversity and inclusion in Nigerian libraries (Figure 7). The preference for diverse collections, professional development, and accessibility indicates an understanding that sustainable diversity and inclusion require embedding these values into the core operations and services of libraries. The less frequent use of celebratory events suggests that libraries might view these as less effective for the sustainability efforts compared to foundational changes in library practices and environments.

The strategies I employ to implement and sustain diversity and inclusion initiatives in our library include

102 responses

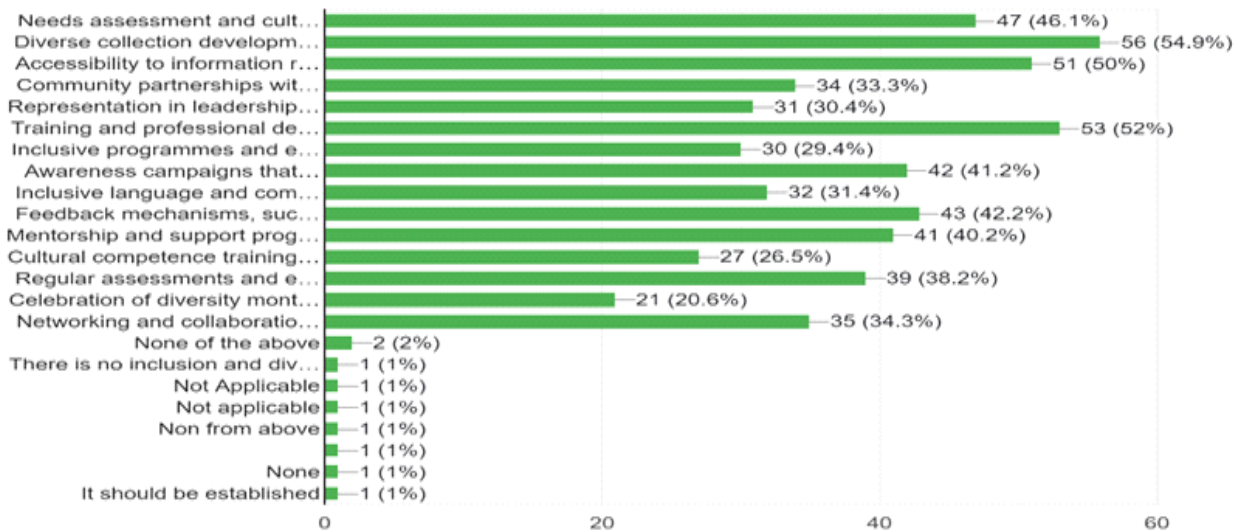


Figure 7: Strategies employed for the implementation and sustainability of diversity and inclusion

Challenges faced by Nigeria librarians in promoting diversity and inclusion

Even though 62 (60.8%) of the respondents claimed their libraries had diversity and inclusion policy and programme, the majority of them – 73 (71.6%) identified the 'lack of library policy on diversity and inclusion' as the biggest challenge faced by librarians in promoting diversity and inclusion in libraries. This challenge was followed by a 'lack of awareness and resistance to change', 56 (54.9%), while 26 (25.5%) chose 'navigating sociocultural sensitivities' as the least challenging (Figure 8).

Challenges I face in promoting diversity and inclusion in our library include

102 responses

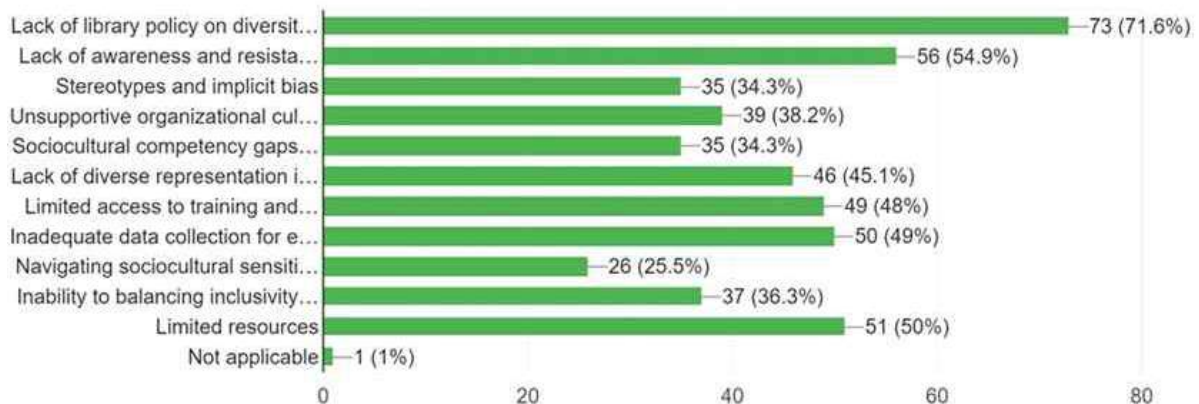


Figure 8: Challenges faced in the promotion of diversity and inclusion in libraries

The data reveals a significant disconnect between the presence of diversity and inclusion policies and their effective implementation in Nigerian libraries. Despite 60.8% of respondents indicating that their libraries have such policies and programs, a larger percentage (71.6%) cite the lack of a clear library policy on diversity and inclusion as the primary challenge. This suggests that existing policies may be inadequate, poorly communicated, or not actionable. Furthermore, over half of the respondents identify 'lack of awareness and resistance to change' as a major obstacle, highlighting significant attitudinal barriers among staff and patrons. The relatively lower concern for 'navigating sociocultural sensitivities' suggests that while cultural factors are recognized, they are not seen as formidable as the structural and attitudinal challenges. This indicates a need for more robust, clear, and effectively communicated policies, along with initiatives to raise awareness and foster a culture of inclusivity within libraries.

Professional development opportunities and support systems

The study, however, found that most respondents, 74 (72.5%) considered 'access to periodic training' as the most valuable support system needed by librarians in Nigeria to enhance their effectiveness as advocates for diversity and inclusion. Other respondents, 62 (60.8%) and 58 (56.9%) identified networking opportunities and professional development workshops as other important mechanisms to boost the involvement of librarians in promoting diversity and inclusion in Nigeria (Figure 9).

The finding indicates that Nigerian librarians see 'access to periodic training' as the most crucial support for enhancing their role in promoting diversity and inclusion, highlighting the need for ongoing education. Additionally, 'networking opportunities' and 'professional development workshops' are also valued, emphasizing the importance of continuous learning and peer support to effectively advocate for diversity and inclusion in their libraries.

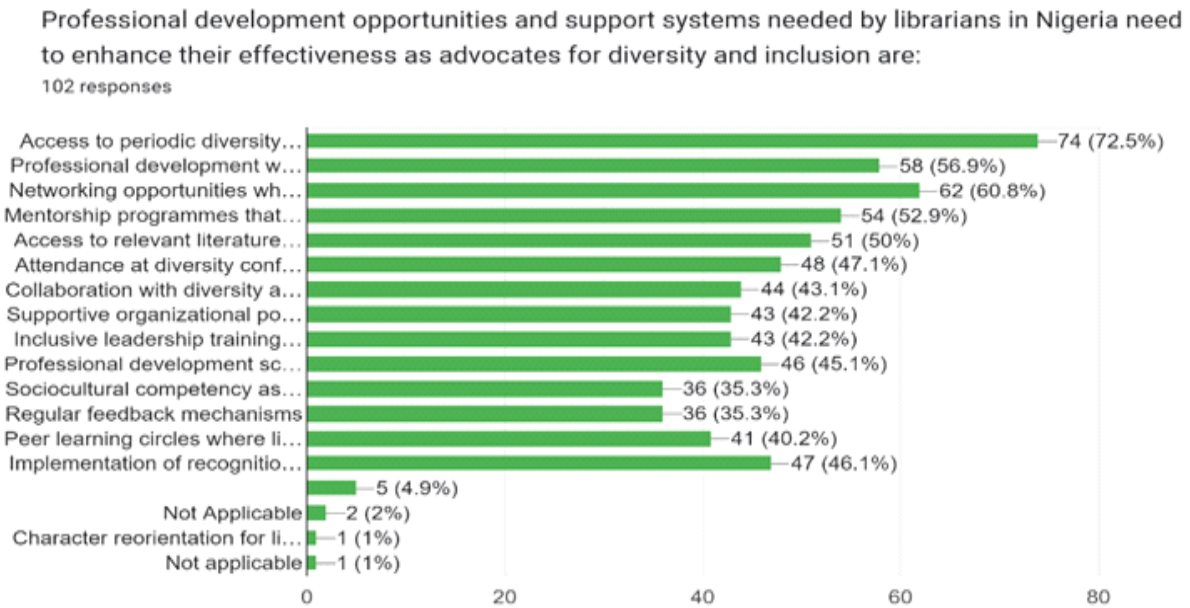
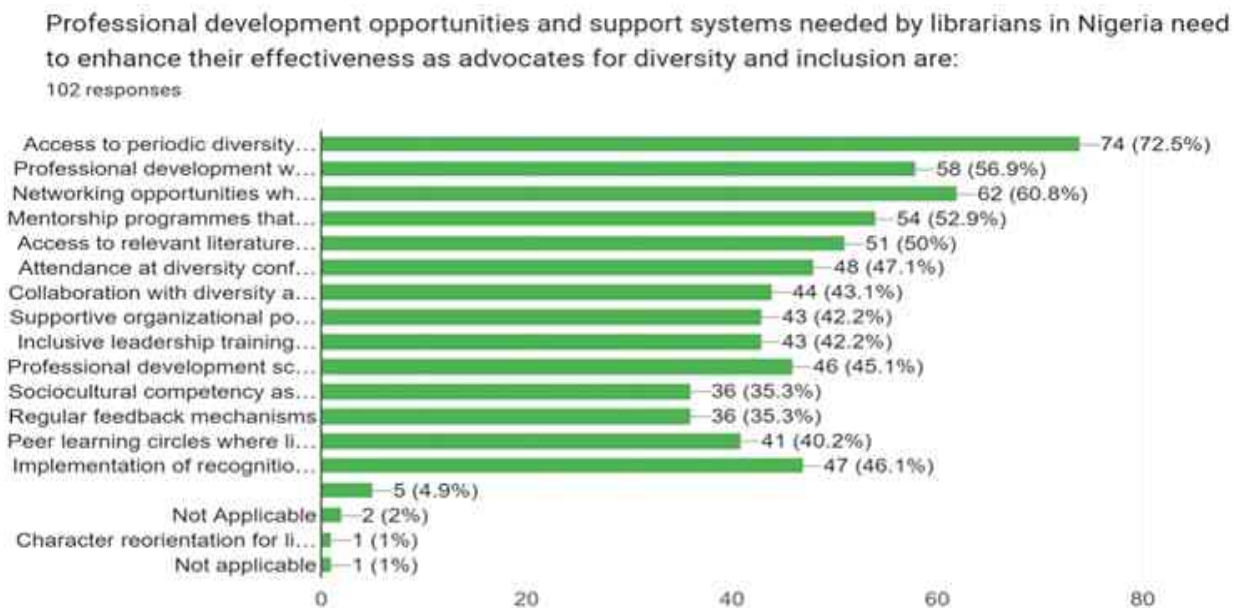


Figure 9: Development opportunities and support needed by librarians for effective diversity and inclusion



Discussion

The findings of this study shed light on the motivations, challenges, strategies, and perceived impacts of diversity and inclusion initiatives within Nigerian libraries, with a particular focus on the roles of librarians as driving forces behind equity. The discussion will delve into the implications of these findings, drawing on relevant literature to provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play within library settings in Nigeria.

Motivations for Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives

The results reveal that professional ethics and values, personal and professional growth, and personal values and beliefs are the top motivations driving librarians' involvement in diversity and inclusion initiatives. These findings are consistent with the study of Collins and McCready (2016) which indicated that librarians are driven by a sense of social responsibility and a commitment to promoting social justice within their profession. Librarians' intrinsic motivation to create inclusive spaces that reflect the diversity of their user communities underscores their dedication to fostering equitable access to information resources and services.

Perceived Impact of Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives

The study findings demonstrate that diversity and inclusion initiatives have a positive impact on meeting the diverse needs of users, easing accessibility to information resources and services, and shaping organisational culture within Nigerian libraries. Librarians who prioritize diversity and inclusion serve their communities more effectively and also contribute to broader social goals of promoting equity and justice. These findings align with existing literature highlighting the benefits of diverse and inclusive library environments, including enhanced user satisfaction, increased representation of underrepresented groups, and improved staff morale and productivity (Kim & Lee, 2021; Rodriguez & Boyd, 2018).

Strategies Employed to Implement and Sustain Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives

The study identifies diverse collection development, training and professional development, and accessibility to library settings and resources as the top strategies employed by librarians to implement and sustain diversity and inclusion initiatives. These findings underscore the importance of proactive measures in creating inclusive library environments, including the development of diverse collections, staff training on cultural competence, and ensuring physical and digital accessibility for all users (Garcia & Garcia, 2017). Furthermore, the limited use of celebration events such as diversity month/week highlights the need for librarians to explore additional avenues for promoting diversity and inclusion within Nigerian libraries.

Challenges Faced by Nigerian Librarians

Despite the perceived benefits of diversity and inclusion initiatives, Nigerian librarians face significant challenges in promoting equity within library settings. The lack of library policies on diversity and inclusion, coupled with resistance to change and navigating sociocultural sensitivities, emerges as part of the major barriers to the successful implementation of these initiatives. These identified challenges are in congruent with previous studies which highlighted institutional barriers and cultural complexities as factors limiting librarians in advocating for diversity and inclusion (Dali et al., 2019; Johnston & Henriksen, 2019). Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from library administrators, policymakers, and professional associations, such as the Nigeria Library Association (NLA), to provide support and resources for librarians engaged in diversity advocacy.

Professional Development Opportunities and Support Systems

The study findings underscore the importance of access to periodic training, networking opportunities, and professional development workshops as valuable support systems needed by librarians in Nigeria to enhance their effectiveness as advocates for diversity and inclusion. Furthermore, networking opportunities facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration among librarians, enabling them to exchange best practices and innovative strategies for advancing diversity and inclusion initiatives. These findings align with the view of Smith et al. (2018) who emphasized the role of ongoing training and professional development in fostering cultural competence and promoting inclusive practices within libraries.

Limitations of the Study

Despite the valuable insights gained from this research, it is important to acknowledge that there are limitations that may have influenced the findings and interpretation of the results. The study relied on a quantitative survey method, whereas the research could have benefitted from employing mixed or qualitative methods to provide a richer understanding of librarians' experiences and perceptions in driving equity initiatives within libraries. Additionally, the study's reliance on self-reported data from librarians may have introduced response bias or social desirability bias, wherein respondents may have provided answers that they perceived as socially acceptable or in line with perceived expectations. While efforts were made to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of responses, the researchers recognize the potential influence of bias on the validity of the results, particularly in sensitive areas such as perceived impacts of diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the pivotal roles of librarians as drivers of diversity and inclusion initiatives within Nigerian libraries. Through a quantitative survey method, the motivations, challenges, strategies, and perceived impacts of diversity and inclusion efforts spearheaded by librarians were explored. The findings reveal that while librarians are motivated by professional ethics, personal growth, and a commitment to reflecting the diversity of their communities, they face challenges such as administrative resistance, resource constraints, and navigating sociocultural sensitivities. Despite these challenges, librarians employ diverse strategies such as diverse collection development, training, and accessibility enhancements to sustain diversity and inclusion initiatives. However, the study also highlights the need for greater organisational support, policy frameworks, and professional development opportunities to empower librarians in their advocacy for equity and inclusivity in library settings. Moreover, fostering a culture of support, professional development, and collaboration among librarians is

essential for sustaining momentum in driving diversity and inclusion initiatives. Ultimately, this study has provided valuable insights for practitioners, policymakers, and stakeholders seeking to create more equitable and inclusive library environments in Nigeria, Africa and beyond.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research, five recommendations are made to enhance diversity and inclusion initiatives within Nigerian libraries. Firstly, there is a clear need for the development and implementation of comprehensive diversity and inclusion policies and programmes in libraries across the country. These policies should be tailored to address the unique sociocultural contexts of Nigerian communities and should encompass strategies for promoting equity, inclusivity, and cultural responsiveness within library services and operations. Secondly, library administrators and decision-makers should prioritize the allocation of resources and support systems to enable librarians to effectively champion diversity and inclusion initiatives. This includes investing in professional development opportunities, networking platforms, and mentorship programmes to enhance librarians' skills and capacity to promote diversity and inclusion. Thirdly, there is a critical need for increased awareness and advocacy efforts to promote the importance of diversity and inclusion within the library profession and among library stakeholders. This includes raising awareness about the benefits of diverse collections, inclusive programmes, and culturally sensitive services in meeting the needs of diverse user populations.

Fourthly, library associations such as the NLA, professional bodies, and academic institutions can play a crucial role in facilitating dialogue, training, and knowledge-sharing on diversity and inclusion best practices among librarians. Additionally, collaboration and partnership-building with community organisations, advocacy groups, and marginalized communities can strengthen librarians' efforts to address inequities and promote social justice within their spheres of influence. Lastly, library administrators should prioritize creating an organisational culture that values and supports diversity and inclusion initiatives. This entails fostering an inclusive work environment where librarians from diverse backgrounds feel respected, empowered, and valued for their contributions. Leadership commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion should be demonstrated through concrete actions, such as inclusive hiring practices, equitable resource allocation, and transparent decision-making processes. By fostering a culture of diversity and inclusion within libraries, administrators can create an enabling environment for librarians to effectively drive equity initiatives and create lasting positive change within their institutions and communities. The researchers believe that by adopting a holistic approach that encompasses policy development, capacity building, advocacy, and organisational change, librarians can serve as catalysts for social transformation and contribute to the advancement of a more equitable and inclusive society.

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LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICES FOR INCLUSIVE SERVICE DELIVERY TO PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

In all ages, information access has been a necessity for all library users including people that have physical or mental challenges. Or people that live in remote areas which make access to library and information access difficult if not impossible especially in the context of the developing continents. Inclusiveness, however, has always beckoned libraries and librarians as well as information scientists to design and render user-oriented services geared toward satisfying the information needs of every library patron. It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to address the issues around information access. Literature was reviewed on the IFLA Public Library Guideline, People with Disabilities, Language for People with Disabilities, Physical Resource Accessibility, Services and Programmes and Disability as Subject Matter in Cataloguing and Indexing Language. Descriptive research design was employed to this study. Data was gathered through secondary source of information. Using literature-based contents, thematic data gathered was analyzed qualitatively. Findings of the study reveal that. It also reviews that a good number of people with disabilities have had their information needs satisfied; while there is need to create and/or improve enabling environment for other disabled people to access information equitably with their able-bodied counterparts. The paper concludes with recommendations which include that library service policies for information access, especially for people with disabilities should be adopted and implemented by libraries and librarians in Nigeria.

Keywords: Library resources, Information accessibility, People with disability, Inclusive services, IFLA guidelines

Introduction

One of the aspects of and information science practice that is often neglected especially in the developing world is inclusive library resources and services. Inclusive library services, according to LinkedIn (2023) are those that respect and respond to the needs, preferences, and identities of all regular and potential users regardless of their age, race, gender, sexuality, disability, language, culture, religion, or socio-economic status. Inclusive library services aim to eliminate barriers, promote equity, and foster a sense of belonging and empowerment for everyone who interacts with the library

As part of human experience, there exist approximately 15% of people around the world who have physical or cognitive impairments that limit their ability to perform one or more important functions (WHO, 2014). The interaction between these impairments and barriers in the environment is defined as disability (UN Convention 2006). It is a category that anyone can enter as life circumstances change; some activists highlight this fact by referring to people without disabilities as “temporarily able-bodied” (Longmore 2003). Again, Koford (2018) asserts that people with disabilities are almost certainly present in any community served by libraries or other information institutions.

Information professionals believe strongly in equity of access. The notion that resources should be available to everyone in a community is a core ethical principle of information professions. In practice, however, institutions often fall short of the accessibility ideal for a variety of reasons: finances, competing priorities for time and attention, attitudinal barriers, and lack of awareness.

This paper examines one such technology; helping users to find information in ways that “flatten” language barriers. It also discusses the languages and terms that are applicable to people with disabilities with an attempt to decipher the acceptable terms from that of the commonly used terms in the society.

Literature Review

The IFLA Public Library Guideline

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) Public Library Guideline (2010) has in its article 1.6 Access for all, which states thus:

“A fundamental principle of the public library is that its service must be available to all and not directed to one group in the community to the exclusion of others. Provision should be made to ensure services are equally available to minority groups who for some reason are not able to use the mainstream services, for example, linguistic minorities, people with physical and sensory disabilities or those living in remote communities who are unable to reach library buildings. The level of funding, development of services, the design of libraries and opening hours should be planned with the concept of universal access as a basic principle.” [11]

It further stated that:

“The development of collections should also be based on the principle of access for all and include access to formats appropriate to specific client groups, for example, Braille and talking books for visually impaired people. Information and communications technology (ICT) should be used to allow access to the library's collections and those of other information sources publicly available on the Internet, from within the library or from remote sites”[p.11].

Again, in their “Services to special customer groups”, the IFLA Public Library Service Guidelines (2010) includes, among others:

- Special equipment and reading materials for those with physical and sensory disabilities, e.g., hearing impaired and visually impaired people.
- Special materials for people with learning, difficulties, e.g., easy-to-read materials and multimedia.

Also it states that services for people with special needs can be enhanced by the use of new technology, for example, speech synthesizers for the visually impaired. It is based on the aforementioned that Ahamefuna and Chimah (2024) recommend that operational policies of libraries in Nigeria should be reworked to accommodate policies that will facilitate access and use of the library by the physically challenged persons.

People with Disabilities

A disability is any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions) (Matilde et al., 2022). As earlier observed by Koford (2018), people with disabilities have made important gains in asserting their right to live, work, and play alongside others in their communities. Laws in many countries have affirmed the idea that social institutions and public spaces should be accessible to all. However, people with disabilities are still socially and economically marginalized. They face barriers to full participation in education, public life, and the workforce. Libraries, museums, websites, and other sources of organized information can be empowering resources for this underserved group; they also have the potential to contain barriers to access, reinforcing marginalization and isolation.

Types of Disabilities

There are many different kinds of disability. Some broad categories of disability according to Koford (2018) are:

- Mobility disabilities
- Sensory disabilities
- Cognitive disabilities
- Learning disabilities
- Mental illness

Many disabilities change in severity and expression over time. Some people experience multiple disabilities. Many disabilities are “invisible”; arthritis, epilepsy. Learning disabilities, and many more are not apparent to an outside observer. In many cases, the best way to learn about what people need is to ask. A great deal of the current literature on accessibility of information institutions emphasizes the importance of consulting with people with disabilities (Koford, 2018).

Print Disabilities

The category of print disabilities is convenient when discussing disability in relation to libraries and information. Print disabilities are any disabilities that affect a person's ability to read standard print and can include blindness, low vision, some learning disabilities, and some cognitive disabilities. The category includes people who have difficulty holding a book or turning pages. The term “print disabled” was coined by George Kerscher in the late 1980s (Reading Rights Coalition, 2014). Ways for print-disabled people to access books and articles include magnification, change in font, text-to-speech technologies, audiobooks, and Braille.

Language for People with Disabilities

Among people with disabilities, as among many historically marginalized groups, language and labels are taken seriously. Words are understood as vehicles for social power that can either enforce or subvert oppressive structures. Historically, people with disabilities have been given many of which strike the modern reader as dehumanizing: invalids, cripples, freaks, and the insane. In the 1980s, the people-first language movement grew out of a concern about the dehumanizing nature of much of the language used to describe people with disabilities (Disability is Natural, 2014). Advocates of people-first language promoted the use of words and phrases that emphasize the person rather than the disability. The American Psychology Association's "Guidelines for Non-Handicapping Language in APA Journals" (APA, 1992) explains key principles of people-first language. Examples of preferred language include "blind people" rather than "the blind"; "people who have epilepsy" rather than "epileptics"; and "people with disabilities" rather than "disabled people". Terms with superfluous negative overtones, like "a victim of . . .", "afflicted by . . .", or "confined to a wheelchair", are discouraged.

Person-first language is not universally embraced; there is ongoing debate about it within the disability community. Especially in the United Kingdom, writers and activists tend to use "disabled people" rather than "people with disabilities". Many in the autistic and blind communities also embrace identity-first language. Those who use identity-first language often view it as less linguistically cumbersome and as a way to assert their social and political identity (Schur et al, 2013).

In another example of the significance of language, many Deaf people capitalize the term to denote Deafness as a culture, while the term deafness with a lowercase "d" describes the physical condition. Hard-of-hearing is often used to describe the condition of partial hearing loss (NADCC 2014). Some writers reject the term "hearing impaired": Lane (1992) writes:

"The label has embedded with it the infirmity model that legitimates that establishment; and it exists only in opposition to hearing; in this it is like 'non-men' as a label for women, 'non-white' as a label for people of color, or 'sexually impaired' as a label for gays". Others, in contrast, find "impairment" a useful term. According to Davis (2002) "An impairment involves a loss or diminution of sight, hearing, mobility, mental ability, and so on. But an impairment only becomes a disability when the ambient society creates environments with barriers – affective, sensory, cognitive, or architectural" [P. 89].

As cataloguing and metadata librarians are well aware, language norms are culturally relative and change over time. The most important policy for information professionals is to speak respectfully, be willing to ask people about their preferred language, and be open to changing language after receiving new information.

Physical Resource Accessibility

Library Space

Accessibility of physical space is an essential aspect of library services to people with disabilities. People who use wheelchairs, walkers, or scooters need wide enough pathway to navigate library buildings. Some physical space considerations, such as signage, also affect people with visual and cognitive visibilities.

The practice of designing spaces to be inherently accessible to all, including elderly and disabled people, can be called universal design, accessible design, barrier-free design, or inclusive design. Universal design from the beginning of a project is easier than retrofitting non accessible spaces, and it is more inclusive than making only certain areas accessible. There are many ways for libraries to improve their physical accessibility without undergoing new construction or renovation. They can provide plenty of seating, good lighting, and large and high-contrast signs. They can make sure the aisles, workstations, and handrails are kept clear. Tables can be raised or purchased at an appropriate height for wheelchairs. Vincent's (2014) *Making the Library Accessible for All* has a clear and concise chapter on architectural and environmental accessibility.

Physical Books and Media

Physical books present inherent accessibility challenges to many people with visual disabilities, learning disabilities, mobility disabilities. Libraries have a long history of collecting large-print books, which facilitate access by people with low vision. Another way to increase accessibility of physical books is to offer assistive technology that magnifies printed text, such as close-circuit televisions. Many libraries arrange accommodations such as extended borrowing periods, proxy borrowers, renewal by phone, or extended reference help to facilitate by disabled patrons (Koford 2018). The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) produces Braille materials and audiobooks – also known as

talking books – and distributes them by postage-free mail to borrowers' homes. They also began to offer online access to talking books and Braille books (digital Braille books can be downloaded and printed using embossing hardware).

Deaf and hard-of-hearing patrons can access a much larger proportion of a library's holdings than visually disabled patrons, but videos may present an accessibility challenge. Many DVDs and Blue-Rays include captioning. Some libraries lend audio-described videos, which provide narration of the film's action for blind viewers (Vincent 2014).

Services and Programmes

Libraries offer a wide range of programs, classes, book clubs, and other events. One way to avoid excluding people with disabilities from events is to publicize the fact that sign language interpretation or other accommodations are available if the library is notified a certain number of days in advance. Providing reasonable accommodations so that people with disabilities can participate in library programmes is not only ethical, but likely falls under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)'s provision that no individual should “be denied the benefits of the services, programmes, or activities of a public entity” (US Department of Justice 2009). Many libraries provide programmes specifically geared for people with disabilities. The Seattle Public Library, for example, host a book club conducted in American Sign Language. Several books and websites offer suggestions for programming for children and youth on the autism spectrum (Farmer 2013).

Electronic Resource Accessibility

Born-digital electronic resources have the potential to be more inherently accessible than print since assistive technology can modify text in a variety of ways to make it possible for people with disabilities to access. Assistive technology can change font size, style, or color; convert print to spoken word; or convert print to Braille. Other types of assistive technology allow users to use speech for text input or to navigate resources using a keyboard, mouth stick, or head wand. Unfortunately, many websites and electronic resources contain features that make them difficult or impossible to navigate using assistive technology.

Many web accessibility guidelines are related to website performance on assistive technologies such as screen readers, while some, such as the recommendation to provide text transcripts of videos, address accessibility needs that are not related to screen readers.

Through a questionnaire directed at database vendors, Dermody and Majekodunmi found that most vendors did not work with people with disabilities to conduct usability test (Schmetzke, et al (2007).

The Universal Accessibility Interest Group of the Association of College and Research Libraries maintains an online guide to resources on web accessibility, which as of this writing included information on vendor databases and LibGuides in addition to websites. In a content analysis of disability and accessibility in the library and information science literature from 2000 to 2010, Hill (2013) found a strong emphasis on accessibility of electronic resources and on visual disabilities. A comparatively small amount of research has focused on information behaviour or on attitudinal and social barriers to access. Thirty-six percent of the research articles Hill (2013) examined involved participation by people with disabilities, and the states that increasing this proportion would benefit the field.

Disability as Subject Matter (Cataloguing and Indexing Language)

Because the terminology used to describe disability has historically reflected discriminatory cultural attitudes, library catalogues can contain archaic or insensitive words. The word “handicapped,” for example, is commonly found in indexes despite not being in general use. Emmett and Catherine Davis discussed subject access to disability materials in the 1980s, where they critiqued then-current Library of Congress headings such as Idiocy and Castration of Criminals and Defectives (Davis & Davis 1980). In a 2013 study of award-winning books about disability for youth, Kaney (2013), found that catalogue terms failed to adequately represent many important disability issues.

In a 2014 article, Koford (2014) interviewed nine disability studies scholars about their impressions of subject headings, finding that they often encounter and use non preferred language when searching.

Cataloguers and Indexers continually change standards to reflect changes in society and language. Drabinski (2013) argues that problematic subject access terms can be used as pedagogical tools, helping library users better understand historical and social aspects of information. Davis (2010) writes, “an article on 'crippled saints' could not be searched by computer because the word 'crippled' was disallowed by MLA regulations as constituting discriminatory language. The bibliographer therefore filed the article under

'saints' thus rendering it unretrievable by anyone with an interest in disability". This story illustrates the idea that access structures cannot be fixed by replacing terminology; rather, structures serve as evidence of history, struggle, and change. In practical terms, the variety of words historically used to describe disability means that searching for disability information is challenging and might require extra time and creativity.

People with disabilities are underrepresented in librarianship and library work. As the library profession works to increase diversity in its ranks, disability is one of the areas targeted. The ALA Century Scholarship is provided annually to support a library school student with disabilities. Few empirical studies of librarians with disabilities have been conducted. A study of academic library managers in the Republic of Ireland found that they were aware of the need to accommodate disabilities, but that one-third of their libraries did not have procedures in place to address requests for reasonable accommodation (O'Neil & Urquhart, 2011).

Methodology

Descriptive research design was employed to this study. Data was gathered through secondary source of information. Using literature based contents, thematic data gathered was analyzed qualitatively.

Findings from Literature Review

Based on the reviewed literature, the findings of the study include the fact that inclusiveness should be borne in mind by librarians and other stakeholders in the education sector in order to meet the information need of people with special needs. Libraries are obligated to provide library resources and services for people with disabilities should be provided with such resources such as embossing machine, magnifying glass, digital reading machine, SARACE reading aid machine, talking dictionary, walking stick, Braille machine/typewriter, hearing aid devices, non-conventional entrance into the library, wheel chairs, and other forms of assistive technologies.

Again, the findings reveal that the way to address the people with special needs should not be derogatory in order to avoid stigmatization. For instance certain expressions such as "disabled", instead of "physically challenged"; "Blind or deaf" instead of visually or hearing impaired". Cataloguers and Indexers continually change standards to reflect changes in society and language. They are expected to use terms that would not make it difficult to retrieve information due to its negative keywords.

In terms of the library environment, including library buildings and facilities, the people with special need should be considered in order to give them equal opportunity to access library an information resources with their able-bodied counterparts. If people with disabilities are hindered they feel neglected by the society.

Conclusion

The main focus of this paper is library resources for inclusive services to people with special needs. Access to information is essential for people with disabilities. In developed countries, many disabled people have had positive experiences finding information through websites, databases, museums, archives, and libraries, but the story is not quite good in the developing countries of the world. Even in the advanced countries, many disabled patrons have encountered barriers that prevented them from accessing the full range of information available to nondisabled people. Awareness of some disability issues, such as the importance of large-print books, is high within the library profession, while awareness of other issues, such as the poor accessibility record of many vendor-supplied databases, is low.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that libraries, particularly in Nigeria should adopt and implement IFLA and other policies that provide adequate physical and electronic facilities and resources that could benefit people with disabilities in their efforts to access information.
- Librarians and information scientists should learn and always use the language and terminologies universally acceptable while referring to people with disabilities.
- Universal design which is more efficient and equitable than retrofitting non accessible structures or building alternate versions should be adopted in order to accommodate the disabled library users.
- Inclusiveness should be the watchword for all library staff both academic and supportive staff as they are always ready to render assistance to the library users.

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MANAGING DIVERSITY WITHIN LIBRARY STAFF FOR OPTIMAL SERVICE DELIVERY IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study examined managing diversity within the library staff for optimal service delivery in university libraries in Akwa Ibom State. Three research questions were raised to guide the study. The study adopted the correlational research design. Total enumeration sample technique was used to sample all 48 unit-heads across the three university libraries in Akwa Ibom State, including the research centres. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used in answering the research questions and in testing the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that to a great extent, managing diversity within the library staff relates to optimal service delivery. The PPMC analysis showed that managing ethnic diversity and language diversity do significantly relate to optimal service delivery in university libraries in Akwa Ibom State. Consequently, it was recommended among others, that Workshops and seminars should regularly be organised for the library managers on the need to accommodate individual diversity for optimal service delivery in the library.

Keywords: Managing Diversity, Library Staff, University Libraries, Optimal Service Delivery, Libraries

Introduction

In the dynamic realm of academia, libraries play a pivotal role as crucibles of knowledge, fostering an environment where the exchange of ideas thrives. The academic library stands as a vital nexus within the scholarly ecosystem, serving a diverse community of students, faculties, and researchers. As the university's academic landscape continues to evolve, so does the composition of its library staff. The diversity inherent in our team presents an incredible reservoir of potential, encompassing a spectrum of skills, perspectives, and experiences. Managing diversity entails having organisational policies and practices aimed at recruiting, retaining, and managing employees of diverse backgrounds and identities, while creating a culture in which everybody is equally enabled to perform and achieve organisational and personal objectives (Hordofa, 2022).

Diversity within the library staff could be defined as the multitude of the individual differences and similarities that exist within the library staff. These similarities and differences are in terms of age, gender, marital status, social status, personality, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, religious belief, and culture. Other aspects include lifestyle, tenure, position in the library, functional specialty, geographical location, educational background, and income (Kossek et al., 2016). However, ethnicity and language diversity within the library staff, its impacts and challenges of managing diversity for optimal service delivery are the main focus of this paper.

Ethnicity as a facet of diversity among library staff could be likened to a double-edged sword that may impact service delivery, either positively or negatively, particularly in Nigeria, known for its ethnic diversity with over 300 ethnic groups. It is expected that libraries, especially those with federal status, would boast a diverse staff representing various ethnicities. Effective management of this diversity is key to enhancing optimal service delivery in the library. One of the ways ethnic diversities could be expressed is through language (Kossek et al., 2016). Language diversity is one of the features that set humanity apart from each other. Language is a crucial aspect of our lives. It reflects how we think. The words we use reflect facts, ideas and events that are understood because of a shared knowledge of the world forming a guide to our social reality. Language is an inherent part of culture; developing a multi-lingual environment is the best way to generate a diverse and inclusive staff in the library that will impact on quality and quantity of service delivered.

There are many factors that impact and influence the well-being of an organisation like the library. The nature of the staff is one of such factors. Diversity adds to performance (Jauhari & Singh, 2013). According to Jauhari & Singh (2013), diversity raises organisational performance to its full capacity. An efficiently managed diverse staff will increase organisational effectiveness and enhance productivity. However, this diversity while inherently enriching, also brings forth unique challenges that necessitate thoughtful management to ensure optimal service delivery.

Diversity management is a process intended to create and maintain a positive work environment where the similarities and differences of individuals are valued, so that all can reach their potential and maximise their contributions to an organisation's strategic goals and objectives. Diversity management influences staff's productivity, as well as better decision making that fosters optimal service delivery (Muhu & Zewdie, 2020).

Service delivery, according to Martins & Ledimo (2015) referred to where, who and how a service product is delivered to the customer, whether fair or unfair. Service delivery in the context of this study could be seen as the ability of a university library to provide the information need of users at the time of request in order to satisfy the expectation of users and improve their experience.

Statement of problem

Despite the significant challenges encountered in managing diversity within library staff, particularly in societies characterized by high levels of language and cultural diversity like Nigeria, observations underscore the critical importance of effectively addressing the similarities and differences that distinguish individuals. This is essential to cultivate a cohesive and productive staff, thereby enhancing optimal service delivery within organizations, including libraries.

Research findings have highlighted prevalent issues of discrimination, marginalization, and antagonism experienced by Nigerian workers, including within library settings, across individual, intergroup, and organizational dimensions (Omoh et al., 2015; Isaiah et al., 2017; Udoyiu & Uko, 2023). These discriminatory practices manifest in various facets, such as biased hiring, training, and promotion based on factors like gender, language, and ethnicity. Hence, despite these challenges, there is a pressing need for a comprehensive review, recognizing inclusivity as a cornerstone of organizational effectiveness.

Research Questions

Consequently, this study aims to address the following research questions:

- *To what extent does effective management of ethnicity diversity within the library staff relate to optimal service delivery in university libraries in Akwa Ibom State?*
- *To what extent does effective management of language diversity within library staff relate to optimal service delivery in university libraries in Akwa Ibom State?*
- *To what extent does managing diversity within the library staff relate to optimal service delivery in university libraries in Akwa Ibom State?*

Literature Review

The literature was reviewed under the following sub headings:

- i. *Theoretical framework*
- ii. *Conceptual framework*
- iii. *Challenges encountered in managing diversity in libraries*

Theoretical Framework: This study adopted the contingency theory by Richard (2002) as its theoretical framework. This theory states that diversity management and the organisation success depend on the attitude of the organisation in multiple areas such as culture, ethnicity, environment, as well as individual employees. An organisation such as the library must focus on those areas where the library staff are diverse, and deal with them in a positive way for the purpose of achieving effective performance.

Conceptual Framework

The Concept of Diversity: Diversity is a concept that holds various meanings, applications, and implications. While some organizations embrace it as an asset that promotes innovation and provides a competitive edge, others perceive it as a barrier fraught with constraints and biases. Diversity in its simplicity implies the variety, variegation and multiplicity of characteristics, both visible and invisible (Akinnusi et al. 2017). The concept of diversity includes acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique and recognising our individual differences. It is the exploration of these differences in a positive, safe and nurturing environment (Fagbe et al. 2019). Diversity is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual. Diversity within the library staff could be seen as the multitude of the individual differences and similarities that exist among the library staff. This means that

the diversity within the library staff pertains to the host of the individual differences and similarities that make all the staff special and different from one another. According to Kossek et al. (2016), these similarities and differences are in terms of age, gender, marital status, social status, disability, sexual orientation, religious belief, personality, ethnicity, language, and culture. Acknowledging this assertion, Dike (2018) defined diversity as the ability to recognise, understand, and accept individual differences irrespective of the race, gender, age, class, ethnicity, and so on. Diversity, if well managed enhances individual productivity, organisational effectiveness, and sustained competitiveness that promotes the overall growth of the organisation, and in the case of the library, it promotes optimal service delivery.

The Concept of Diversity Management in Libraries: Diversity management is a process intended to create and maintain a positive work environment where the similarities and differences of individuals are valued so that all can reach their potential and maximise their contributions to an organisation's strategic goals and objectives (Hambui et al. 2018). Managing diversity within the library staff will harness the different ideas, experiences, skills and knowledge of the different staff to gain competitive advantage for optimal service delivery. Managing diversity fosters exchange of ideas through socialisation, team work and community of practices within organisation which invariably enhance innovation and improve service delivery of an organisation, the library inclusive. It also reduces cost of training as the library staff are able to learn through brainstorming, tutoring, mentoring and coaching (Amaden, 2020). Effective management of diversity also brings inclusiveness and acceptance of other staff while reducing conflicts that may arise because of differences (Kuuseka, 2018; Gossen, 2016; and Larsen, 2017).

Managing diversity within the library staff for optimal service delivery cannot be overemphasised. Bah (2015) asserted that a more diverse staff will increase organisational effectiveness and enhance productivity. Also, Allen and Montgomery (2021) avowed that libraries that embrace diversity are better able to meet the information needs of its users, especially the minorities who believe that libraries with diverse staff are better able to identify with their everyday experiences, thus improving credibility and service delivery. Urbanova et al. (2016) iterated the impact of diversity management as bringing inclusiveness and acceptance of other staff while reducing conflicts that may arise due to differences. According to Inazu et al. (2021), when libraries manage distinctive characteristics of staff properly, it would lead to improved performance and sensitivity to users' needs which will equip them to relate and serve the users better. Shore et al. (2021) however maintained that uniqueness of a group or team will provide opportunities only when the unique individual is an accepted member of the group, and the group values the particular unique characteristics. The American Library Association, as cited by Amaden (2020) emphasised that when libraries manage distinctive characteristic of its staff, it would lead to improve performance and sensitivity to users' needs which will improve their service delivery. When diversity is efficiently managed within the library staff, it will enhance communication between the staff and the population they serve, just as Kung et al. (2020) and Van der Wake & Du Plessis (2014) noted that library users identify and relate with library workers with whom they share similar characteristics in language, race, age, ethnic and even gender. It helps libraries to collaborate better with users for optimal service delivery. By managing diversity within the library staff, libraries create an inclusive and harmonious environment whereby the staff feel valued, rewarded and motivated which invariably enhances their delivery of service to the users. Apart from the social and economic benefits for managing diversity in the library, it is also morally imperative to protect the library staff from discrimination, stereotype, harassment and social distancing (Green et al., 2015). Therefore, there is need for the library to create a sense of inclusiveness within the diverse library staff that will make the staff, irrespective of the demographic diversity, to perceive that they are esteemed members of the library through experiencing treatment that satisfy their need for belongingness and uniqueness. In the view of Magohi & Chang (2019), employees' satisfaction relates significantly to their expectation that the organisation is committed to understanding and utilising the unique characteristics of everyone.

The Concept of Ethnicity Diversity: Ethnic diversity could be seen as the different ethnicity and cultural background of employees of an organisation such as the library. It is perceived as a source of strength to some organisations, and a source of weakness to others (Zhan et al. 2015). Managing ethnic diversity in the library is better appreciated in terms of cognitive outcomes such as greater innovation, ideas, and creativity that come from the distinct library staff which stimulates optimal service delivery to the esteemed library users. These calls for library managers with appropriate managerial skills to manage these ethnically diverse library staff to bring out the individual uniqueness in them that will lead to a more committed, better satisfied and better performing staff. The manager needs to develop programmes in which these ethnic diverse staff (both the majorities and minorities) can progress in their careers and maximise the opportunities that diverse ideas and experiences of heterogeneous workforce brings.

The Concept of Language Diversity: Language is an inherent part of culture. Developing a multi-lingual environment is the best way to generate a diverse and inclusive workforce. Language shapes how we think. Effective management of people from diverse language background can spur creativity and innovations in the library as individuals with different linguistic backgrounds bring unique knowledge to solving complex

problems. Employees often rely on one another to relay important information, share helpful advice and distribute knowledge about a client, product or service (Almelda, 2023). A language gap within the library staff can hinder effective communication, and also lead to a lack of efficiency in service delivery.

Language misunderstandings and varying levels of fluency can also influence trust, which is crucial for the well-functioning of teams (Larsen, 2017). Those with lower proficiency worry that difficulty in communication could be mistaken for a lack of technical and professional abilities. According to Inazu et al. (2021), when libraries manage distinctive characteristics of staff properly, it would lead to improve performance and sensitivity to users' needs which will equip them to relate and serve the users better. Therefore strategic management of a language diverse library staff properly through inclusiveness policy is key to optimal service delivery; as users usually tend to rapport more effectively with the staff who shares same background in terms of language with them. This in turn provides the diverse library staff the opportunity to serve the different users optimally and efficiently. Consequently, library staff satisfaction will positively enhance their commitment to service delivery in the library. Nishii (2023) opined that when employees in a diverse workforce experience a sense of belongingness and inclusion, and are valued for their uniqueness, their commitment to the organisation grows, and the organisation will experience high retention of employees and low turnover, with the accompanying benefits. In other words, when diversity is well managed, it attracts and retains talent, promotes creativity and flexibility, increases productivity and output and encourages efficient service delivery with minimal challenges.

Challenges Encountered in Managing Diversity in Libraries: Challenges are likely to be encountered while managing diversity within the library staff. Confirming this assertion, Nwokpoku et al. (2017) mentioned that employee's individualistic behaviour especially when it comes to their ideologies and belief systems is one major challenge managers of libraries has to face. Humans are complex and complicated with varying personality, which influence the degree to which changes can be accepted in libraries (Inazu et al., 2021). According to Rahman (2019) and Inazu et al. (2021), a manager's lack of skills and initiative as well as inability to communicate ideas and lack of institutional commitment hinders implementation of diversity policies.

Discrimination is another challenge faced in managing diversity by library managers with underlying factors linked to gender, language, ethnicity, which could come from managers, individuals, and teams (Martins, 2015). Bolivar et al. (2019) averred that manager's personal bias and perception of people can affect their decision making process especially in recruitment and promotion of staff. Shaban (2016) maintained that managers deal with social distancing in the workplace especially among individual that does not share similar dimension of ethnicity, language and culture. This apparently can affect sharing of ideas or knowledge, which can pose as a threat to optimal service delivery. Nishi (2018) opined that hiring a diverse workforce with demographic diversity brings about high levels of conflict, turnover and tension. Hence, Marina (2020) and Brenda (2016) inferred that it is not just enough for organisations like the university libraries to hire a diverse workforce, but to create proper channels that will actively manage the diversity for optimal service delivery.

Library Service Delivery: Service delivery in university library can be seen as the ability of the university library to provide information need of patrons as required in a timely manner in order to satisfy the expectations of the users (Oden & Owolabi, 2015). It ensures the provision of optimal service to library users. The university library plays a pivotal role in promoting the advancement of knowledge. According to Oladipo & Soyemi (2021), every library aims at supporting the information needs of the institution to which it is attached, and in most cases, those of the public where it is located. Hence, it is the duty of the university library and its staff to provide the information needs of the university community and that of their visitors. Aboyade (2018) defined library services as the total of every library activity which is aimed at promoting the use of the library and its resources.

According to Igwela & Nsirim (2018), service delivery involves providing assistance to library users in search of various forms of information within a specific library. They further assert that service delivery encompasses the efforts made by a library, utilizing available resources both within and outside, to effectively meet the information needs of its users. These services include but not limited to user education services, bibliographic services, circulation services, reference services, technical services, and information technology (IT) services, computerised interactive search, and counselling services.

The literature reviewed showed that diversity management and service deliveries have been extensively studied but none has been conducted in university libraries in Akwa Ibom State. This is the gap that this study intends to fill.

Methodology

The study adopted the correlational research design. This design is used to discover or clarify relationships by using correlational coefficients. The population for the study comprised 48 unit-heads across the three university libraries in Akwa Ibom State, including the research centres. Unit-heads of library and research centres referred to here as library managers in the three university libraries in Akwa Ibom State, which

includes the University of Uyo library, Federal University of Technology Ikot Abasi library and Akwa Ibom State University library. The total enumeration sampling technique was used to sample the entire population due to its manageable size. The instrument for the study was a self-structured and expert-validated questionnaire; with a reliability coefficient of 0.82 achieved by administering the questionnaire once to 30 library staff from the University of Calabar library that were not part of the sample size. Cronbach alpha was used in achieving the coefficient of the instrument. Out of the 48 copies of questionnaire distributed, 46 copies were properly filled and returned, given a total return rate of 96%. The data collected were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to answer the research questions and testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Decision Rule:

The degree of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation relationship was interpreted thus: $r=0.99-0.80$ positive with very great relationship; $r=0.79-0.50$ positive with great relationship; $r=0.40-0.30$ positive with moderate relationship; $r=0.29-0.10$ positive with low relationship; $r=0$ no relationship; $r=-0.10- -0.29$ negative with low relationship; $r=-0.30- -0.49$ negative with moderate relationship; $r=-0.50- -0.79$ negative with great relationship; $r= -0.80- -0.99$ negative with very great relationship. And when the calculated r-value is greater than the critical r-value, the hypotheses was rejected but otherwise accepted.

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Findings

Answering the Research Questions

Research Question 1: To what extent does managing ethnicity diversity within the library staff relate to optimal service delivery in university libraries in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation between Managing Ethnic Diversity and Optimal Service Delivery in University Libraries in Akwa Ibom State (N=46)

Variable	$\sum X$ $\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$ $\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	r-value
Managing Ethnic Diversity	1501	22849	49252	.55
Optimal Service Delivery	3285	107989		

Result on Table 1 showed that the calculated r-value between managing ethnic diversity and optimal service delivery as 0.55. The r-value when compared with the decision rule indicated that to a great extent, managing ethnic diversity positively relate to optimal service delivery in university libraries in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Question 2: To what extent does managing language diversity within the library staff relate to optimal service delivery in university libraries in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation between Managing Language Diversity and Optimal Service Delivery in University Libraries in Akwa Ibom State (N=46)

Variable	$\sum X$ $\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$ $\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	r-value
Managing Language Diversity	1517	23341	49887	.69
Optimal Service Delivery	3285	107989		

Result on Table 2 showed that the calculated r-value between managing language diversity and optimal service delivery as 0.69. The r-value when compared with the decision rule indicated that to a great extent, managing language diversity positively relate to optimal service delivery in university libraries in Akwa Ibom State. .

Research Question 3: To what extent does diversity management within the library staff relate to optimal service delivery in university libraries in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation between Diversity Management and Optimal Service Delivery in University Libraries in Akwa Ibom State (N=46)

Variable	$\sum X$ $\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$ $\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	r-value
Diversity Management	1512	23146	49640	.61
Optimal Service Delivery	3285	107989		

Result on Table 3 showed that the calculated r-value between diversity management and optimal service delivery as 0.61. The r-value when compared with the decision rule indicated that to a great extent, diversity management positively relate to optimal service delivery in university libraries in Akwa Ibom State. .

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between managing ethnicity diversity and optimal service delivery in university libraries in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 4: Result of Pearson Product Moment Correlation of the relationship between managing ethnicity diversity and optimal service delivery (N = 46)

Variable	df	r	-cal	r	-crit	Decision
Managing ethnicity diversity						
44	0.55	0.412	*significant			
Optimal service delivery						

*significant at $p < .05$; $df = 44$

The result on Table 4 revealed that the calculated r-value of 0.55 is greater than the critical r-value of 0.412 at 44 degrees of freedom and at 0.05 level of significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Hence, there is significant relationship between managing ethnic diversity and optimal service delivery in university libraries in Akwa Ibom State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between managing language diversity and optimal service delivery in university libraries in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 5: Result of Pearson Product Moment Correlation of the extent of the relationship between managing language diversity and optimal service delivery (N = 46)

Variable	df	r	-cal	r	-crit	Decision
Managing language diversity						
44	0.69	0.412	*significant			
Optimal service delivery						

*significant at $p < .05$; $df = 44$

The result on Table 5 revealed that the calculated r-value of 0.69 is greater than the critical r-value of 0.412 at 44 degrees of freedom and at 0.05 level of significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Hence, there is significant relationship between managing language diversity and optimal service delivery in university libraries in Akwa Ibom State.

Hypothesis 3: there is no significant relationship between diversity management and optimal service delivery in university libraries in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 6: Result of Pearson Product Moment Correlation of the extent of the relationship between managing ethnicity diversity and optimal service delivery (N = 46)

Variable	df	r	-cal	r	-crit	Decision
Managing ethnicity diversity						
44	0.61	0.412	*significant			
Optimal service delivery						

*significant at $p < .05$; $df = 44$

The result on Table 6 revealed that the calculated r-value of 0.61 is greater than the critical r-value of 0.412 at 44 degrees of freedom and at 0.05 level of significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Hence, there is significant relationship between diversity management and optimal service delivery in university libraries in Akwa Ibom State.

Discussion of Findings

- i. Findings revealed that to a great extent managing ethnic diversity relates to optimal service delivery, and also managing ethnic diversity significantly relates to optimal service delivery in university libraries in Akwa Ibom State. This agrees with the position of Latif (2016) that developing programmes and opportunities for the ethnic minorities to progress in their career can spur their service delivery.
- ii. Findings also showed that to a great extent, managing language diversity relates to optimal service delivery, and it also showed that managing language diversity significantly relates to optimal service delivery in university libraries in Akwa Ibom State. This is in line with the finding of Fagbe et al (2019) who maintained that when people are treated with fairness and respect, despite their diverse language and culture, they will put in their best and deliver service optimally.
- iii. The findings also indicated that diversity management to a great extent relates to optimal service delivery in university libraries in Akwa Ibom State. This is in agreement with Inazu et al. (2021) who avowed that when libraries manage distinctive characteristics of staff properly, it would lead to improved performance and sensitivity to users' needs.

Deducing from the study, managing diversity within the library staff in university libraries in Akwa Ibom State, to a great extent impacts on optimal service delivery. Basically, this implies that the more effective the library managers employ diverse management techniques in managing the diverse staff, the more it enhances efficiency and optimal service delivery in the library. This is in agreement with the view of Akinnusi et al. (2017) that workforce diversity if properly managed would result in the effectiveness and adequate service delivery in the library. Also in concurrence to the assertion, Latif (2016) maintained that effective management of the various diverse workforce increases productivity and raises the level of performance.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that managing ethnic diversity within the library staff in university libraries in Akwa Ibom State, to a great extent relates to optimal service delivery. The study also showed that managing language diversity within the library staff in university libraries in Akwa Ibom State do significantly relate to optimal service delivery. The study further revealed that diversity management within the library staff significantly relates to optimal service delivery in university libraries in Akwa Ibom State. Considering the importance managing diversity within the library staff for optimal service delivery, the library managers should find a way to address these problems of managing diversity in order to harness the differences to the benefits of the library and efficient service delivery to its users.

Recommendations

- i. Library managers should ensure that there is ethnic tolerance within the library staff.
- ii. Team projects should be encouraged irrespective of language background that would spur trust among staff.
- iii. Workshops and seminars should regularly be organised for the library managers on the need to accommodate individual diversity for optimal service delivery in the library.

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MANAGING LIBRARY STAFF DIVERSITY FOR EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY IN ABDURRAHMAN GHAJI LIBRARY, ADAMAWA STATE UNIVERSITY MUBI, ADAMAWA STATE NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The paper looked at managing library staff diversity for effective service delivery in Abdurrahman Ghaji Library, Adamawa State University Mubi. It sees the diversity of the library staff as a tool for effective service delivery if well managed. The Abdurrahman Ghaji Library comprises of staff with diverse characteristics for example age, gender, religion, tribe, culture, education, social status, rank, marital status, psychological status and health status. The study looked at these diversities from especially the positive side as it affects the provision of library services. It also gives an insight into how the leadership of the library manage this diversity and the cooperation among the staff to achieve success in service delivery. The essence of the paper is to highlight how these diversities among the staff lead to effective service provision rather than emphasizing the opposite of what it causes to service delivery. The advantages of managing staff diversity to influence positively library service delivery were also discussed. The paper digs into the challenges faced in Abdurrahman Ghaji Library which affect effective service delivery to include new technology, ageing, social, religious and cultural norms, educational background and experience, among others. Conclusively, the paper revealed how library staff diversities if well managed will foster good working relationships and good collaboration to team up with diverse ideas and knowledge that will enhance effective library service delivery. It finally made some recommendations for the challenges affecting service delivery which include improving staff ICT literacy to accelerate and make easy delivery of services, and also use the knowledge to teach the library user skills on accessing information easily. Tolerance was suggested for both religious, social and cultural norms and respect for intergenerational age diversity to build a conducive environment for both staff and the clientele. Educational qualification was recommended to be used to (elevate) alleviate others rather than be used as a yardstick to relegate the less qualified and inexperienced staff.

Key Words: Managing Diversity, Effective Service Delivery, Library, Adamawa State.

Introduction

Abdurrahman Ghaji Library is an academic library set up in Adamawa State University, Mubi to help support the aims and objectives of the institution. Staff employment was initially based on an equal number of employees from all the local governments in the state; emphasis was placed on employment cutting across all the local government areas in the state. This step was taken to minimize the abuse of office during employment favouring one area more than the other as it is the normal norm in Nigerian culture, and to reduce partiality since all the local governments contribute their share in developing the state university. But does this system of employment guarantee the employment of competent people? This anyway, is by the way. With the diversity in religion as well as languages in the state each local government area is predominated by either one or two tribes. Some of these people constitute the library staff who are of diverse religions, ages, genders, tribes, cultures, education, social status, rank, marital statuses, psychological stages as well and health statuses, all these diversities are expected to affect the service delivery in an organization unless it is well managed.

The Abdurrahman Ghaji Library comprises staff of different ages ranging from approximately 30 years to 62 years with the lowest qualification of SSCE and the highest qualification of PhD. The library also comprises over thirteen tribes as all staff were drawn across all the local governments in the state. All these people practice only two forms of religion which are Christianity and Islam. Social status and education differ based on exposure and background of staff. Other differences in gender as well as the other diversities of the staff do not affect the delivery of effective library services.

The management and leadership of the library promote inclusiveness of the library staff in delivering library services using selected languages for communication, English being the official language notwithstanding. It also provides diverse training for staff in all aspects of service delivery in the library, for instance those with SSCE are encouraged to go and obtain Diplomas in Library and Information Science (DLIS), those

with DLIS to go for BLIS and so on. Other in-house training of paraprofessional staff on some key Library routines are carried out from time to time. The library is mindful of all the stages of staff growth in all categories and encourages staff to take advantage of the order of staff development training accordingly. The diversity in background and personality of the library staff affects relationships with colleagues, dealing with clientele and general library service delivery positively.

Diversity can either bring positivity if well managed or negativity if poorly managed. Positive constructive ideas and views will arise out of people diverse in all areas working as a team to achieve a purpose, although not without challenges which include; new technology, an ageing workforce, social/cultural and religious norms, education/experience etc.

Diversity

The library like any other organization is a place that comprises different categories of people diverse in all areas. It is a place where people irrespective of their differences find themselves as a team with one intention, that's good library service delivery.

In any organizational set-up, there is bound to be staff of different diversities, this diversity comes in age, gender, religion, tribe, culture, education, social status, perspectives, experiences etc. According to Dike (2013), diversity is "recognizing, understanding and accepting individual differences in-respective of their race, gender, age, class, ethnicity, physical disability, sexual orientation, spiritual practices and so on". Accepting people diverse in all aspects of life creates a feeling of belonging, a feeling of welcoming that each one of them is unique and different in his/her way and appreciating their importance despite their differences.

Diversity of Staff and Leadership of Abdurrahman Ghaji Library

Diversity of library staff in Abdurrahman Ghaji Library Adamawa State University Mubi (A. G. Library ADSU Mubi) like any other organization generally includes age, gender, tribe, religion, culture, rank, educational qualification, social status, marital status etc. These diversities are what qualify us to be distinct from each other and these diversities if well managed affect positively our work as a team in the library and consequently good library service delivery. It is an excellent factor used in influencing good service delivery in the library. In a complex environment such as the library because of staff diversities, managing those diversities becomes most important so that its ill management will not affect the realization of the organization's purpose of existence.

According to Olasunkade (2016), "Organization is a (unit) of people that is structured and managed to meet a desire, (need) or pursue common goals." It comprises a "(management) of hierarchy that interface and determines relationships between different (activities) and (members), subdivides and (assigns roles), (responsibilities) and (authority) to carry out different roles or tasks." Coordinating the efforts of an organization to achieve its objectives and intended goals requires the combined activities of all employees and other resources be it material or human resources. This is the exact description of the set-up of the library, with the exact happening as underlined by the author cited.

Delivering effective services in an organization requires good leadership to lead and direct all subordinates to better performance. According to Northouse (2016), "leadership is a form of influence displayed in directing subordinates towards a predetermined goal". In a similar vein Abayomi (2020), stated that "leaders represent one of the essential factors in job satisfaction, it is their leadership styles that will facilitate subordinate's direct involvement by soliciting their inputs and listening to their views". In most circumstances, the leadership of the organization in this case the library, leads to the employees' satisfaction and ultimately the customer, who is the library user.

The leadership of A. G. Library ADSU Mubi is not unaware of the diversity of its staff, it therefore adopts a leadership style that will go in line with the people being led to achieve the purpose of the library. The adoption of the leadership style of the previous and current university librarians depends on the leader's discretion based on the diverse staff being led.

Managing Diversity of Library Staff in A. G. Library ADSU Mubi

Though the diversity among A.G. Library staff is numerous, few of them were looked into to understand how the library managed such diversities to achieve effective service delivery. The overall performance of each unique individual depends on the cooperation of all individuals and so also the performance of all individuals depends on the cooperation and performance of each individual.

The performance of an organization does not depend solely on finance which is key to any organization's success but mostly depends on the ability of all the staff to adapt to each individual with tolerance. Individual performance affects the performance of a team and consequently, the organization's performance as earlier said, therefore, there is a need for harmonized ties between staff, as the ability to manage such a complex group of people is of paramount importance to achieving its desired goals. Managing diversity brings inclusiveness and acceptance of other employee's differences while reducing conflicts that will arise due to the differences.

Managing Age Diversity

There is a popular assumption that there is a decline in performances and the ability to be creative as people age, this may be just a myth. So much research has shown that knowledge, skills and productivity rather increase or remain stable until very late in life. (Towers Perrin, 2005). Many evidence also abound of younger staff who are less experienced and less knowledgeable in their work who need the guidance of the older staff to achieve a task.'

Assessment of a staff should not be based on mere age, this corroborates Strebler (2007), that it is not enough to judge a staff on age "but the extent to which employees feel engaged with their jobs that determines positive attitude to and experiences of work". Not all aged workers remain on the job for the financial side of it, some drive joy in coaching the younger staff who are willing to learn. Most younger staff in the A.G. Library have youthful exuberance in the area of carelessness in their work, absenteeism from work without any reason, and challenging attitude. But the leadership of the library maturely handle such cases with once-in-a-while queries when it becomes necessary. Advice and admonishment are sometimes the tricks used to achieve a purpose.

However, Boliver et al (2019) in their study of four academic libraries found that conflicts between the older and younger staff arise in a situation where the younger staff oversee the older staff, Munde (2010) study supported that this conflict arises as a result of power/position struggle, technology and expression of ideas differences. But it should be borne in mind that some of the older staff have all the knowledge and experiences to move the library forward. Even some of the very old who are part of the library subsidiaries staff but who also play important roles in keeping the library environment clean were allowed to remain at work because they are also very important to the library, in the spirit of good management, they are allowed to work fewer hours. There is total mutual understanding between the ranges of ages in the library despite age disparity in the Library which ranges from approximately above thirty and above sixty. The staff work as a team by learning from the older ones through tutoring, mentoring, coaching and brainstorming. However, there is liberty in the free expression of ideas and views from the younger staff because being young does not necessarily mean that some of them are not assets. Their good ideas and views are incorporated into the library to make it work.

Managing Gender Diversity

Each time the word gender is mentioned, everyone focuses on women. In this part of the world, (Northern Nigeria) it is expected that the female gender was only created to take care of the home front, but women are now competing with their male counterparts in finding sources of livelihood to support the family. Ivancevich and Konopaske (2013) asserted that "The number of women and single parents entering the workforce is expected to continue increasing." The authors chose to talk about this gender, because they are the ones who are always expected to pause the rate of work in an organization because they combine overseeing the home front with their official work. These individuals who are often viewed as primary caregivers will experience stress as they attempt to balance career and family.

With good management of the A.G Library ADSU Mubi, both sexes are arranged to work in the same office to make room for cover-up in their work in case of the absence of one gender. Just like mentioned above women are prone to seek days off to attend to issues relating to family, for instance, maternity leaves, children's school issues, sick children, and attending to family ceremonies, among others. In such cases, the male counterpart will always stand in. This is a very good arrangement to maintain non-stop delivery of services in this organization. This is likened to job sharing as Ihuoma (2018) defines "job sharing as a work arrangement in which two or more employees divide responsibilities, hours and time among themselves, in job sharing also one person may work mornings while the other person works in the evening." Such arrangement is mostly best practice among shifting staff in A. G Library as such, delivery of library services is continuous throughout service hours.

However, observations have shown that the female gender in A.G Library are more enduring and serious in their work than some of their male counterparts. Generally, women are assumed to show higher moral behaviour than men. Women in contrast to men are also likely to be ethnically sensitive and therefore display a more empathetic and caring attitude to the library clientele., so the leadership of the library pairs them for better deliverance of library services.

Managing Religion/Culture/Social Diversity

It is normal in this part of the world (Nigeria) to discriminate especially individuals that do not share similar dimensions of social, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, religion etc. in an organization. This discrimination also happens between staff and people who come for one service or the other. In the same vein, some users also feel more comfortable in relating with library workers who have similarities with them. Kung et al (2020) noted that some library users identify and relate with library workers with whom they share similarities in characteristics e.g. language, race, age, ethnicity and gender. Public expectation, religion and cultural norms forbid certain things and certain associations with the opposite gender, though this is sometimes minimised based on socialization and level of exposure. The library is a social unit and therefore staff of A.G Library always advocate for socialization and accommodative behaviours because social distances can prevent the library staff and the user from coming together and therefore affect the sharing of ideas or knowledge among staff and the user too.

Managing Tribe Diversity

Despite the differences in languages spoken in the library because of the diversity in tribes, the A.G. Library communicate mostly in English and Hausa languages. These two languages foster understanding between individuals, for things to move smoothly and speedily as required, there must be a free flow of communication. This communication does not only stop at conversations between staff but also includes communication between the management of the library and the library users.

There is a positive connection between people when management processes are shared, and effective rendering of services when staff share ideas and views among them and knowledge to the library clientele, this encourages both the library staff and the user positively. Ibhade (2020) affirmed that communication is a critical part of management processes in the of sharing knowledge and thought.

Managing educational Background Diversity

In any organization, people of different educational levels and some who are qualified in special areas are found who collaborate to work as a team for the betterment of the organization. A.G Library have different categories of staff and each level of qualification is good for the organization. Qualifications of staff in A.G Library comprises SSCE to Ph.D. holders. The management of the library motivates subordinates to carry out tasks by collaborating with colleagues. The management shows concern for employees' feelings and needs and provides positive feedback after encouraging them to voice out their concerns. The management also facilitates staff development through training. In-house training is sometimes conducted by the heads of divisions in the library to teach the inexperienced ones the technicalities of the profession.

Advantages of Managing Library Staff Diversity

Several advantages come with managing library staff diversity for effective service delivery:

- i. *Information will be made available and timely by the well-coordinated staff.*
- ii. *Dependable and reliable information will be delivered to the required user specifications.*
- iii. *Credible information for the user to comfortably apply to decision-making.*
- iv. *Useful information will be provided that is appropriate to the library user.*
- v. *Usable information will always be readily available for the library information seeker.*
- vi. *Authentic information will always be provided that can be accepted anywhere.*
- vii. *There is always room for expansion to cover all areas of the information seeker's need because there is coordination and collaboration among the staff.*
- viii. *There is always sustainability, consistency and affordability in the provision of effective library services.*

Challenges in Managing Library Staff Diversity in Delivering Effective Library Services.

In trying to manage library staff diversity to provide effective services to its clientele, some challenges also come with it as follows:

New Technology

The way people now access information varies, with the current information exploration online and different information and communication gadgets even in the library, library staff are expected to be conversant with using these gadgets to provide and deliver information, but many of the library staff are not conversant with them. According to Tanawade (2011), many librarians lack self-reliance in the face of growing information technology. Anyira (2011) adds that librarians who do not have advanced Information Communication Skills (ICT) cannot provide effective office services. The library staff need to understand ICT infrastructure and emerging trends and technology to be able to provide effective library service delivery. Sahabi (2021) opined that the modern academic library in the digital age must be strong in storing, retrieving and disseminating information through ICT. This is done either through computer, internet, email, slides, CDs, phones, fax machines GSM etc. Therefore, the academic librarian must have the skills of being ICT literate to be able to meet the changing demands of the library user.

Social, Religious and Cultural Norms

Social norms that have to do with public expectations of certain behaviours in interacting with the opposite sex abound. The fact is that religion differs and so do beliefs and practices, this if not well managed interferes with work and inconveniences colleagues. Cultural norms and expectations of especially the female gender behaviours at work and in public in associating with the opposite gender is a major constraint in managing library staff for effective service delivery.

Ageing Workforce

The ageing staff in the library are most times the staff with better experience of the work, but most times seen from afar, as people with redundant skills or other work constraints and decline in performance, this is generally the assumption about the characteristics and abilities of the aged staff, as such they are not incorporated into most activities and this may just be a myth. Instead, older staff should be seen as people of skills, knowledge high productivity and a valuable resource.

Education/Experience

Education diversity in the library according to Assefa (2014) is the distribution of staff in the library according to their qualifications. This qualification as earlier stated elsewhere here ranges from SSCE to PhD. The staff in each category have a specific role to play. When staff are in the same level of educational background, sometimes managing such staff to perform a certain task becomes a problem. Being on a different level of educational qualification also becomes a problem where some staff will feel being looked down upon when asked to perform certain tasks unless there is cooperation from the incept.

Conclusion

A lot can be achieved when diversity in individuals are well managed towards achieving a goal. We have seen how organizations are comprised of diverse people who found themselves in the same organization and agreed to work as a team to achieve a common purpose despite their diversity using Abdurrahman Ghaji Library ADSU as a case study. Though it is not easy managing adults with diverse ways, the leadership style of management and leading in Abdurrahman Ghaji Library help in bringing those difficulties down, the consequences of not managing those diversities well can lead to ineffective library service delivery. Libraries now deploy ways to harness the differences, ideas, skills and knowledge of multicultural, cross-sectional, intergenerational age, gender and educational backgrounds of library staff to make information services delivery smooth. It fosters the exchange of ideas through socialization, teamwork, collaboration and brainstorming practices within the library to achieve a common purpose. It is, therefore, very essential to find ways to manage the staff diversities in the library seeing the advantages that come with it.

Recommendations

Because of the benefits of managing diverse staff as well as the challenges that come with it, the authors recommend the following to help improve Library service delivery in Abdurrahman Ghaji Library ADSU Mubi;

1. *The management of Abdurrahman Ghaji Library should strive to train their staff on the new emerging trends to be able to cope with the rate of information exploration and new ways of using different gadgets to get work done. Let it be made known that the librarians have to provide information literacy skills to the library clientele to be able to find, extract, analyse and use information, this way they can be able to become independent learners for life, therefore, the staff need to be information literate.*
2. *Tolerance with each other in the diversity of religion, tribe and cultural norms especially, should be preached and inculcated in the Abdurrahman Ghaji library staff. A lot of crisis and misunderstanding arise most times because of such diversity. This tolerance should be taught to extend to any library clientele that comes to the library generally and, the library staff's interaction with the organization's community.*
3. *Age diversity in the case of older staff should not be seen as burden but rather as assets to the library because of the huge knowledge they have to offer and also a wealth of experiences in other areas. It will be impossible to have people of the same age bracket in the same organization; respect should be advocate and practise to avoid conflicts arising from age differences.*
4. *All the staff in Abdurrahman Ghaji Library cannot be of the same educational qualification or have same background of experiences. These diversities should not be used or seen as a reason to look down on others by those with higher qualification in the delivery of library services, for each level of educational qualifications has a major role to play, but rather should be used positively to train others on the job, mentoring and using it to deliver effective services to the clienteles.*

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MANAGING LIBRARY STAFF DIVERSITY FOR EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

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Abstract

Managing library staff diversity for effective service delivery will provide a springboard to usher staffs into a higher realm of knowledge to effectively assist patrons while equipping them with leadership skills for better interpersonal relationship and human resource management. To successfully manage staff diversity in any organization, workforce must be considered, welfare and other enumerations will be more enhanced. Fairness in management is the key to the success of any organization. In order words heads of libraries must overlook critic, gossip, and ensure fairness among his staff for effective management of staff diversities and service delivery in the library. The paper also highlights concept of diversity management, diversity management in the academic libraries and finally the way forward for the academic libraries' growth and sustenance of effective service delivery by librarians and managers for the continuous growth and sustainability of the academic library service delivery.

Keywords: management, managing library staff, diversity, service delivery

Introduction

Management in every organization is a priority headway to successful service delivery in 'time like this'. Managing human diversity for effective service delivery is the keynote for organizational growth and resourceful in-service delivery especially in the library where diverse service delivery is required in their daily activities. Management seems to be a difficult task, as it is the process of dealing with staff/controlling things or people within the organization. Obim (n.d) university libraries are libraries attached to a university institution, which is responsible for the provision of information resources and services to meet the information needs of its user community which are mostly, staff, students and external researchers. University libraries are the heart of the university institution, because it makes available and accessible information in various formats to support the teaching, learning and research objectives of the institution of learning (Onah, Adayi, Okonkwo and Onyebuchi, 2020). The University Library is an established and organized arm of a university with a clear mandate to provide relevant and up to date information resources that meet the information needs of its users (Omeluzor, Dolapo, Agbawe, Onasote and Abayomi, 2017) indicated that. The main aim of university libraries is to acquire information resources in different formats, in various fields of human knowledge and to process, organize, disseminate and provide access to them (Obim, n.d). In view forgoing, it becomes imperative to effectively manage library staff diversity in the 21st century and beef up their skills and competencies for enhanced service delivery and patronage.

According to Anyaegbu and Wali (2019) staff training is a learning process in which employees acquire skills, experience and attitudes that they need in order to perform their job better

for the achievement of their organizational goals. Fagbe, Fagbe, and Folorunso-Ako (2019) diversity management practices provides a climate that supports all types of individuals in the workplace since its goal is to include everyone in the inners cycle of employees who are continuously constantly learning to create continuous improvement in activities that contributes to the bottom-line success of the academic library.

This research is therefore aimed at investigating the issue of managing library staff diversity for effective service delivery as a way to equip their skills to tackle emerging challenges in the 21st century library.

Objectives

The general objective of the study is to examine managing library staff diversity for effective service delivery, the study will seek to:

1. Identify methods for managing library staff diversity for effective service delivery
2. Examine the staff trainings provided for librarians for effective service delivery;
3. Ascertain the methods/mechanisms put in place for training staff for effective service delivery;
4. Identify the challenges inhibiting the training of staff for effective service delivery
5. Proffer strategies for efficient managing library staff for effective service delivery

Literature review

Diversity a concept has become increasingly important due to globalization and the migration of people across the globe (Al Ariss and Sidani, 2016). Roosevelt Thomas has coined the term diversity management

in the year 1990 in the context of the USA and gradually, it dispersed over the world (Kelly and Dobbin, 1998). The history behind the theory of diversity management goes long back when affirmative action (AA) plans and equal employment opportunities (EEO) act were incorporated through Article VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in the USA (Kelly and Dobbin, 1998). Prior to the 1990s, studies were conducted on the topic of affirmative action programs and equal employment opportunity but after the emergence of diversity management, researchers have gradually moved into cross-cultural diversity research (Cox, 1991). The issue of diversity was completely ignored in organizations; however, workplace diversity had become a critical issue in the year 1987 when the Hudson Institute of USA published the report “Workforce 2000: Work and Workers for the Twenty-First Century” (Johnson and Packer, 1987). To understand the problems of increasing diversity in the organizations' researchers have defined diversity in different ways and conceptualized the diversity with support of different theories, which are discussed in the following excerpts:

Diversity as a concept (Foster and Harris, 2005) has different meanings and applications depending on where you are in the world. Diversity is strategic and can determine the success or failure of an academic library. It is important to handle the issue of diversity seriously. According to (Daft, 2008; Schindler, and Rogers, 2016), diversity refers to a workforce made up of people with different human qualities or who belong to various cultural groups. Many scholars observed workforce demographic to include people with characteristic. Diversity as noted by (Robbins and Judge, 2011; Hu, & Ho, 2016), is acknowledged as a workforce which comprises of women and men. Diversity is further observed as individuals with variety of physical or psychological abilities. Diversity is generally defined as acknowledging, understanding, accepting, valuing and celebrating.

According to Williams and O'Reilly (1998, p. 81), diversity is defined as “any attributes that people use to tell themselves that another person is different.” Whereas Jackson, Joshi and Erhardt (2003) defined diversity as the differences in personal attributes among individual members in the workgroup. Diversity has been recognized as an immeasurable number of attributes like age, gender, race, etc. based on which individuals may differ from each other. The heterogeneity in diversity research has been explained with the help of underlying theories like social identity (Tajfel and Turner, 1979), similarity-attraction (Byrne, 1971), and self-categorization (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher and Wetherell, 1987). These theories have been differentiated based on the perspectives of social and personal identity of individuals. The social identity of an individual depends on group membership, while personal identity is less or more independent of group memberships. The self-categorization theory is refers to where an individual engages in a group based on social comparisons like status, income and education to differentiate between their in-groups and others into different relevant groups (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher and Wetherell, 1987). Whereas social identity theory states that individuals' perceptions classify themselves into social groups based on certain attributes (e.g., age, race and gender) (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Similarity-attraction theory highlights that as individuals are likely to be attracted toward those who possess similar attributes and attitudes, in contrast, they feel challenged with others who have dissimilar attitudes, values and experiences (Byrne, 1971). Collectively, these theories offer the conceptual foundation of relational demography theory (Tsui, Egan and Iii, 1992), which proposes that demographic attributes within work units will highly influence an individual's behavior and attitudes. Conclusively, these theories address the negative perspective of diversity in workgroups related to diversity such as race, gender, age, nationality. However, these theories suggest that a homogenous group of people are more productive and have less conflict rather than diverse teams due to attraction toward in-group members with similar characteristics.

To Batmomolin, Sadikin, Hadi, Gunawan, and Sadana (2022), diversity is the deliberate action performed by an organization to develop a diverse workforce made up of qualified and competent workers. According to Mousa (2020), workplace diversity management refers to accepting individual career aspirations without seeing differences in religion, family status, race, ethnicity, and other related factors as obstacles. Diversity is defined as the coexistence of people affiliated with different social classes. Even if the firm claims to have a relatively homogenous workforce, employees will almost always differ along the lines of social identity aspects such as gender, age, color, opinions, and values (Yadav & Lenka, 2020).

Ekejiuba, U. C., Muritala, T. A., Abubakar, H. L. and Sharma, A., (2023) profit maximization is the aim of every organization, regardless of industry. The company must accomplish this in order to satisfy the wants of the customers who will then finance the enterprise or pay for the product and/or service. This can only be accomplished through the organization's effective and efficient staff, who are required to keep current clients and draw in new ones through top-notch customer service. With the hope of improving service delivery to customers, many organizations' management strategies center on finding and keeping talented employees with the appropriate skills, knowledge, and attitudes. This is true regardless of the employees' educational, racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds. The recent rise in migration, particularly from poor to developed nations in search of better pastures, has greatly increased the diversity of the labour pool, allowing companies to pick and choose who to hire (Ekejiuba, U. C., Muritala, T. A., Abubakar, H. L. and Sharma, A., 2023).

Diversity is all about differences and dissimilarities among people. Although an organization claims to be relatively homogenous, yet employees vary along with social identity characteristics such as demographic variables (i.e., age, gender, race and ethnicity), values, beliefs or cultural backgrounds (Weber, Sadri and Gentry, 2018).

Ngalo, Ogohi and Ibrahim (2023). organisations should be aware that the same diversity plan may not be successful in every organisation. This may be due to varying hierarchical structures which makes some leaders incapable of managing diversity and creating an inclusive atmosphere.

Library staff management

Harun Ar Rashid (2023) Library staff management refers to the process of organizing and overseeing the activities of staff members who work in a library. This includes everything from hiring and training new employees to delegating tasks, evaluating performance, and providing ongoing support and guidance. Effective staff management is essential to ensure that library services are delivered efficiently and effectively. A good management of staff diversity in the workplace can help reduce lawsuits and increase marketing opportunities, recruitment, creativity, and business image. Diversity can have a positive impact on employee morale and the development of a working environment that feels inclusive to everyone that works in the organization . Diversity is about everyone. It is about creating a working culture that respects, welcomes, and harnesses differences for the benefit of the academic library (Fagbe, Fagbe, and Folorunso-Ako, 2019).

According to Rafiq, Batool, Ali and Ullah (2021) librarians need to acquire such skills as online navigation skills, social media use skills, skills for developing online institutional repository among others to effectively meet the information needs of their users. In a recent empirical study conducted by Omoisejimi, Eyaufe, Nwobu and Nweke (2019) in their study which revealed that, librarians in university libraries in South-South needs such training to acquire digital skills required for effective service delivery in such areas as e-mail Service, e-reference service, digitization services, OPAC service, e-library service, and selective dissemination of Information on social media networks among others.

Librarians/managers in the library should learn to recommend/grant their staff the opportunity to partake in some programmes in their specialty (cataloguing and classification, e-library, serials, etc) considering their very positions and the future of the library. This will increase their zeal and ability to learn fast and most importantly these acquired knowledge will positively impact on their library operations and services to the university, community whom they inter-relate with. Furthermore, it would provide the enabling environment for the management to adequately manage staff diversity for effective service delivery. Effective leaders inspire and communicate; leading by example, recognizing and celebrating achievements and propel teams to greater success of the organization.

Omoisejimi, Eyaufe, Nwobu and Nweke (2019) maintained that university library management should support the training and retraining of their librarians through TETFUND and other sources to ensure that their libraries are equipped with capable librarians who can function effectively in the face of the 21st Century information demands of the library users among others.

Academic libraries are now promoting diversity because of the advantages of having diverse workforce. Heads of academic libraries should strive to provide a working environment that treats people with fairness and respect and where the talents and resources of all employees are utilized to the fullest (Fagbe, Fagbe and Folorunso-Ako, 2019).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study which focused on managing library staff diversity for effective service delivery, bringing transformative and dynamic nature of staff diversity for effective service delivery required training and retraining on the job. Managing library staff diversity for effective service delivery will bring the opportunity of learning new things and equally give staff a hands-on experience of current development in their fields to better their service and continue patronage of users in the library. Library managers should annually evaluate staff efforts and thereafter give incentives to staff who merited them as well as recommendations. These ideas will strengthen and encourage the efforts of other staff who are not serious on their job, and thus encourage efficiency and productivity for effective service delivery in the library.

Managing library staff diversity for effective service delivery will provide a springboard to usher staff into a higher realm of knowledge to effectively assist patrons while equipping them with leadership skills for better interpersonal relationship and human resource management.

Library managers should be intentional to approve their staff leave, sick leave, maternity leave, and training. Not approving staff leave and training discourages staff, engenders bad blood affects workflow thereby leading low productivity and inefficient. If managers of the library treat their staff maliciously, it will end up destroying each other and thereby bring evil report, the managers need to live love out loud in their actions and words, librarians are calling the users attention and making them aware of a better life to live in academic environs. Managers/management should focus on serving one another in love. Love is the main thing that should be at the center of every gathering of an organization and there we find committed, competent and noble staff to observe and learn from with evidence by their result of services they render.

Way forward

Based on the findings/conclusions, the following suggestions were recommended:

1. **Inadequate knowledge of staff needs:** Library managers should be more friendly to their staff, the act of friendliness attitude will help the library manager to know more of their staff needs especially

in terms of sick, lack or distress condition. Any manager whose focus is on staff need oftentimes stands a chance of getting the best service from the staffs thereby improving effective service delivery in the library/organization.

2. **Unstable Internet connectivity and poor power supply:** deteriorate efforts or zeal of the library staff in discharging their duties for effective service delivery in work environment. Based on this, library manager should provide a conducive environment, improve power supply to enable staffs to put in their best for effective service delivery in the library.
3. **Uncooperative staff attitude:** Library managers should look into the staff welfare system and preach for peace and unity of the organization/staff. Uncooperative attitude of staff brings the downfall of the service delivery despite of forthright efforts of the libraries managers/management. Libraries manager should ensure the peace and tranquility of their staff these will thereby bring effective service delivery in the library.
4. Library management/manager should not increase users' expectations only but also to know servicing their staff with the modern tools, promotions, workshops, conferences and other training will help to enrich/equipped the library staffs which in-turn will make them capable staffs who can function effectively in the 21st Century for effective service delivery.

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MANAGING STAFF DIVERSITY FOR INCLUSIVE PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES IN NIGERIA: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Diversity in the workplace, including libraries is a subject of contemporary discourse in the human resources public space. Staff management in any type of organization, including the public library is as important as the organization itself. To fulfill its overall set objectives in information services delivery, public libraries employ various categories of staff who come with diverse individual characteristics, values, beliefs, experiences, backgrounds, preferences, behaviours and idiosyncrasies, collectively referred to as staff diversity. The aim of the paper is to document issues and challenges vis-a-vis managing diversity for inclusive public library services in Nigeria. Concepts of staff diversity and inclusive library service were discussed. Also discussed are staff diversity and categories of staff in public libraries; benefits and need for staff diversity in public libraries. The paper identified some challenges of managing staff diversity in libraries, such as challenge of communication, cultural misunderstandings, discrimination, etc., and proffered strategies for managing staff diversity for inclusive public library services, such as promoting a culture of tolerance, open communication, and creating effective conflict management channels, among others. For effective and efficient management and implementation of staff diversity for inclusive library services in Nigeria therefore, the paper recommends as follows: public libraries should come up with extant and definitive policies and practices on staff diversity content; management of public libraries should provide avenues for staff to give feedback, using surveys and suggestion boxes to give a better understanding of how staff feel about diversity issues and policies in the library, among others.

KEYWORDS: Inclusive, Managing, Public library, Services, Staff diversity

Introduction

It is axiomatic that no organization, establishment or institution, no matter the type and size can survive without the requisite staff. Staff, also called human resources are collective terms for all the people employed by a company, agency, organization or institution. It is defined by the *British Dictionary* (2024) as “a group of persons, as employees, charged with the responsibility of carrying out the work of an establishment or executing some undertaking”.

Experts in organizational behavior are in agreement that employees cannot give their best except when effectively managed. To this end, staff management in any type of organization, including the public library is as important as the organization itself. Staff management involves supervising, guiding and improving employee's performance overtime. Public library establishments are therefore, expected to manage their staff efficiently to increase their productivity in information services delivery to their users.

A public library is a library, most often a lending library that is accessible by the general public and is usually funded from public sources, such as taxes (Rubin, 2010). The primary purpose of the public library is to provide resources in a variety of media and services to meet the needs of individuals and groups for education, information and personal development, including recreation and leisure (Gill, 2001).

Library service means a service that provides reading materials for convenient use; circulation of reading materials; service to help provide users with library materials, educational and recreational, audiovisual materials; or a combination of these services (IGI Global, 2022). On the other hand, inclusive library services, according to AI and the LinkedIn Community (2024) represents library services that are designed to respect and respond to the needs, preferences, and identities of all library users, regardless of their age, race, gender, disability, language, culture, religion or socio-economic status.

For effective and efficient library services, public libraries are expected to employ various categories of staff (professional, para-professionals and support staff), who come with diverse individual

characteristics, values, beliefs, experiences, backgrounds, preferences, behaviours and idiosyncrasies, collectively referred to as staff diversity. Staff diversity therefore, means similarities and differences among employees in terms of age, cultural background, physical abilities and disabilities, rank, race, religion, gender and sexual orientation, etc. Experiences have shown that managing this diversity to achieve the set objectives of a public library, for inclusive library services often pose a noticeable challenge to the library management. The pertinent question that comes to mind therefore, is how can public libraries manage and harness this staff diversity for inclusive services. It is against this backdrop that this article discusses the issues and challenges of managing staff diversity for inclusive public library services in Nigeria.

Concept of Staff Diversity

Generally, diversity in its simplest form means being composed of differing elements. Diversity in the workplace is a subject of contemporary discourse in the human resources (HR) public space. Diversity in the workplace means that an organization employs a diverse team of people that is reflective of the society and community it exists and operate. Staff diversity means that the workforce is made up of staff or employees with different in race, gender, identities, career backgrounds, skills, sexuality, experience, etc., (Velazquez, 2022). Diversity incorporates all of the elements that make individuals unique from one another, and while there are infinite differences in humans. Staff or workforce diversity focuses on the demographics of the workforce within the organization in the areas of gender, race, age, professional background and sexual orientation, etc.

Nearly every organization today recognizes the value of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), and tend to prioritize its implementation. For example, a Gartner Survey in April, 2020 found out that 69% of heads of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) said that they are prioritizing the advancement of underrepresented talent (*Gartner Glossary*, 2020). However, another recent Gartner Survey of 113 human resources leaders reveals that 88% feel their organization has not been effective at increasing diverse representation in their organizations. In the United States, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) enforces laws to protect individual employees in the workplace based on specified social categories that commonly face discrimination in American culture. These social categories are typically defined in some version of a Non-Discrimination Statement and Policy, such as: “The United States Government does not discriminate in employment on the bases of race, colour, religion, sex (including pregnancy and gender identity), national origin, political affiliation, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, genetic information, age, membership in an employee organization, retaliation, parental status, military service or other non-merit factor” (Velazquez, 2022).

According to Barker (2020), there are certainly more visible and invisible elements that make individuals differ from one another than those defined by these statements, but those broad categories can help organizations identify gaps in diversity. They also provide measurable metrics for organizations to set goals and make concerted efforts to boost diversity in the workforce. In the United States, more than 1600 CEOs have signed onto the CEO Action for Diversity and Inclusion pledge, which aims to rally the business community to advance diversity and inclusion efforts. The pledge focuses on commitments towards more open conversation towards diversity and inclusion, expanding consciousness bias training and having a strategic plan of action for all diversity and inclusion efforts that has to be approved by each organization's management and board of directors. These are positive steps in creating a more diverse work environment, but true progress involves holding leadership accountable for following through on the actions (Velazquez, 2022). However, diversity in the workplace most often comes naturally as different categories of persons with different orientations and backgrounds are employed. What is more important is the effective management of this diversity to bring inclusion, to achieve the overall goal of the organization (barker, 2020).

Today, most businesses and organizations are desirous of implementing diversity in the workplace as it has the potential for a great deal of benefits. When an organization proactively runs a workforce, they include individuals that are unique; individuals who come from distinct backgrounds and have different caste, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, locations, ethnicity, beliefs and education. With the rising significance of staff diversity, it is crucial to understand its effects because it has a significant influence, whether in the marketing sector, sales, finance or information services industries, where public libraries fit in.

Concept of Inclusive Library Services

Inclusive library service has attracted various meanings and definitions to itself. According to Grassi (2013), inclusive library service is an approach to library service that involves patrons with disabilities in an equitable way. It is a vital community resource, addressing the diverse information needs of all members in the community (Ezeabasili and Umeji, 2021). AI and the LinkedIn Community (2024) explains inclusive library service to mean those library services that respect and respond to the needs, preferences and identities of all library users and potential users, regardless of their age, race, gender, sexuality, disability, language, culture, religion or socio economic status.

Inclusive library service aims to eliminate barriers, promote equity and foster a sense of belonging and empowerment for everyone, who comes in contact with the library. Inclusive library services are

specifically important to public libraries because they reflect the values of the library profession, such as intellectual freedom, social responsibility, and diversity. They also support the mission and vision of the library as a public good, a democratic space, and a catalyst for learning and innovation. By providing inclusive library services, public libraries can enhance their quality, relevance and impact to the community, and contribute to the social and cultural development of the community in which they are located (AI and the LinkedIn Community, 2024).

Staff Diversity and their Categories in Public Libraries

The library profession recognizes the critical need for access to library and information resource, services and technologies by all people, especially those who may experience language or literary-related barriers; economic distress; cultural or social isolation; physical or attitudinal barriers; racism, discrimination on the bases of appearance, ethnicity, immigrant status, religious background, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or barriers to equal education, employment and housing. The vision of any public library therefore, is to play a crucial role in empowering diverse populations for full participation in a democratic society, and public libraries recognize the value of a diverse workforce in achieving this vision. By assembling the perspectives and experiences of multiple diversities – age, gender, ethnicity, physical ability, sexuality, etc., public libraries can continue to innovate and improve services and respond to the needs of the changing communities (American Library Association, 2023). More than that, to equip itself to provide efficient information services to the benefitting diverse populations, public libraries employ diverse staff, categories into professional and non-professional (support staff) (Kalu and Ndulaka, 2018).

The librarians constitute the professional library staff. According to Reitz (2004), cited in Kalu and Ndulaka (2018), a librarian is a professionally trained person responsible for the care of a library and its contents, including the selection, processing and organization of materials and the delivery of information, instruction and loan services to meet the needs of its users. Librarians are those professionals that are trained to carry out core duties of a library beyond the day-to-day routines of library officers and library attendants. These duties include cataloguing, classification, indexing, collection development, serials management and readers' services (Ezeani, Eke and Ugwu, 2012). There is no general educational qualification for librarians across countries of the world. The accepted policy of the American Library Association (ALA) states: "The master's degree from a programme accredited by the American Library Association (or from a master's level programme in library and information studies accredited or recognized by the appropriate national body of another country) is the appropriate professional degree for librarians." This means that in America and other advanced countries, one needs to have a master's degree to qualify as a librarian. However, in Nigeria, before one qualifies as a librarian, he must be a graduate of a recognized university with a minimum of a first degree in library and information science. The Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria, which is the organization responsible for regulating the practice of librarianship in Nigeria, specifies that before a person becomes a librarian, he must be a holder of a bachelor's degree in library and information science and must be certified by the Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria to practice librarianship (LRCN, 2013).

The non-professional library staff are those who does not have the requisite qualifications of a librarian but work as a library staff. These categories of library staff perform the non-professional duties, which usually do not require high level training. They may be involved in all library operations at all levels. They may manage libraries or contribute very specialized expertise in some specific field. They may engage in routine activities, supervise and direct other staff. The range and complexity if their duties vary with each position, the size and type of library in which they work, and each library's specific needs, goals or mission (American Library Association, 2024). Categories of non-professional library staff include:

Library Officers: These categories of non-professional library staff are often referred to as para-professionals. They assist the professionals in performing some professional library duties. They constitute the highest level of non-professional library staff. In Nigeria, these categories of staff possess the Higher National Diploma (HND) or the National Diploma (ND).

Library Assistants/Attendants: They constitute the most common category of non-professionals in the library. In most cases, these are the category of staff uninformed library users see as librarians. The reason is that often times, they are the group of people library users meet for inquiries whenever they come to the library. They also take the orders of library users. They can be likened to the non-commissioned foot soldiers in the army. Library Assistants assist the librarians in making sure the materials processed by the professionals get to the users without hitch. Sometimes, Library Assistants perform directional duties, as they direct library patrons to where they would locate appropriate information. Library Assistants possess such qualifications as WASC, GCE, SSCE or their equivalent. In some libraries, they are referred to as attendants, especially if they have lower qualifications.

Support Staff: They render support services to the librarians and the library system. They may not have any knowledge of librarianship, but may be experts in their field of specialization, but still work in the library.

They include: administrative staff, computer operators, programmers, library porters, security officers and cleaners.

For public libraries to implement staff diversity, they must not only recognize but respect each staff category and cadre, who in turn put their knowledge, expertise and experiences to provide robust information services to users.

Benefits of Staff Diversity in Public Libraries

A diverse public library brings together individual staff with different orientations, backgrounds, experiences perspectives and problem-solving approaches. This diversity of thoughts engenders creativity and leads to innovative library services. Cook-Campbell (2023) observes that diverse teams are more likely to generate fresh ideas and develop unique approaches to challenges. A diverse public library staff, according to People Scout (2024) will help public libraries better understand target demographics and what moves them, align the library's culture with the demographic make-up of the community and increase user satisfaction by improving how staff interact with a more diverse clientele. Dike (2013) has enumerated the impact of staff diversity in public libraries to include:

1. Different Perspectives Yielding Better Results: Since diversity in public libraries entails diverse employees with differences in gender, age, cultural backgrounds, unique skills and experiences, they are bound to have different perspectives in planning and managing the resources of the library, with the capacity of yielding better results. Different perspectives can result in making important decisions that ultimately result to improvement in the provision of inclusive public library services.

2. Different and Unique View Points: The recognizable and infinite differences of the individuals in a library team, who come from different experiences and life histories make their viewpoints different and each unique. A diverse library team brings about creativity, exposure, new ideas, new thoughts and new outcomes in information service delivery.

3. New and Better Innovations: Information services delivery in every type of library today demands a great deal of constant innovations always aimed at new ways to satisfy the information needs of users. A diverse public library staff has a higher and better chance of innovations. This is made possible through combining different ideas, perspectives, and competencies that results in innovations.

4. Better Decision-Making and Creative Solutions: Staff diversity in public libraries has benefits in better decision-making, multiple and creative solutions. Congregating similar group of people lacks variety and problem-solving skills. When compared to diverse people within the public library establishment, they are found to provide quicker and better solutions, from their varied skills and qualities, which in turn benefits the library.

5. Boost Productivity: Making diversity a policy matter, and prioritizing it in the management of public libraries maximizes productivity in terms of satisfying the information needs of your users. With diversity, there is no negative atmosphere that results in burnout. Unique ideas and passion bring excellent outcomes and increases the productivity of the library.

6. Increased Employee Engagement and Morale Boost: When different kinds of people work together, each one of them gets opportunity to grow more from what they see or like from other people. When library staff understands that they can mingle, interact well, included, they feel valued, accepted. The result is that they are happier, perform better, and look to stay with the library longer, which culminates in increased staff engagement and reduce employee turnover.

7. Other benefits of staff diversity in public libraries may include reduction in bias, attracting new talents, and increase in brand value.

Based on the above benefits, Citoka (2020) concludes that appropriate handling of library staff diversity may lead to more committed staff, pleased and high-ranking employees, as well as making the library a more efficient one.

Challenges of Managing Staff Diversity in Public Libraries

Despite the amazing benefits of staff diversity in public libraries, bringing diverse group of people together naturally presents some inherent challenges that the management of public libraries will always struggle to overcome. Some of the challenges identified by Kallidus (2023) include:

1. Challenge of Communication: This can play out in various areas and dimensions within the library for a variety of reasons. They may be language barriers, different communication styles or preferences among

the diverse staff. They may be generational difference in communication patterns, where the younger staff members prefer to communicate using slangs and other contemporary communication gadgets. For instance, a staff who speaks English as a second language may struggle to comprehend and follow the conversation in group conversations or meeting.

2. Cultural Misunderstandings: Diversity in cultures is inherent. When library staff come from different cultural backgrounds and orientations, misunderstanding may arise. For example, giving a thumbs up, using your left hand, putting someone on the back, shaking hands with a woman, a man embracing a woman openly, etc., may be offensive in some cultures, resulting in deeper differences and misunderstanding, which may undermine group cohesion.

3. Slower Decision-Making: Staff diversity engenders different perspectives in opinions and ideas, which no doubt brings about innovations, but can slow decision-making and progress towards the library's set goals. For instance, a staff who challenges the status-quo in a management or staff meeting may bring up an important point that may need to be explored. This will delay decision-making, which may affect the library negatively.

4. Discrimination: Staff diversity often brings about more biases, discrimination and some level of harassment, resulting in staff frustration. According to Kallidus (2023), sixty-one percent of workers in public libraries have witnessed discrimination based on age, race, ethnicity, gender, cadre, disability identity, etc. This can prevent library staff from bringing their real selves to work, thereby hindering innovation, creativity and team work.

5. Inequitable Inclusion: An inclusive library may mean different things to different sets of people. For staff with disability, it might include providing a staircase ramp or elevator. For a working parent, it might include a childcare flexible spending account. For staff who their children and wards are in junior schools, it might include going for "school runs" during working hours, etc., as such the library will feel inclusive to some, but not to others.

Strategies for Managing Staff Diversity for Inclusive Public Library Services

Managing staff diversity in public libraries, as earlier discussed presents a set of unique challenges to the library management. In the coming years, libraries that understand how to manage staff diversity effectively will hold a competitive advantage in information service provision. The stated challenges can be mitigated to bring inclusive library service, if the library make concerted efforts to encourage a more heterogeneous environment through promoting a culture of tolerance, open communication, and creating conflict management channels to address issues that may arise. One of the first steps public libraries take to ensure inclusiveness of their services is to assess the current situation, what is obtainable and identify the gaps and opportunities for improvement. This can be done by conducting a diversity audit, which is a systematic process of collecting and analyzing data on the representation and participation of different groups in the library's collection, programmes, policies and staff. By doing a diversity audit in both staff and collection, you can gain a better understanding of your library's strengths and weaknesses and set realistic and measurable goals for inclusive services.

Once you have assessed the inclusiveness of your library resources and services you can design and deliver them in a manner that is responsive and respectful to the diversity of your users and potential users. AI and LinkedIn Community (2024) argues that for the library management to effectively manage staff diversity for inclusive library services, it must understand their backgrounds and how their behavior and beliefs can affect their decision-making within a diverse environment. To do this, library management must use inclusive language and communication such as plain language, multiple formats and culturally appropriate terms and images; provide access and accommodation, like ramps, elevators, assistive technology for the disabled groups, and flexible policies and procedures; diversify library collections and resources to reflect different groups, interests, experiences, and perspectives; develop and promote inclusive programmes and services to engage and empower library users, and finally, collaborate with other organizations that share her vision and values to help it reach diverse audiences. People Scout (2024) provides the following tips for managing library staff diversity for inclusive public library service:

1. Improving Communication: To manage a diverse library staff for inclusive library services, library management need to ensure that it effectively communicate with staff. Policies, procedures, safety rules and other important information should be designed to overcome language barriers by translating materials and using pictures and signage where applicable. Library management should exploit staff diversity to overcome language barriers by using staff who may have knowledge of the language of the local community in the provision of services. Translation services may also be necessary. Some guidance on when and how to use different available platforms to communicate could be highly beneficial to staff. You may suggest slangs for quick questions and informal communication, while you use the phone, in-person meetings, or Zoom for more in-depth conversations.

2. Treat Each Staff as an Individual: To get the best from staff, library management should avoid making assumptions about staff from different backgrounds. Instead, look at each staff as an individual and judge successes and failures on the individual's merit, rather than attributing actions or inactions to their cultural background, religion or other collective orientations. The library leadership should create an environment in which staff welcome feedback and education when they have said or done something potentially offensive. Teachable comments can help each staff do their part to provide service and create a more inclusive library environment, while expanding their own knowledge and understanding of other cultures.

3. Encourage Staff to Work in Diverse Groups for Effective Decision-Making: Diverse work teams enable staff get to know and value one another on individual basis and can help break preconceived notions and cultural misunderstandings. The librarian should create room for such situation by allowing more time for groups to work together and consider different ideas, debate them and come to more informed decisions. There are many benefits of allowing staff to work together and speak, even in an area outside their expertise. However, the librarian should have the capacity to take all ideas into consideration and make final decision and decide how to move forward ultimately. In doing so, he must acknowledge and recognize contributions to ensure other staff feel valued for their contributions. At this point, library staff can feel better disposed to provide inclusive library services.

4. Open- Mindedness for Equitable Inclusion: Library management should recognize and encourage staff to recognize that one's own experience, background and culture are not the only with value to the library. An inclusive public library will always be a work-in-progress, and should be driven by feedback from staff. Library management should focus on what should impact the most people, but also pay attention to the feedback from those having unequitable employee experience. For example, you may have two staff who may identify as LGBTQ+, but they feel the least supported. Use their feedback to elevate their experience and create more equitable inclusion. Library management should also look for ways to incorporate a diverse range of perspectives, skills and competencies into efforts to achieve the set objectives of the library.

5. Avoid Discrimination on Recruitment: To build a diverse library, it is crucial to recruit staff from a variety of backgrounds. Libraries that commit to recruiting a diverse employees have a large pull of applicants to choose from, which can lead to finding more qualified candidates, who will be better disposed to deliver inclusive services. This requires that those who make employment decisions in the library should overcome every form of bias in recruitment interview, so as to recruit the most qualified candidates; those with the right education, credentials, experience and skill sets. Diversity and inclusion must go hand in hand, and library management should be able to explain the importance of both to staff, and set expectations through an established code of conduct. Management should be able to discuss diversity and inclusion goals and progress throughout the employee life cycle, including during recruitment and onboarding, as well as during staff meetings. Every staff should be clear that diversity and inclusion is a priority, and that discrimination will not be allowed or tolerated.

6. Base Standards on Objective Criteria: Library management that is desirous of harnessing staff diversity for inclusive library services should set one standard of rules for all categories of library staff regardless of background. Management should ensure that all employee actions, including disciplines follow the same standardized criteria to make sure each employee is treated the same.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Staff management in public library is very important. Today, diversity in the workplace, including public libraries is a subject of contemporary discourse in the human resources public space. For effective and efficient library services, public libraries employ various categories of staff who come with diverse individual characteristics, values, beliefs, experiences, backgrounds, preferences, behaviours and idiosyncrasies, collectively referred to as staff diversity. Different types of libraries are making concerted efforts to adapt to this diversity in their staff make-up because it comes with great deal of benefits, though without challenges. Encouraging and managing staff diversity is a plus to public libraries that are desirous of providing inclusive library services. In a global talent market, libraries that can successively manage staff diversity will have a competitive advantage over others in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, and innovation in information services delivery and library branding.

For effective and efficient management and implementation of staff diversity for inclusive library services in Nigeria therefore, the paper recommends as follows:

1. Public libraries should come up with extant and definitive policies and practices on staff diversity content, which will protect employees' rights and stay compliant with government regulations.
2. Management of public libraries should provide avenues for staff to give feedback, using surveys and suggestion boxes to give a better understanding of how staff feel about diversity issues and policies in the library.

3. In addition to written policies, it is essential to ensure that un-official “rules”, library philosophy and values are thoroughly explained to all categories of library staff effectively.
4. Libraries should a culture of tolerance, open communication, and creating conflict management channel.

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OPEN SCIENCE AND GENDER EQUITY: PROMOTING INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY IN RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge of equity is a broad concept. Although it is linked to the goals of Open Science, it is rarely discussed in the scientific community. The term refers to a variety of aspects such as epistemology, research methods, data analysis, inclusive education, equal representation, participation, and science communication. It is reflected on individual, institutional, and structural levels. The study attempts to the impact of open science and gender equity: inclusivity and diversity in research. The study explored four research objectives which focused on how open science can foster gender equity, the benefits of open science in promoting gender diversity in research, the challenges of gender equity in promoting diversity in research and strategies for promoting gender inclusivity and diversity in research. The study employed a descriptive survey design and the population of the study is 300 librarians. The results of the study revealed some challenges and strategies in promoting gender inclusivity and diversity in research. These strategies are as follows helping individual women succeed, encouraging financial inclusion, speaking out against gender-based violence, becoming an activist in the educational sector, supporting women's leadership and education, and keeping in mind that gender is not the same as biological sex.

Keywords: Gender Equity, Gender Equality, Open Science Education, Research.

INTRODUCTION

Beyond the legal semantics of gender equality, Nigeria and any other developing country treading the path of development are expected to demonstrate realistic gender mainstreaming in access to education and research. Gender equity in research is not just a privilege but a fundamental right of every Nigerian citizen. Hence, individuals are legally guaranteed to have access to research irrespective of sex, race and religion. According to Idiong (2023), the significant progress in education and research of so many countries is possible through the wings of their intellectual capacity. Gender equity in education and research is value-laden because it drives sustainable global and national development. Research opens the door for enhanced capacity and potential needed for people to succeed and to contribute to societal and national growth. Therefore, in the real sense of it, "governments ought to make gender equity in education and research part of their value system and not to prioritize it because priorities can change at any time but values do not.

In Nigeria, gender equity in education intersects with other factors such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status and geographical location. According to Amadeo (2019), there are two dimensions to equity in education: The first is fairness, which implies making sure that personal and social circumstances are not obstacles to achieving educational potential. Examples include gender, socio-economic status, or ethnic origin. The second is inclusion, which implies ensuring a basic minimum standard of education for all. For example, everyone should be able to read, write, and do simple arithmetic. However, Mehnert (2019) stated that "gender equity is not just a social issue; it is a massive economic opportunity. Secondly, gender equity is not a synonym for women's rights. It is for both men and women.

Gender equity therefore is "the process of allocating resources, programmes and decision-making fairly to both males and females without any discrimination based on sex and equally addressing any imbalances in the benefits available to males and females" (CAAWS, 2019).

The concept of gender equity recognizes that women and men have different needs and power and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies the imbalances between the sexes.

This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities (CAAWS, 2019). In the context of this study, gender equity is a means while more access to education by women is the end and development is the outcome. Gender equity in education does not mean that women and men will become the same, but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities, research ability and opportunities are guaranteed through equal education obtainable not depending on whether one was born male or female. Even when there are differences, they should not be equated with inferiority or superiority (Eister, 2017), for no human is less of the other. Therefore, 'women education' is defined as the education that would make a woman to become aware of herself and her capacity to exploit her environment and involves training in literacy and vocational skills to enable her to become functional in society (Afebendeughe &Ugwu, 2001).

'Women education' is synonymous with 'women empowerment. According to Aja-Okorie (2013), an educated woman is an empowered woman and more marketable in terms of employment; better employment implies more earnings for the family as well as improved well-being all of which contribute to poverty reduction and economic growth. The Federal Government of Nigeria in 2004 succinctly acknowledged education as an instrument of parity for excellence in national development. In 1971, the United Nations gave the following as factors for national development: equal living standard for all, equal share of all in profit, similarly equal distribution of income and capital, expansion of facilities regarding education, health, shelter and social welfare and preservation of the environment (Pamnani, 2013). National development in the context of this study is the mobilization and articulation of the human resources potentials in Nigeria through education irrespective of gender and exploiting them for the wellbeing of all.

Statement of problem

Gender equity recognizes that women and men have different needs and power and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies the imbalances between the sexes. Presently this recognition has brought about some controversies due to the neglect of gender equity and the belief that a particular gender is better than another. This notion has been extended to research and has been a barrier in creating a balance for promoting the inclusivity of both genders in open science and education as well. Therefore, this study tends to promote inclusivity and diversity of gender equity in research.

Objective of the study

The general objective of the study is to (to do what with this? Relationship? Influence? Effect? Be specific with your general objective) open science and gender equity in promoting inclusivity and diversity in research. The specific objectives are to;

1. Examine how open science can foster gender equity
2. Examine the benefit of open science in promoting gender equity in research
3. Find out the challenges of gender equity in promoting diversity in research
4. Find out strategies for promoting gender inclusivity and diversity in research

Research questions

1. How can open science foster gender equity?
2. What are the benefits of open science in promoting gender equity in research?
3. What are the challenges of gender equity in promoting diversity in research?
4. What are the strategies for promoting gender inclusivity and diversity in research?

Literature Review

Historically, scientific research has neglected differences between male and female organisms and has placed a disproportionate focus on male models. Since the turn of the millennium, this male bias has been increasingly recognized as both unscientific and unethical, but the tendency to accept men as the norm in research remains a key source of gender inequity. Consideration of sex and gender differences is essential to scientific research. Underrepresentation or even exclusion of women and gender-diverse people remains a problem in both clinical and social sciences. As such, despite increasing recognition of the importance of sex and gender as health determinants, the gender data gap remains and poses disproportionate risks to women and gender-diverse people risks that include misdiagnosis and inappropriate treatment. Sex and gender differences also affect outcomes in engineering, technology, and socio-economic research.

Heidari, et al (2016) said report should show how sex and gender were taken into account in the design of the study, ensure adequate representation of males and females and justify reasons for the exclusion of males or females. Methodological choices about sex and gender in relation to study population and analytical approach should be reported and justified in the same way as other methodological choices. Also Allen and Mehler (2019) said Despite an appetite for change, equality, diversity and inclusivity (EDI)-related issues continue to ripple through the world of research and academia, from inequity at the point of entry into education, through to lack of diversity and equality in senior roles.

Van E. H, et al. (2022) in a study on The Sex and Gender Equity in Research (SAGER) guidelines: Implementation and checklist development, observed that Many research funders now require that sex and gender be balanced among study subjects or that authors justify imbalances; for example, NIH Policy on Sex as a Biological Variable, TransNIH Strategic Plan for Women's Health Research In 2015, the recognition that many papers did not report the sex or gender of participants in the study prompted a collaborative group of experts from the European Association of Science Editors (EASE) to develop the Sex and Gender Equity in Research (SAGER) guidelines, “a comprehensive procedure for reporting of sex and gender information in study design, data analyses, results and interpretation of findings.” Although endorsement of the SAGER guidelines quickly followed, uptake and incorporation of the guidelines into editorial policies have been slow, potentially due in part to concerns about mandating, shortage of time for editors, insufficient awareness, or technical challenges (for example, issues around the incorporation of new requirements for authors into electronic submission systems).

Challenges of gender equity in promoting diversity in research are tasks or problems that involve uncertainty and require the skills, abilities, motivations, finance and knowledge for gender equity. Prince and Francis, (2023) held that lack of women in leadership, workplace discrimination and inequality, imbalance in unpaid care work, social norms and cultural practices, Inadequate access to education and healthcare, lack of workshops and seminars and many more are challenges of gender equity in promoting diversity in research.

When it comes to recommendations on how to make Open Science more inclusive there is no one answers that fits all. Pownall et al. (2021) said that since fields of research, infrastructure, and marginalization experiences differ widely between researchers and institutions, approaches toward knowledge equity need to be differentiated and specific. Institutions, as well as researchers, must make an effort to educate themselves, reflect on knowledge equity in their area of responsibility, and actively work towards more equitable academia and science. Furthermore, the question of equity in the context of knowledge is not a finite one.

Open science is changing how science is conducted, but it is still developing and will take time to consolidate in the mainstream (Moher et al., 2018). Within open science standards are still developing. At present, there is a lack of concessions over single-blind, double-blind and open peer review (Tomkins et al., 2017). The benefits of open science in promoting gender diversity in Research brings about Efficiency and quality of research, innovation, Collaboration and Societal Benefits, boost search engine optimization, Open science helps to boost search engine optimization, Promotion of scientific integrity, Global scientific networking and collaboration and helps to connect with others. Openscholar, (2023) opined that open science increases efficiency and quality of research, allows for an expansion of innovation, escalates collaboration and Societal benefits as benefits in promoting gender diversity. Prince and Francis, (2023) also agreed that Open science provides individuals with an increased access to research, which in turn, leads to more innovation of new products and ideas, Open science helps to boost search engine optimization and Collaboration.

Strategies for promoting gender inclusivity and diversity in research are those *general plans put in place to achieve one or more long-term or overall goals in promoting gender inclusivity and diversity in research.* Gild Collective (2023) stated that to sustain lasting researchers engagement and inclusivity, it is crucial to actively work towards gender equality. Here are some strategies that can implement to promote gender inclusivity. (a) Company policies need to reflect an inclusive culture. This includes specific guidelines that are free of gendered language, preventive measures against sexual harassment, and policies that provide equal opportunities for all genders. (b) promote gender inclusivity, organizations should ensure that employees are paid equitably for the same work, regardless of their gender. This sends out a clear message about the company's dedication towards fostering an inclusive environment. (c) Companies with women in leadership roles often outperform those without. Therefore, it is important to encourage gender diversity in the leadership team.

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey method. The population of this study consisted of 300 scholars and librarians in higher institutions in Rivers and Bayelsa. State The researcher made use of the purposive sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled: “Open Science and Gender Equity: Promoting Inclusivity and Diversity In Research Questionnaire” (OSGEPIDRQ). The OSGEPIDRQ was a 25-item instrument and was scored on a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Accepted (SA)

4 points; Accepted (A) 3 points; Not-Accepted (N) 2 points; and Strongly Not-Accepted (SN) 1 point. The instrument was administered by the researcher and his research assistant through a social media platform. The exercise lasted for one month (four weeks). The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics and frequency with a mean criterion of 2.5, and any item with a mean score of 2.5 and above is accepted while items with a mean score below 2.5 is rejected.

Results

Research Question 1: How can open science foster gender equity in research?

S/N	How can open science foster gender equity in research	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remark
1	Creation of education infrastructure for all	180	70	45	0.5	3.41	Accepted
2	Empowering women to embrace mathematics an research	150	90	45	1.5	3.25	Accepted
3	By instilling confidence in women and making them understand that	165	110	25	0.8	3.4	Accepted
4	Face-to-face training activities	170	120	10	0.6	4	Accepted
5	Organization of workshops and seminars	110	150	25	1.4	3.25	Accepted
	Grand Mean					3.36	Accepted

Table 1 above shows that the highest mean score (4) “By face-to-face training activities” is the highest response on how open science can foster gender equity in research. Items 1 to 5 indicates accepted that open science foster gender equity in research. The grand mean of 3.36 also indicate accepted. Thus, scholars and librarians agreed that pen science foster gender equity in research. It simply implies that through face-to-face training activities and programmes, gender equity in research will be facilitated.

Research Question 2: what are the benefits of open science in promoting gender diversity in research?

Table 2 The benefits of open science in promoting gender diversity in research

S/N	The benefits of open science in promoting gender diversity in Research	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remark
6	Efficiency and quality of research	170	120	10	0.7	4	Accepted
7	It brings about innovation	170	120	10	0.5	4	Accepted
8	Collaboration and Societal Benefits	110	150	25	1.5	3.25	Accepted
9	Open science helps to boost search engine optimization	145	80	55	1.2	2.96	Accepted
10	Promotion of scientific integrity	185	65	45	0.5	3.3	Accepted
11	Global scientific networking and collaboration	191	61	42	0.6	3.32	Accepted
12	It helps to connect with others	165	110	25	0.45	3.4	Accepted
	Grand Mean					3.46	

Table 2 shows that efficiency and quality of research with the mean score of (4) is the highest benefit of open science in promoting gender diversity in research. Items 6 to 12 indicate accepted that open science foster gender equity in research. The grand mean of 3.46 also indicate accepted. Thus, scholars and librarians agreed that pen science allows you to benefit from current scientific as its increases efficiency, global scientific, quality of research, allows for an expansion of innovation, and escalates collaboration.

Research Question 3: what are the challenges of gender equity in promoting diversity in research?

Table 3: The challenges of gender equity in promoting diversity in research

S/N	The challenges of gender equity in promoting diversity in research	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remark
13	Lack of women in leadership	180	70	45	5	3.41	Accepted
14	Poverty and lack of economic Opportunity	150	90	45	15	3.25	Accepted
15	Workplace discrimination and inequality	165	110	25	0	3.4	Accepted
16	Imbalance in unpaid care work	145	80	55	20	2.96	Accepted
17	Social norms and cultural practices	110	150	25	15	3.25	Accepted
18	Inadequate access to education and healthcare	145	80	55	20	2.96	Accepted
19	Lack of workshops and seminars	185	65	45	5	3.31	Accepted
	Grand Mean					2.74	Accepted

Table 3 above shows the responses of the respondents on the challenges of gender equity in promoting diversity in research. The table revealed that the lack of women in leadership with a mean score of 3.41 is the biggest challenge of gender equity in promoting diversity in research. Items 13 to 19 indicate accepted. Also the grand mean of 2.74 indicate accepted thus scholars and librarians agreed that lack of women in leadership, poverty and lack of economic, opportunity, workplace discrimination and inequality, imbalance in unpaid care work, social norms and cultural practices, inadequate access to education and healthcare, lack of workshops and seminars are some of the challenges of gender equity in promoting diversity in research.

Research Question 4: what are the strategies for promoting gender inclusivity and diversity in research?

Table 4. The strategies for promoting gender inclusivity and diversity in research

S/N	The strategies for promoting gender inclusivity and diversity in research	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Rema
20	By helping individual women succeed	180	70	45	5	3.41	Accepted
21	Encouraging financial inclusion	150	90	45	15	3.25	Accepted
22	Speak out against gender-based Violence	165	110	25	0	3.4	Accepted
23	Become an activist in the educational sector	170	120	10	0	4	Accepted
24	Support women's leadership and education.	110	150	25	15	3.25	Accepted
25	Keeping in mind that gender is not the same as biological sex	50	85	65	100	2.15	Rejected
	Grand Mean					3.24	

From table 4 above, the respondents revealed that the highest strategy in promoting gender inclusivity and diversity in research is to become an activist in the educational sector, this has a mean score of (4). Items 20 to 24 indicate accepted while item 25 rejected. Also the grand mean of 3.24 indicate accepted thus scholars and librarians agreed that helping individual women succeed, Encouraging financial inclusion, Speak out against gender-based Violence, Become an activist in the educational sector, Support women's leadership and education are some of the strategies for promoting gender inclusivity and diversity in research.

Discussion of findings

This study investigated open science and gender equity: promoting inclusivity and diversity in research. This study investigated how open science can foster gender equity, the benefit of open science in promoting gender equity in research, the challenges of gender equity in promoting diversity in research and strategies for promoting gender inclusivity and diversity in research. The study revealed that scholars and librarians accept open science to foster gender equity through the creation of education infrastructure for all, empowering women to embrace science, technology, engineering, mathematics and research, instilling confidence in women and making them understand that they can do all things, By face to face training activities, and Organization of workshop and seminars. The present study is similar in findings to that of Allen and Mehler (2023) on Open Science challenges, benefits and tips in early career and beyond. They found out that open science empowering men and women to embrace science and instilling confidence in them to understand that there is nothing they cannot do.

The challenges of gender equity in promoting diversity in research were also revealed in this research. These challenges are highlighted as Lack of women in leadership, Poverty and lack of economic opportunity, Workplace discrimination and inequality, Imbalance in unpaid care work, Social norms and cultural practices, Inadequate access to education and health care, and Lack of workshops and seminars. The present study agrees with the findings to that Bennett EA (2021) on Open science from a qualitative, feminist perspective: Epistemological dogmas and a call for critical examination: *Psychology of Women Quarterly*. He found out that lack of women in leadership, Poverty and lack of economic opportunity and Workplace discrimination and inequality are some of the challenges of gender equity in promoting diversity in research.

From the study, the strategies in promoting gender inclusivity and diversity in research were revealed. From the study, the strategies were as follows helping individual women succeed, Encouraging financial inclusion, speaking out against gender-based violence, Becoming an activist in the educational sector, Supporting women's leadership and education, and Keeping in mind that gender is not the same as biological sex. This present study is similar with the findings to that of Allen and Mehler (2023) on Open Science challenges, benefits and tips in early career and beyond. They found out that helping individual women succeed and encouraging financial inclusion, speaking out against gender-based violence are some of the strategies in promoting gender inclusivity and diversity in research.

Conclusion

Ultimately, to produce meaningful data in research, sex and gender considerations must be incorporated into the design of new trials and studies (and the statistical analyses associated with the studies). Nonetheless, efforts to improve the reporting of ongoing and completed studies represent a step in the right direction and will hopefully raise awareness among authors, regulators, and policymakers. Open science and gender equity a necessary conditions for women empowerment and national development. It will enable more women to become socio-economic, cultural and political change agents of our nation.

Recommendations

From the findings, the study highlighted the following recommendations that

1. There should be regular women empowerment to embrace science, technology, engineering, mathematics and research.
2. There should be the promotion of scientific integrations in women education.
3. Frequent organization of workshops and seminars to sensitize women on the benefits of gender equity for a better society.
4. Women active participation in leadership activities should be facilitated.

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PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVENESS THROUGH LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES IN TERRORIST-AFFECTED AREAS OF NORTH-EAST NIGERIA

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Abstract

The impact of terrorism in northeastern Nigeria was examined, as well as the contribution of libraries to the region's efforts to foster inclusivity and variety. It draws attention to the protracted insurgency carried out by organizations such as Boko Haram, which has caused deaths, displacement, and disruption of vital services. Libraries are described as being essential for both conserving cultural heritage and giving information to internally displaced individuals (IDPs). They also help underprivileged people gain influence and promote communication for the promotion of peace. Notwithstanding obstacles such as restricted financial resources and security worries, libraries present chances for cooperation and ingenuity in advancing diversity and reconstructing society following terrorist attacks.

Introduction

In regions ravaged by the scourge of terrorism, fostering diversity and inclusiveness is not just a moral imperative but also a strategic necessity for societal healing and progress. North-East Nigeria has been grappling with the devastating impact of terrorism for years, disrupting lives, displacing communities, and eroding the social fabric. Amidst this chaos, libraries and information services emerge as powerful agents of change, offering sanctuary, knowledge, and pathways to reconciliation. This article explores the pivotal role of libraries in promoting diversity and inclusiveness in the tumultuous landscape of North-East Nigeria.

Insurgency in the North-East of Nigeria

Insurgency has been plaguing the north-east part of Nigeria for almost two decades. Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe are the three principal states that make up the region. Goodluck, Jerome, Juliana and Ugwunwa (2018). The continuing armed conflict began as an Islamist sect called Boko Haram orchestrated a simple religious crisis. After ten years, the conflict has escalated into a full-fledged terrorist war, causing devastation to the environment, loss of life and infrastructure, poverty, health issues, and insecurity. A religious organization known as Boko Haram is interested in establishing an autonomous caliphate in northeastern Nigeria using whatever means necessary, including terrorism and armed conflict. A humanitarian catastrophe has arisen as a result of the Nigerian government's opposition to the sect's operations. OCHA (2017) noted that from the beginning of the crisis, around 20,000 individuals have lost their lives; millions of people have fled their homes as a result of the terrorist group's kidnapping of thousands of women, girls, and children; and OCHA estimates that 1.9 million people are internally displaced. While some of the internally displaced people (IDPs) find refuge in more safe metropolitan areas, others do so in improvised camps scattered throughout the region, which are guarded by military and paramilitary groups. Currently, over 190,000 IDPs are being housed in 32 official camps. Some IDPs reside in different parts of the nation with friends and family. The primary burden of providing for the needs of the IDPs inside and outside of these camps falls on the shoulders of the federal and state governments. Regretfully, the government has failed to live up to the necessary standards. IDPs urgently require humanitarian interventions due to the disruption of essential services like food, water, energy, healthcare, education, and information.

IDPs require information as well. According to Sambo (2017), information on the present state of the crisis, information on finding lost family members, and information on security, medical treatment, food, and shelter provisions are just a few of the things that internally displaced people require. Sambo bemoaned the lack of sufficient supplies in the IDP camps to address these needs. Additionally, according to UNICEF (2015), there were roughly 66,000 kids living in IDP camps in the area as of 2015.

A higher proportion of youngsters who are internally displaced reside outside of official camps. Formal education is not available to these children. The implications of not having access to education and knowledge are severe for the person, the community, and the country as a whole.

The Role of Libraries, Information Centers, and Librarians in Nation Security and Curbing Insurgency

Libraries have always played a significant part in the advancement of the country, so it makes sense that they would lead the present national security movement. Politicians and military officials use the term "national security" to support a policy goal. Because threats to any aspect of a nation's power generate security issues, national security thus refers to the defence of that nation's interests. Here, it assumes a broad definition as an integral part of national life (Hussain, 2008; Iradia, 2011). Libraries play a vital role in national security by providing a comprehensive approach rather than merely disseminating information in a certain field. about every facet of the Nigerian government's policy. In addition to the armed forces, the entire country is currently involved in economic, scientific, political, and social events and actions in all conceivable spheres of life in the war on terror and terrorism. This is a goal that the libraries can accomplish through their information-gathering and distribution processes (Hali, 2003). According to <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nationalsecurity>, "national security is the requirement to maintain the survival of the state through the use of economic, diplomatic, power projection, and political power." For this reason, information is essential to national security. This is due to the fact that the information provided or withheld determines where security and insecurity end. Any country can gain power from its ability to use information and the instruments that go along with it (Bordbar, 2000: Chorun, Beeteh, Ilo and Idachaba, 2014), and libraries and librarians are the finest people to do this.

The government and people of Nigeria must acknowledge the importance of information literacy and use in order to maintain national security in light of the country's current security crisis (Noruzi, 2006). Libraries continue to handle only information, which encompasses all forms of media used to shape that information. The actual cooperation and exchange of critical information between the two, the terrorized and the terrorists, is the only way to truly bring people who live in political, economic, religious, and ideological poles together. Since Nigeria is still developing its democracy at this point, ideological divisions, which are the conditions for terrorism's growth, can be overcome by effectively disseminating information (propaganda and counterpropaganda). To stop the wave of ignoramus decadence, it is imperative that the "right information, in the right format, for the right people, at the right time, and in the right place" be made available. Librarians are becoming more and more involved in teaching their patrons how to locate information on electronic networks as well as in libraries. Librarians now perform work outside of physical libraries. In the information industry, librarians are now employed as researchers, information analysts, salespeople, and designers of new information systems. They are also present in industries like public relations and marketing, as well as in businesses like law firms, where employees require quick access to information.

Library as a Haven:

In the midst of conflict, libraries often serve as sanctuaries of stability and hope. They provide a safe space where individuals from diverse backgrounds can converge, transcending ethnic, religious, and socio-economic divides. In north-east Nigeria, libraries offer solace to those displaced by violence, fostering a sense of community amidst adversity. Here, individuals can access information on education and recreational resources, empowering them to envision a brighter future beyond the shadows of terrorism.

Preserving Cultural Heritage:

Terrorism seeks to erase identities and impose homogeneity through fear and violence. In response, libraries in north-east Nigeria play a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage and promoting diversity. By curating collections that celebrate the rich tapestry of local traditions, languages, and histories, libraries become bastions of cultural resilience. Through storytelling sessions, cultural workshops, and exhibitions, libraries reaffirm the dignity and vitality of diverse communities, countering the narrative of division propagated by terrorist groups.

Empowering Marginalized Voices:

In conflict-affected areas, marginalized groups, such as women, children, and internally displaced persons (IDPs), are particularly vulnerable to exclusion and exploitation. Libraries serve as catalysts for empowerment, amplifying the voices of the marginalized and fostering inclusiveness. Through targeted programs and outreach initiatives, libraries in North-East Nigeria provide educational opportunities, vocational training, and psychosocial support to marginalized populations, equipping them with the skills and confidence to reclaim their agency and participate fully in community life.

Promoting Dialogue and Understanding:

Building peace in the aftermath of terrorism necessitates dialogue and reconciliation among disparate groups. Libraries serve as neutral spaces for fostering dialogue and understanding, transcending divisions and building bridges of empathy. In north-east Nigeria, libraries facilitate community dialogues, interfaith gatherings, and conflict resolution workshops, promoting mutual respect and understanding among diverse stakeholders. By nurturing a culture of dialogue and tolerance, libraries lay the foundation for sustainable peace and social cohesion.

Challenges and Opportunities:

Despite their immense potential, libraries in north-east Nigeria face formidable challenges in promoting diversity and inclusiveness. Limited funding, infrastructure deficits, and security concerns often impede their efforts to reach marginalized populations effectively. However, amidst these challenges lie opportunities for innovation and collaboration. Partnerships with local communities, government agencies, NGOs, and international organizations can bolster the capacity of libraries to address the unique needs of diverse populations and promote inclusiveness.

Conclusion:

In the aftermath of terrorism, promoting diversity and inclusiveness is not merely an aspiration but a fundamental imperative for rebuilding fractured societies. Libraries and information services emerge as beacons of hope and resilience in the tumultuous landscape of north-east Nigeria, fostering a culture of dialogue, understanding, and empowerment. By embracing their transformative potential, we can harness the power of libraries to catalyze social change, advance reconciliation, and build a more inclusive future for all.

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PROMOTING LIBRARY STAFF DIVERSITY FOR EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY IN UNIVERSITY ON THE NIGER, UMUNYA, ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

The study was designed to assess the promotion of library staff diversity for effective service delivery in the 'University on the Niger, Umunya, Anambra State. A descriptive survey research design was used. The sample was carried out by use of pervasive research method by the researcher, selecting librarian available. The population comprised of 10 librarians which served as the sample for the study. Pervasive method was used to collect data from 6 librarians in the library. Researcher used A structured questionnaire was used for this study. Data collected from the study were analysed using mean scores. The study found that staff diversity in age, Gender, Cultural background, Physical abilities and Sexual preference was implemented to a high extent toward effective service delivery. The benefits of library staff diversity on effective service delivery were that a diverse library staff supports the library to effectively meet the needs of its diverse user population. The challenges to the implementation of library staff diversity towards effective service delivery were that organizational barriers impede efforts to recruit a diverse workforce. The strategies for implementing library staff diversity towards effective service delivery was the recruiting and supporting of a diverse workforce that reflects the demographics of the user community. The study concluded that the need to promote library staff diversity is crucial for enhancing service delivery at the University on the Niger, Umunya, Anambra State as it enables the embracing of diversity and fostering an inclusive organizational culture which helps the university library to meet the diverse needs of its user community. The study recommended that **the university library** needs to develop and implement diversity-focused recruitment and hiring practices that prioritize attracting candidates from underrepresented groups

Keywords: University Library, Library staff Diversity, Effective service delivery

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of diversity in academic institutions, including universities. Libraries, as integral components of academic institutions, play a crucial role in supporting teaching, learning, and research endeavours (Agim, 2018). However, for libraries to effectively fulfil their mission, it is essential to promote diversity among library staff.

Library staff diversity refers to the representation of individuals from various backgrounds, including race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and abilities, among others, within the library workforce (Gonzalez & Westbrook, 2017). Diversity in library staff encompasses the recruitment, hiring, and retention of individuals with diverse perspectives, experiences, and expertise to reflect the broader community served by the library. The essence of library staff diversity lies in its potential to enrich the library's organizational culture, improve service delivery, and enhance user experiences. Diverse library staff bring a range of perspectives, skills, and cultural competencies that enable them to better understand and meet the needs of the diverse user population (Nakano, 2016). By fostering an inclusive environment that values diversity, libraries can create welcoming spaces where all users feel represented and supported. This will improve effective library service delivery in university libraries

Service delivery in university libraries encompasses a wide range of activities aimed at meeting the information needs of students, faculty, researchers, and other stakeholders within the academic community. This includes providing access to scholarly resources, offering reference and research assistance, facilitating instructional sessions, and promoting information literacy skills development (Gorman, 2019). Effective service delivery is essential for supporting the academic mission of the university and promoting student success and scholarly productivity. In this regard, promoting library staff diversity is key to enhancing effective service delivery in university libraries

Promoting library staff diversity can significantly enhance effective service delivery in university libraries by fostering a more inclusive and responsive organizational culture. Diverse library staff bring unique perspectives, experiences, and cultural competencies that enable them to better understand and address the diverse needs of library users (Gonzalez & Westbrook, 2017). By reflecting the diversity of the user community, library staff can develop and implement services, programmes, and resources that are more relevant, accessible, and responsive to the needs of all users.

Despite the importance of promoting library staff diversity, several issues may affect library management's efforts in this regard. These issues may include limited resources for recruitment and retention initiatives, unconscious biases in hiring practices, resistance to change within the organizational culture, and lack of institutional support for diversity initiatives (Nakano, 2016). Additionally, challenges related to staff training, communication, and accountability may hinder the effective implementation of diversity strategies within library management structures (Bopp & Smith, 2017). By embracing diversity and fostering an inclusive organizational culture, university libraries can better meet the diverse information needs of their users and contribute to student success and scholarly excellence. However, addressing issues that affect library management's efforts in promoting diversity is crucial for realizing the full potential of diversity initiatives and ensuring equitable access to library services for all members of the academic community. Therefore, this paper will examine the promotion of library staff diversity for effective service delivery in University on the Niger, Umuaya, Anambra State.

Statement of Problem

Despite the acknowledged importance of diversity in libraries, many academic institutions, including University on the Niger in Umuaya, Anambra State, continue to face challenges in achieving diversity among library staff. The underrepresentation of certain demographic groups, such as minorities, women, and individuals with disabilities, among library staff can have significant implications for service delivery. Limited diversity may result in a lack of perspectives, experiences, and expertise necessary to effectively meet the diverse needs of library users and support the institution's academic mission. Therefore, the lack of diversity among library staff poses a pressing problem that needs to be addressed to enhance service delivery and ensure inclusivity within the academic community.

Similarly, there may be gaps in previous studies that have examined this issue in the context of University on the Niger. Previous research may have focused primarily on other aspects of library management or may have been conducted in different geographic regions with different demographic compositions. As a result, there may be limited empirical evidence or insights specific to the challenges and opportunities for promoting library staff diversity at University on the Niger. Therefore, this has provided a gap in the literature. There is an urgent need for further research to fill this gap in the literature and provide evidence-based recommendations for promoting diversity in the university library. This, therefore, is the motivation for this study

Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this paper is on promoting library staff diversity for effective service delivery in University on the Niger, Umuaya, Anambra State. The specific objectives were to:

1. ascertain if the management of University on the Niger, Umuaya, Anambra State implement library staff diversity for effective service delivery
2. determine the benefits of library staff diversity on effective service delivery in University on the Niger, Umuaya, Anambra State
3. examine the challenges to the implementation of library staff diversity towards effective service delivery in University on the Niger, Umuaya, Anambra
4. determine the strategies for implementing library staff diversity towards effective service delivery in University on the Niger, Umuaya, Anambra State

Literature Review

Library Staff Diversity

Library staff are the workforce in the library. This set of the workforce has diverse cultures and backgrounds. Staff or workforce diversity refers to the differences between a set of people working within an organisation (Amaliyah, 2015). This form of diversity refers to employee similarities and differences based on age, gender, cultural background, ethnicity, religion, physical abilities and impairments, and sexual preference. Bedi et al (2014:1) stated that staff workforce diversity is concerned with the similarities and differences in such characteristics as age, gender, ethnicity, heritage, physical abilities and disabilities, race and sexual orientation among the employees of the organization. This definition provides a vivid description of what diversity in an organisation is which also includes the library.

Library staff diversity refers to the representation of individuals from various backgrounds, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, ability, socio-economic status, and cultural background, within the workforce of a library or information institution (Gonzalez & Westbrooks, 2017). It encompasses the recruitment, hiring, and retention of staff members who bring a diverse range of perspectives, experiences, and identities to the library setting. A diverse library staff is essential for ensuring that the library effectively meets the needs of its diverse user population. As Gonzalez and Westbrooks (2017) note, diversity in the library workforce allows for a broader understanding of the community served and facilitates the development of inclusive services and programmes. By reflecting the demographic diversity of its users, the library can create welcoming and accessible spaces where all individuals feel represented and valued.

Effective Service Delivery

Service delivery is a state of being able to provide goods or services that satisfy the needs of a client or consumer. Service delivery occurs when there is an increased output and efficiency of an employee in a given task (Kouvas, 2016). Service delivery is a psychological state that requires an individual to donate his commitment to the success of the organization. Service delivery enables employees to increase their contribution to work in the business (Koontz & Mills, 2014). Service delivery connotes a level of performance with an increased output that is correlated with the values and abilities of a person to be effective in providing services (Greenhaus, Callanan & Godshalk, 2014). Therefore, service delivery must correspond with the organizational requirements and aims (Cascio, 2014).

Concerning the task of the library, Effective service delivery refers to the ability of an organization (library) to meet the needs and expectations of its clients or customers in a timely, efficient, and satisfactory manner (Agyei-Mensah & Mensah, 2010). It involves the provision of high-quality services that align with the library's goals and objectives while considering the preferences and requirements of the service recipients. Effective service delivery encompasses various aspects, including accessibility, responsiveness, reliability, and user satisfaction, and it is essential for achieving the desired outcomes and impacts of the library's activities. One key aspect of effective service delivery is accessibility, which refers to the ease with which individuals can access and utilize the services offered by the organization (Agyei-Mensah & Mensah, 2010). Accessible services are available to all users of the library community, regardless of their socio-economic status, physical location, or demographic characteristics. Libraries that prioritize accessibility ensure that their services are designed and delivered in a manner that removes barriers to access to resources and promotes inclusivity for all library users

Relationship between Library Staff Diversity and Effective Service Delivery

Library staff diversity has a significant impact on the effectiveness of service delivery within libraries. Research indicates that diverse teams are better equipped to understand and address the needs of a diverse user population, leading to more inclusive and responsive services (Gonzalez & Westbrooks, 2017). The presence of staff members from various backgrounds enhances the library's ability to develop programmes, collections, and initiatives that reflect the interests and preferences of different user groups. Moreover, library staff diversity fosters innovation and creativity, which are essential for delivering high-quality services. Diverse teams bring a range of perspectives, experiences, and skills to the table, leading to more robust problem-solving and idea-generation processes (Nakano, 2016). This diversity of thought enables libraries to adapt to changing user needs and technological advancements more effectively, resulting in innovative service offerings that meet the evolving demands of the community.

Additionally, library staff diversity enhances communication and collaboration within the organization, which are essential components of effective service delivery. When staff members from diverse backgrounds work together, they learn from each other's experiences and perspectives, leading to greater understanding and cooperation (Gonzalez & Westbrooks, 2017). This collaborative environment fosters teamwork and mutual support, enabling library staff to work more efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of library users. Furthermore, library staff diversity contributes to the development of cultural competence among library professionals, which is critical for providing services that are sensitive to the cultural and social contexts of diverse user groups (Nakano, 2016). Staff members who come from different cultural backgrounds are better able to understand and respect the cultural norms, values, and preferences of library users, leading to more culturally responsive and inclusive service delivery practices.

Challenges to the implementation of library staff diversity towards effective service delivery in University Library

Implementing library staff diversity in university libraries can be met with various challenges that hinder the effectiveness of service delivery and the realization of diversity goals. These challenges encompass organizational, cultural, and structural barriers that may impede efforts to recruit, retain, and support a diverse workforce (Gonzalez & Westbrook, 2017). Similarly, library managers face resistance to implementing new policies or changes in a library. According to Rahman (2019), a manager's lack of skills and initiative as well as the inability to communicate ideas hinders implementation of diversity policy. This can affect the staff in their effective service delivery in the library as services will be poor. In the same vein, lack of institutional commitment on the part of libraries creates challenges for managers (Wagner & Willms, 2010). Here, library heads will not be able to implement policies that will encompass the diversity of the staff, leading to poor service delivery.

One significant challenge is the existence of unconscious biases in the recruitment and hiring process, which may favour candidates from certain demographic groups over others (Nakano, 2016). Despite efforts to promote diversity, hiring managers may inadvertently gravitate towards candidates who share similar backgrounds or characteristics, perpetuating existing patterns of homogeneity within the workforce. Also, Intergenerational issues sometimes can be difficult for managers, especially human resources to leverage in an organization (Kuusela, 2013). Addressing this form of unconscious bias requires ongoing training and education for hiring committees and decision-makers to promote awareness and ensure fair and equitable hiring practices.

Additionally, limited resources for diversity initiatives may pose a significant challenge to the implementation of library staff diversity in university libraries (Gonzalez & Westbrook, 2017). Budget constraints and competing priorities may restrict the allocation of funds for diversity recruitment efforts, training programmes, and support services for underrepresented staff members. Without adequate resources, libraries may struggle to attract and retain diverse talent and provide the necessary support to ensure their success within the organization. Furthermore, resistance to change within the organizational culture can hinder efforts to promote diversity and inclusivity in university libraries (Nakano, 2016). Some staff members may be reluctant to embrace diversity initiatives due to fear of change, uncertainty about their role in a more diverse workplace, or concerns about potential backlash from colleagues. Overcoming resistance to diversity requires strong leadership, effective communication, and ongoing efforts to foster a culture of inclusivity and respect for diversity among all staff members.

Strategies for Implementing Library Staff Diversity in University Libraries for Effective Service Delivery

Implementing library staff diversity in university libraries requires deliberate strategies aimed at recruiting, retaining, and supporting a diverse workforce that reflects the demographics of the user community. These strategies encompass various aspects of human resource management, organizational culture, and community engagement to ensure the success of diversity initiatives (Gonzalez & Westbrook, 2017). Several other approaches have been applied to manage the challenges that library staff diversity brings towards enhancing and effective service delivery in libraries. Ensuring standard employment has encouraged managers at the workplace to promote inclusiveness, prevent, inequality stereotypes, prejudices, oppression, harassment among the workforce (Heskett, 2018). Some of the common approaches that library managers have deployed to promote workforce diversity include formulation of policies, drafting of strategic action plans and production of standards to support the implementation and enforcing workforce diversity as operational in the USA and Canada (Kung et al 2020). One key strategy is to develop and implement diversity recruitment initiatives to attract candidates from underrepresented groups to library positions (Gonzalez & Westbrook, 2017). This may involve establishing partnerships with diversity-focused organizations, attending job fairs targeting diverse candidates, and actively reaching out to minority-serving institutions to recruit talented individuals. By actively seeking out candidates from diverse backgrounds, university libraries can expand their pool of qualified applicants and increase the likelihood of hiring staff members who bring diverse perspectives and experiences to the organization.

Also, library managers can promote library staff diversity by drafting strategic action plans and producing standards for implementing library staff diversity (ALA, 2012). Another strategy is to create a supportive and inclusive organizational culture that values diversity and fosters a sense of belonging among all staff members (Nakano, 2016). This involves implementing policies and practices that promote equity, fairness, and respect in the workplace, such as diversity training programmes, mentoring initiatives, and employee resource groups for underrepresented staff members. By cultivating a culture of inclusivity and belonging, university libraries can create an environment where all staff members feel valued, respected, and empowered to contribute to the organization's success.

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was used for the study. A descriptive survey design is a study that aims at collecting data on something and describing it in a systematic manner. This involves the collection of data on a representative population of the target audience, on which generalization is made (Nworgu, 2015). The area of the study is University on the Niger, Umuanya, Anambra State. The population was 10 librarians which was also used as the sample population. A structured questionnaire on a four (4) – point Likert scale was used for the collection of data for this study. The instrument was subjected to face validation and pilot test using Cronbach Alpha which gave a reliability coefficient value of 0.88. Personal method of distribution and data collection were used to get the data from the respondents. Data collected from the study were analyzed using mean scores

Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: What is the extent at which the management of University on the Niger, Umuanya, Anambra State implements library staff diversity for effective service delivery?

Table 1: Responses on the extent at which the management of the University implements library staff diversity for effective service delivery

S/NO	Items	Mean	Decision
1	There is an age balance in giving tasks to library staff	3.16	High
2	Gender balance is considered by library management	3.29	High
3	Cultural background plays a role in staff posting	2.96	High
4	Ethnicity is a factor in employment	2.15	Low
5	Religion is considered during engagement in the library	2.02	Low
6	Physical abilities are considered in the library staff posting	3.04	High
7	There is Sexual preference when scheduling staff in the library	2.80	High

In Table 1, the extent to which the management of University on the Niger, Umuanya, Anambra State implement library staff diversity for effective service delivery is high as the majority of the respondents attested that age, Gender, Cultural background, Physical abilities and Sexual preference were implemented when engaging library staff towards effective service delivery. However, ethnicity and religion got a low response. This implies that the extent to which the management of University on the Niger, Umuanya, Anambra State implement library staff diversity for effective service delivery was high.

Research Question 2: What are the benefits of library staff diversity on effective service delivery in University on the Niger, Umuanya, Anambra State?

Table 2: Responses on the benefits of library staff diversity on effective service delivery

S/NO	Items	Mean	Decision
1	A diverse library staff supports the library to effectively meet the needs of its diverse user population	2.86	Agree
2	Diversity in the library workforce allows for a broader understanding of the community served	2.69	Agree
3	Library staff diversity creates a welcoming environment where all individuals feel represented and valued	2.76	Agree
4	Library staff diversity promotes innovation and creativity within the organization	2.65	Agree
5	Library staff diversity contributes to the promotion of social justice and equity within the institution	2.62	Agree
6	A diverse workforce can lead to the development of new services in the library	2.74	Agree

In Table 2, the benefits of library staff diversity on effective service delivery as agreed by all the respondents were that a diverse library staff supports the library to effectively meet the needs of its diverse user population, diversity in the library workforce allows for a broader understanding of the community served, library staff diversity create welcoming environment where all individuals feel represented and valued, library staff diversity promotes innovation and creativity within the organization, library staff diversity contributes to the promotion of social justice and equity within the institution, and that a diverse workforce can lead to the development of new services in the library.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges to the implementation of library staff diversity towards effective service delivery in University on the Niger, Umuoya, Anambra?

Table 3: Responses on the challenges to the implementation of library staff diversity towards effective service delivery

S/N	Items	Mean	Decision
1	Organizational barriers may impede efforts to recruit a diverse workforce	2.73	Agree
2	The existence of unconscious biases in the recruitment and hiring process	2.92	Agree
3	Hiring managers may inadvertently gravitate towards candidates who share similar backgrounds, perpetuating existing patterns of homogeneity within the workforce	2.75	Agree
4	Limited resources for diversity initiatives may pose a significant challenge to the implementation of library staff diversity	2.92	Agree
5	Budget constraints may restrict the allocation of funds for diversity recruitment efforts	2.90	Agree
6	Competing priorities may restrict the allocation of funds for diversity training programmes for underrepresented staff members	3.05	Agree
7	Without adequate resources, libraries may struggle to attract and retain diverse talent to ensure their success within the organization	3.12	Agree

In Table 3, the challenges to the implementation of library staff diversity towards effective service delivery in University on the Niger, Umuoya, Anambra as attested by the respondents were organizational barriers may impede efforts to recruit a diverse workforce, existence of unconscious biases in the recruitment and hiring process, hiring managers may inadvertently gravitate towards candidates who share similar backgrounds, perpetuating existing patterns of homogeneity within the workforce, limited resources for diversity initiatives may pose a significant challenge to the implementation of library staff diversity, budget constraints may restrict the allocation of funds for diversity recruitment efforts, competing priorities may restrict the allocation of funds for diversity training programmes for underrepresented staff members, and without adequate resources, libraries may struggle to attract and retain diverse talent to ensure their success within the organization.

Research Question 4: What are the strategies for implementing library staff diversity towards effective service delivery in University on the Niger, Umuoya, Anambra State?

Table 4: Responses on the strategies for implementing library staff diversity towards effective service delivery

S/N	Items	Mean	Decision
1	Recruiting and supporting a diverse workforce that reflects the demographics of the user community	2.73	Agree
2	Library management adoption of standard employment at the workplace to promote inclusiveness	2.92	Agree
3	Formulation of policies to encourage a diversified workforce	2.75	Agree
4	Implement diversity recruitment initiatives to attract candidates from underrepresented groups to library positions	2.92	Agree

5	Attending job fairs targeting diverse candidates that can be considered for employment	2.90	Agree
6	Library management to establish partnerships with diversity-focused organizations to link them with under-represented staff	3.05	Agree
7	Library management to actively reach out to minority -serving institutions to recruit talented individuals	3.12	Agree

In Table 4, the strategies for implementing library staff diversity towards effective service delivery in University on the Niger, Umuaya, Anambra State as agreed by the respondents were recruiting and supporting a diverse workforce that reflects the demographics of the user community, library management adoption of standard employment at workplace to promote inclusiveness, formulation of policies to encourage diversified workforce, implement diversity recruitment initiatives to attract candidates from underrepresented groups to library positions, attending job fairs targeting diverse candidates that can be considered for employment, library management to establish partnerships with diversity-focused organization to link them with under-represented staff, and library management to actively reach out to minority-serving institutions to recruit talented individuals.

Discussion of the findings

In Table 1, it was shown that the extent to which the management of University on the Niger, Umuaya, Anambra State implement library staff diversity for effective service delivery was high. This result is in line with the findings of Gonzalez and Westbrooks (2017) who asserted that libraries usually implement effective policies on staff diversity which make the staff perform their task most efficiently.

In Table 2, on the benefits of library staff diversity on effective service delivery as agreed by all the respondents were that a diverse library staff supports the library to effectively meet the needs of its diverse user population, and that a diverse workforce can lead to the development of new services in the library, among others benefit. This result is in line with the findings of Nakano (2016) **who stated that** diverse teams are more likely to generate innovative ideas and solutions due to the variety of perspectives and approaches they bring to problem-solving in the library. In agreement with the above findings, Gonzalez and Westbrooks (2017) noted that diversity in the library workforce allows for a broader understanding of the community served and facilitates the development of inclusive services and programmes

In Table 3, on the challenges to the implementation of library staff diversity towards effective service delivery in University on the Niger, Umuaya, Anambra it was found that all the respondent agree to majority of the items such as organizational barriers may impede efforts to recruit a diverse workforce, and that without adequate resources, libraries may struggle to attract and retain diverse talent to ensure their success within the organization, among other challenges. This result is in line with the findings of Rahman (2019) who stated that a manager's lack of skills and initiative as well as inability to communicate ideas hinders implementation of diversity policy for the staff which will hinder effective service delivery. Also, Gonzalez and Westbrooks (2017) **in support of the above results, found that** lack of institutional support for diversity initiatives may impede progress towards achieving diversity goals in university libraries

In Table 4, the respondents agreed to majority of the items that the strategies for implementing library staff diversity towards effective service delivery in University on the Niger, Umuaya, Anambra State were recruiting and supporting a diverse workforce that reflects the demographics of the user community, and that library management actively reach out to minority-serving institutions to recruit talented individuals, among other strategies. This result is in line with the findings of Heskett (2018) who stated that ensuring standard employment has encouraged managers at the workplace to promote inclusiveness, prevent, inequality stereotypes, prejudices, oppression, harassment among the workforce. Also, Kung et al (2020) **in support of the above results, found that** some of the common approaches that library managers have deployed to promote workforce diversity include the formulation of polices, drafting of strategic action plans and production of standards to support the implementation and enforcing workforce diversity which is operational and practised in the advanced countries

Conclusion

The need to promote effective management policies on staff diversity which makes the staff perform their task most efficiently in the University on the Niger, Umuaya, Anambra State. Also to promotes innovation, creativity within the organisation, library staff diversity contributes to the promotion of social justice and equity within the University, and that a diversity workforce can lead to the development of new services delivery in the library. The challenges to the implementation of library staff diversity towards services delivery, organisation, recruitment, hiring process, limited resources for diversity initiatives may pose a significant challenge with budget constraints in University on the Niger, Umuaya, Anambra State.

With the above results lack of institutional support for diversity initiatives may impede progress towards achieving diversity goals in University libraries. In conclusion strategies for implementing library staff diversity towards effective services delivery, recruiting, supporting a diverse in University on the Niger, Umunya Anambra State, can position itself as a leader in promoting diversity in workforce that reflects the demographics of the staff , library management adoption of standard policy on employment to promote inclusiveness which is operational and practised, innovation, effective services delivery and social impact within the academic community and beyond.

Recommendations

From the data analysis and conclusion of the study, it can be recommended that:

- **Library management should** implement comprehensive diversity training programmes for all library staff members to increase awareness of unconscious biases, promote cultural competency, and foster inclusivity in the workplace, in house training for staff.
- **The university library** needs to develop and implement diversity-focused recruitment and hiring practices that prioritize attracting candidates from underrepresented groups by having a strong library management policy for the University.
- **The university library** should foster leadership commitment to diversity and inclusion by ensuring that senior administrators actively support and champion diversity initiatives within the library, the University community services delivery services too.
- **The university management** should allocate sufficient resources, including financial, human, and technological resources, to support diversity initiatives within the library, for progress of the library staff and services delivery.
- **The university library** should strengthen partnerships with diverse community organizations, cultural institutions, and minority-serving groups to enhance outreach efforts and recruit diverse talent.
- **The university library** should foster a supportive and inclusive organizational culture that values diversity, promotes equity, and ensures that all staff members feel valued, respected, and empowered to contribute to the organization's success.

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PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION IN NIGERIAN SMART CITIES: THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

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Abstract

As urbanization accelerates and technology becomes increasingly integrated into urban life, libraries serve as essential hubs for fostering equitable access to information, technology, and community resources. This paper employed a systematic literature review to examine the role of the library in promoting social inclusion in Nigerian smart cities. A review of existing literature was conducted to identify scholarly article and other relevant sources that discuss the role of libraries in the context of promoting social inclusion in Nigerian smart city. The literature review focused on the importance of social inclusion in Nigerian smart cities, the current challenges and opportunities for promoting social inclusion in Nigerian smart cities. It also discussed how libraries contribute to social inclusion efforts within the context of smart city development. Literature was sourced from different databases including Google Scholar, Research Gate, Academica and ProQuest. The paper establishes that through digital literacy programs, access to technology, and inclusive community spaces, libraries empower residents from diverse backgrounds to participate fully in the digital age. By addressing challenges such as the digital divide and socioeconomic disparities, libraries contribute to building more inclusive and resilient urban environments. This paper also highlights the importance of leveraging libraries as catalysts for social inclusion in Nigerian smart cities and underscores the need for collaborative efforts to ensure that all residents have the opportunity to thrive in the digital era. The implication of the study is that public libraries can serve as vital hubs for promoting social inclusion within Nigerian smart cities by providing access to information, technology, and community resources to all citizens, regardless of socio-economic status or background.

Keywords: Social inclusion, Nigerian smart city, library, technological integration, digital literacy

Introduction

In the fast-paced evolution of urbanisation, the concept of smart cities has emerged as an inspiration of progress, promising interconnectedness, efficiency, and sustainability. As Nigeria, like many other nations, embarks on the journey of urbanization, the integration of smart city technologies presents both opportunities and challenges (Okwu, 2021). While the proliferation of digital infrastructure holds the potential to enhance urban living standards, there exists a pressing imperative to ensure that this transformation is inclusive, leaving no segment of society behind. At the heart of this endeavor lies the pivotal role of public institutions, notably public libraries, which have traditionally served as hub of knowledge, community engagement, and social cohesion. In the Nigerian context, where diversity in socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and geographic location characterizes urban populations, the library stands as a vital nexus for promoting social inclusion (Kwan, 2020) within the framework of smart city development.

Globally, public libraries have adapted to the digital age by offering digital literacy programs, access to technology, and online resources, bridging the digital divide and empowering marginalized populations to participate in the digital economy and society (Oladokun, et al. 2023). In the Nigerian context, public libraries face unique challenges and opportunities in promoting social inclusion within smart cities including digital divide, limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of trained. Despite these challenges, Nigerian public libraries have the potential to play a transformative role in promoting social inclusion within smart cities.

Nigeria stands at the precipice of rapid urbanization, with projections indicating that over half of its population will reside in urban areas by 2050 (United Nations, 2018). This demographic shift necessitates proactive measures to ensure that urban development is equitable and accessible to all residents, irrespective of socioeconomic background or geographic location. The advent of smart city technologies introduces a paradigm shift in urban governance and service delivery, promising efficiency gains and improved quality of life. However, there exists a risk that these advancements may exacerbate existing inequalities, particularly if marginalized communities are excluded from the benefits of digitalization. Libraries, as trusted community institutions with a mandate for public service, possess inherent strengths that position them as catalysts for social inclusion in the smart city. From providing access to information and technology to offering educational programs and community spaces, libraries have the capacity to bridge digital divides, empower marginalized groups, and foster civic engagement. This study aims to unravel the ways of promoting social inclusion in Nigerian smart cities, with a particular focus on the role of public libraries. By examining current practices, challenges, and opportunities, this research endeavors to shed light on effective strategies for leveraging library resources and initiatives to promote a more inclusive

urban environment. The study hopes to offer actionable insights and recommendations to policy makers, urban planners, librarians, and other stakeholders involved in the advancement of inclusive smart cities in Nigeria. Through collaborative efforts and a commitment to equity and social justice, it is envisioned that Nigerian smart cities can become guiding light of inclusion, where every resident has the opportunity to thrive in the digital age.

Statement of the Problem

In the rapidly evolving Nigerian urbanization and the growing integration of smart city technologies, the imperative to foster social inclusion stands as a paramount concern. Despite the promises of enhanced connectivity and efficiency, there exists a glaring gap in ensuring equitable access to these advancements, particularly for marginalized communities. Thus, public libraries, traditionally known as knowledge and community engagement centres are poised to play a pivotal role in bridging this divide. However, they face complex challenges that impede their ability to effectively serve as agents of social inclusion within the context of Nigerian smart cities. These challenges encompass issues such as the pervasive digital divide, worsened by disparities in access to technology and digital literacy skills, as well as socioeconomic inequalities that perpetuate barriers to educational and economic opportunities. Moreover, limited awareness and engagement, coupled with constraints in technological infrastructure and staff capacity, further hinder the transformative potential of libraries in fostering inclusivity. Thus, it is imperative to identify and address these barriers to empower libraries to fulfill their mandate as catalysts for social inclusion within the dynamic of Nigerian smart cities.

Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to examine the role which library plays in promoting social inclusion in Nigerian smart city. Specifically, the following objectives were used to guide the study:

1. *to assess the importance of social inclusion in Nigerian smart cities*
2. *to identify the opportunities for promoting social inclusion in Nigerian smart cities*
3. *to discover how libraries contribute to social inclusion efforts within the context of smart city development*
4. *to identify the current challenges of promoting social inclusion in Nigerian smart cities*

Literature Review

The Concept of Social Inclusion

Social inclusion is a multidimensional concept that encompasses the processes of ensuring that all individuals and groups, regardless of their backgrounds or characteristics, feel valued, respected, and fully integrated into society (United Nations, 2015). It involves recognizing and addressing systemic barriers and inequalities that prevent certain groups from participating fully in social, economic, and political life. Social inclusion is closely linked to the principles of equity, diversity, and human rights, emphasizing the importance of creating environments where everyone has equal opportunities to thrive and contribute to society (Economic and Social Council, 2013). By promoting social inclusion, societies can foster greater cohesion, solidarity, and resilience, leading to more sustainable and equitable development outcomes for all. Furthermore, social inclusion is essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set forth by the United Nations, particularly Goal 10, which aims to reduce inequalities within and among. Addressing issues of poverty, discrimination, and exclusion is integral to promoting social inclusion and ensuring that no one is left behind in the pursuit of sustainable development. Moreover, research has shown that socially inclusive societies tend to be more prosperous, peaceful, and resilient, as they harness the full potential of their diverse populations and promote greater social cohesion (World Bank, 2019). By investing in policies and initiatives that promote social inclusion, governments, libraries, organizations, and communities can create more equitable and resilient societies that benefit everyone.

The Concept of Smart Cities

Smart cities represent a transformative vision for urban development, leveraging technology and innovation to address the country's growing urbanization challenges. These cities are characterized by the integration of digital technologies, data-driven governance, and sustainable infrastructure to enhance efficiency, improve quality of life, and promote economic development (Ezeudu, & Ismail, 2024). With rapid urbanization and increasing demand for urban services, smart cities offer opportunities to optimize resource use, enhance service delivery, and create more liveable and resilient urban environments. Nigerian smart cities aim to harness the power of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to address pressing urban issues such as traffic congestion, inadequate infrastructure, and environmental pollution, ultimately contributing to the country's sustainable development goals (Okwu, 2021). However, the

development of smart cities in Nigeria also presents numerous challenges, including issues related to digital divide, cybersecurity, privacy concerns, and institutional capacity (Brown & Smith, 2016). Despite the potential benefits of smart technologies, significant segments of the population, particularly those in rural and underserved areas, may lack access to digital infrastructure and skills, widening existing disparities and exacerbating social inequalities (Nam & Pardo, 2011). Moreover, the rapid pace of technological advancement in smart cities raises questions about data privacy, cybersecurity, and ethical considerations, necessitating robust regulatory frameworks and governance mechanisms to protect citizens' rights and ensure responsible use of technology (Ahmad et al. 2024). Addressing these challenges requires holistic approaches that prioritize inclusivity, sustainability, and citizen engagement, ensuring that the benefits of smart city development are equitably distributed across society.

The Nigeria Smart City Initiative acronym NSCI was launched in Abuja, Nigeria on 8th August, 2017 (Mansur 2017). The summit aimed to establish effective strategies for modernizing Nigerian urban centers, transitioning them from traditional, inefficient cities to responsive ones capable of meeting the needs of both current and future generations, with a heavy reliance on ICT and smart technologies for city management. While a smart city integrates sensors and software to enhance decision-making and address everyday challenges, its success depends not only on ICT but also on robust geospatial technologies, human interaction, and socio-cultural factors (Okwu, 2021). Geospatial technologies play a pivotal role in providing accurate and timely location information, essential for smart solutions and city management, highlighting the crucial involvement of librarians, who are capable of providing and managing geospatial data and information.

Importance of social inclusion in Nigerian smart cities

Social inclusion plays a pivotal role in the sustainable development and resilience of Nigerian smart cities (Tekin & Dekmen, 2024). As urbanization accelerates and smart city technologies become increasingly integrated into the fabric of urban life, it is imperative to ensure that these advancements benefit all segments of society, particularly marginalized communities. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2021), social inclusion is not only a fundamental human right but also a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development goals (UNDP, 2021). In the Nigerian context, where urbanization is accompanied by widening socioeconomic disparities and spatial inequalities, promoting social inclusion is crucial for fostering cohesive and resilient communities. Social inclusion is closely linked to economic prosperity and innovation within Nigerian smart cities. Research has shown that inclusive urban environments are more conducive to entrepreneurship, creativity, and knowledge exchange, driving economic growth and competitiveness (World Bank, 2019). By ensuring that all residents have equal access to education, employment opportunities, and essential services, smart cities can harness the full potential of their human capital and foster a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship. In Nigeria, where youth unemployment rates remain high and informal employment dominates urban economies, promoting social inclusion through targeted policies and investments is essential for unlocking the country's demographic dividend and driving sustainable economic development (World Bank, 2021). Moreover, social inclusion is critical for building trust, social cohesion, and political stability in Nigerian smart cities. Inclusive urban governance processes that actively involve residents from diverse backgrounds in decision-making and planning are key to fostering a sense of ownership and belonging among urban dwellers (Anthony, 2023). By prioritizing the needs and aspirations of marginalized communities and ensuring their voices are heard, smart cities can mitigate social tensions and enhance social cohesion, thereby reducing the risk of conflict and instability. In a country as ethnically and culturally diverse as Nigeria, fostering social inclusion is not only a moral imperative but also a pragmatic approach to building resilient and harmonious urban societies (Wan et al. 2021).

Opportunities for Promoting Social Inclusion in Nigerian Smart Cities

Social inclusion in Nigerian smart cities presents numerous opportunities for enhancing the well-being and participation of all citizens in urban life. One opportunity lies in leveraging technology to improve access to essential services and empower marginalized communities. Mobile technology, for example, has the potential to bridge the gap in access to financial services, healthcare, and education by providing innovative solutions such as mobile banking, telemedicine, and e-learning platforms (Rotondi et al. 2020). Moreover, the emergence of digital platforms and social media has facilitated new forms of civic engagement and community organizing, enabling residents to voice their concerns, access information, and participate in decision-making processes (Tom-George & Nsirim, 2020). By harnessing the power of technology and digital innovation, Nigerian smart cities can create more inclusive and participatory urban environments that prioritize the needs and aspirations of all residents.

Moreover, the integration of smart transportation systems offers another avenue for promoting social inclusion in Nigerian smart cities (Oktorini & Barus, 2022). By designing inclusive urban environments that accommodate diverse needs and preferences, city planners can create spaces where people from different backgrounds can interact and engage in social activities (Agost-Felip, et al. 2021).

The Roles of the Library in Promoting Social Inclusion in Nigerian Smart Cities

Promoting inclusion in smart cities through the role of the library can be a multifaceted and impactful endeavor. Libraries have the potential to be key drivers of inclusion in smart cities by providing access to technology, fostering digital literacy and skill development, creating community spaces for learning and collaboration, and advocating for the needs of diverse populations. By embracing their role as hubs of knowledge, innovation, and community engagement, libraries can help ensure that all residents have the opportunity to participate fully in the digital age. Hence, the contributions that public libraries can make in promoting social inclusion in Nigerian Smart Cities are as follows:

Digital Literacy Programs: Libraries, through their Digital Literacy Programs, play a pivotal role in promoting social inclusion in smart Nigerian cities by equipping residents with the essential skills and knowledge necessary to navigate the digital landscape. These programs offer a range of educational initiatives, workshops, and training sessions aimed at enhancing digital literacy among individuals from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. By providing access to computers, the internet, and digital resources, libraries empower residents with the ability to harness technology for personal and professional development (Rozak & Purike, 2024). Through hands-on learning experiences, participants acquire essential digital skills such as computer proficiency, internet navigation, online communication, and digital content creation, enabling them to effectively engage with digital technologies and online platforms. Digital Literacy Programs offered by libraries serve as inclusive community spaces that promote social interaction, learning, and cultural exchange in smart Nigerian cities. These programs bring together individuals from different age groups, educational backgrounds, and social strata, fostering a sense of belonging and connection within the community (Igwela & Nsirim, 2017). Participants have the opportunity to learn from one another, share experiences, and collaborate on projects, thereby breaking down social barriers and building relationships across diverse groups. By serving as accessible and welcoming spaces for all members of society, libraries contribute to creating more inclusive urban environments where residents feel empowered to participate fully in the digital age.

Access to Technology: Libraries play a crucial role in promoting social inclusion in smart Nigerian cities through the provision of access to technology. By offering free or affordable access to computers, the internet, and digital resources, libraries ensure that residents from all socioeconomic backgrounds have the opportunity to engage with technology regardless of their personal circumstances (Faturoti, 2022). This access is particularly essential for marginalized communities who may lack the financial means to afford their own devices or internet connectivity. By democratizing access to technology, libraries empower individuals with the tools they need to participate fully in the digital age, whether it be for education, employment, or civic engagement purposes. Moreover, libraries serve as essential hubs for digital inclusion by providing training and support to help residents effectively utilize technology. Librarians and staff members offer guidance and assistance to users, helping them navigate the internet, access online services, and develop digital skills (Oladokun et al. 2021). Through workshops, training sessions, and one-on-one tutorials, libraries ensure that individuals have the opportunity to learn and grow in their digital literacy, thereby reducing the barriers to entry for participation in the digital economy and society. By serving as inclusive community spaces that facilitate learning and skill development, libraries contribute to building more equitable and accessible urban environments in smart Nigerian cities.

Community Spaces for Learning and Collaboration: Libraries serve as vital community spaces for learning and collaboration, playing a significant role in promoting social inclusion in smart Nigerian cities. These spaces offer a range of educational programs, workshops, and cultural activities that cater to the diverse needs and interests of residents from various socioeconomic backgrounds. By providing a welcoming and inclusive environment, libraries facilitate interactions between individuals from different age groups, ethnicities, and social strata, fostering a sense of belonging and community cohesion (Oladokun et al. 2021). Participants have the opportunity to engage in lifelong learning, exchange ideas, and build relationships with others, thereby breaking down social barriers and promoting cross-cultural understanding within the community. Libraries serve as platforms for collaboration and innovation, enabling residents to come together to address common challenges and explore new opportunities. Through collaborative projects, hackathons, and maker spaces, libraries provide a space for residents to develop and showcase their talents, skills, and ideas (Omehia et al. 2021). These collaborative endeavors not only foster creativity and entrepreneurship but also empower individuals to actively contribute to the social and economic development of their communities. By serving as inclusive hubs for learning, creativity, and collaboration, libraries play a vital role in building more resilient and inclusive urban environments in smart Nigerian cities.

Cultural and Linguistic Inclusion: Libraries play a crucial role in promoting cultural and linguistic inclusion in Nigerian smart cities by offering resources, programmes and services that celebrate the diverse cultural heritage of the community. Libraries provide access to a wide range of materials, including books, films, music, and digital archives, representing various languages, ethnicities, and cultural traditions

(Opara et al. 2023). By offering materials in multiple languages and formats, libraries ensure that residents from different linguistic backgrounds have equal access to information and cultural resources, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and cultural pride within the community. Furthermore, libraries serve as inclusive spaces for cultural exchange and dialogue, facilitating interactions between individuals from different cultural backgrounds and promoting cross-cultural understanding and appreciation (Bishop, 2022). By serving as inclusive hubs for cultural exchange and dialogue, libraries contribute to building more harmonious and cohesive communities in smart Nigerian cities, where residents from diverse backgrounds feel valued, respected, and included.

Accessibility and Universal Design: Libraries play a crucial role in promoting social inclusion in smart Nigerian cities through accessibility and universal design principles. By implementing features such as ramps, elevators, and wide aisles, libraries ensure physical accessibility for individuals with mobility impairments, making their facilities welcoming and inclusive to all members of the community (Opara, 2020). Moreover, libraries provide assistive technologies and resources such as screen readers, magnifiers, and adjustable computer stations to accommodate individuals with visual or hearing impairments, ensuring equal access to information and technology. Libraries also incorporate universal design principles into their programs, services, and resources to ensure that they are accessible and usable by individuals with diverse abilities, preferences, and needs. For example, libraries offer digital resources in multiple formats, including large print, braille, and audio, to cater to individuals with visual impairments or reading disabilities. Additionally, libraries provide flexible seating arrangements, quiet study areas, and sensory-friendly spaces to accommodate individuals with autism spectrum disorders or sensory sensitivities (Horsfall & Opara, 2022). By embracing universal design, libraries create inclusive environments where all members of the community, regardless of ability or background, feel welcome, valued, and empowered to participate fully in library programs and services.

Partnerships with Local Stakeholders: Libraries in Nigerian smart cities actively engage in partnerships with local stakeholders to promote social inclusion and community development. These collaborations extend beyond the traditional role of libraries as repositories of knowledge, transforming them into dynamic hubs for civic engagement and social change. By forging alliances with government agencies, NGOs, educational institutions, and community-based organizations, libraries tap into a diverse array of resources and expertise to address the multifaceted needs of residents. For example, partnerships with local schools enable libraries to extend their reach to students and educators, offering educational programs, tutoring services, and access to learning resources. Similarly, collaborations with healthcare providers allow libraries to host health awareness campaigns, wellness workshops, and vaccination drives, promoting health literacy and improving access to healthcare services among underserved communities. Moreover, partnerships with grassroots organizations and community groups enable libraries to tailor their programs and services to the specific needs and interests of local residents. By actively involving community members in the planning and implementation of library initiatives, libraries ensure that their efforts are responsive to the priorities and aspirations of the community (Makama et al., 2021). These partnerships foster a sense of ownership and empowerment among residents, encouraging active participation and collaboration in addressing social issues and promoting positive change. Through collective action and collaboration, libraries and their partners contribute to building more inclusive, resilient, and vibrant communities in smart Nigerian cities.

Challenges in Promoting Social Inclusion in Nigerian smart cities

One of the primary challenges in promoting social inclusion in Nigerian smart cities is the persistent digital divide, which disproportionately affects marginalized communities. Despite the rapid expansion of digital infrastructure, access to technology and digital literacy skills remains limited in many urban areas, particularly in low-income neighbourhoods and rural communities (Radovanović et al. 2020). This digital divide exacerbates existing socioeconomic disparities and hampers the ability of disadvantaged populations to fully participate in the digital economy and civic life (Shin et al. 2021). Without targeted interventions to address this digital divide, smart city initiatives risk exacerbating inequalities and widening the social gap between digitally connected and disconnected residents. The inadequate provision of social services, including healthcare, education, and social welfare, further marginalizes vulnerable populations (Ndaguba, et al. 2018). Discrimination based on factors such as ethnicity, gender, religion, and disability worsens social exclusion and marginalization in Nigerian smart cities (Tekin, 2024). Another challenge is the lack of affordable housing and inadequate urban infrastructure, which exacerbates social exclusion and spatial inequalities in Nigerian smart cities. Rapid urbanization has led to the proliferation of informal settlements and slums, where residents often lack access to basic services such as clean water, sanitation, and healthcare (Carrilho & Trindade, 2022). The absence of affordable housing options further compounds the problem, forcing many low-income households to live in overcrowded and substandard conditions. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive urban planning strategies that prioritize inclusive housing policies, infrastructure development, and slum upgrading initiatives to ensure that all residents have access to safe and affordable housing and essential services.

The literature review explores the connection of smart cities, social inclusion, and the role of public libraries in promoting social inclusion within the context of Nigerian urban centers. It discussed the concept of smart cities, highlighting their reliance on information and communication technologies (ICT) and smart technologies for efficient urban management and decision-making. Additionally, the review examines the importance of social inclusion in smart city development, emphasizing the need to ensure equitable access to resources, services, and opportunities for all citizens, regardless of socio-economic status or background. Furthermore, the literature review discusses the role of public libraries as key institutions for promoting social inclusion within smart cities. The study emphasizes how public libraries serve as inclusive spaces for community engagement, digital literacy, and access to information and resources, thereby addressing the needs of diverse populations and promoting social cohesion.

Methodology

The paper reviewed literature to examine the role of the library in promoting social inclusion in Nigerian smart cities. A review of existing literature was conducted to identify scholarly articles, books other relevant sources that discuss the role of libraries in the context of promoting social inclusion in Nigerian smart city. The literature review focused on the importance of social inclusion in Nigerian smart cities, the current challenges and opportunities for promoting social inclusion in Nigerian smart cities and how libraries contribute to social inclusion efforts within the context of smart city development. Literature was sourced from different databases including Google Scholar, Research Gate, Academia and ProQuest from January, 2024 to March, 2024. The key terms employed in search included “Social inclusion”, “smart cities”, “Nigerian smart cities”, “libraries and inclusion”, “libraries AND smart cities” library contribution OR library role” Forty-Two (42) papers were harvested from the databases and 35 papers were found useful as they aligned with the study objectives.

Implications of the Study

Role of the Library holds significant implications for policymakers, urban planners, librarians, and other stakeholders involved in the development of smart cities in Nigeria. This study underscores the importance of social inclusion in the context of Nigerian smart cities. Social inclusion is not only a moral imperative but also a prerequisite for sustainable development and resilience. By ensuring that all residents have equal access to opportunities, resources, and services, smart cities can foster cohesive, equitable, and thriving communities. The study highlights the need to prioritize social inclusion in urban planning and policy-making processes, taking into account the diverse needs and aspirations of the population.

The study identifies the challenges and opportunities for promoting social inclusion in Nigerian smart cities. Challenges such as the digital divide, socioeconomic disparities, inadequate urban infrastructure, and limited awareness pose significant barriers to inclusion. However, the study also identifies opportunities for addressing these challenges through targeted interventions and investments. For example, leveraging technology, fostering partnerships with local stakeholders, and adopting inclusive urban planning strategies can help overcome barriers to social inclusion and create more accessible and inclusive urban environments.

The study also highlights the crucial role of libraries in contributing to social inclusion efforts within the context of smart city development. Libraries serve as essential hubs for promoting social inclusion by providing access to information, technology, education, and community engagement opportunities. Through digital literacy programs, access to technology, cultural and linguistic inclusion initiatives, and partnerships with local stakeholders, libraries play a vital role in bridging the digital divide, empowering marginalized communities, and fostering social cohesion. By embracing their role as catalysts for social inclusion, libraries contribute to building more inclusive, resilient, and equitable smart cities in Nigeria.

Conclusion

As urbanization develops and smart city technologies become increasingly integrated into urban life, it is essential to ensure that these advancements benefit all segments of society. Social inclusion is not only a moral imperative but also a prerequisite for sustainable development, resilience, and social cohesion. The study examines the roles of public libraries in promoting social inclusion in Nigerian smart cities. It identifies key issues, challenges and opportunities for promoting social inclusion in Nigerian smart cities, ranging from the digital divide and socioeconomic disparities to inadequate urban infrastructure and limited awareness. The study noted that by providing access to information, technology, education, and community engagement opportunities, public libraries serve as essential hubs for empowering marginalized communities, bridging the digital divide, and fostering social cohesion.

Recommendations

1. *Establish community-driven digital literacy hubs within marginalized neighbourhoods and rural communities, where residents can access technology training, mentorship programs, and collaborative learning spaces. These hubs would be co-designed and co-managed by community members, leveraging local knowledge and resources to address specific digital literacy needs and empower residents to navigate the digital space effectively.*

2. *Public libraries could pioneer the use of virtual reality (VR) technology to offer immersive accessibility tours designed to raise awareness about the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities in navigating public spaces*
3. *Libraries should integrate storytelling circles for interfaith dialogue to serve as a safe and inclusive space for interfaith dialogue. This will also help in breaking down barriers, challenging stereotypes, and promoting social cohesion among diverse religious communities within Nigerian smart cities.*
4. *Public libraries can engage citizens in citizen science projects focused on environmental justice issues, such as air and water quality monitoring and community-based ecological restoration efforts. By empowering residents to collect and analyze environmental data in their local communities, libraries can foster a sense of environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and collective action.*
5. *Communities should organise inclusive urban design charrettes that bring together residents, urban planners, architects, and policymakers to co-create solutions for affordable housing and inclusive urban infrastructure.*

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PROVIDING FIT-FOR PURPOSE LIBRARY SERVICES TO A DIVERSE POPULATION IN THE ERA OF DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES: THE HYPE IS REAL!

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Abstract

Globally, disruptive technologies such as Internet of Things (IoT), Smart library systems: IoT devices, chatbots, IoT-based sensors, data analytic tools and so forth are permeating every sector, including the education sector. These disruptive technologies place a demand on academic libraries to find new ways to engage students, staff and faculty members and remain relevant both now and in the future. Moreover, librarians run the risk of becoming displaced if they focus exclusively on collection development, technical service and total reliance on subscription to electronic databases. Using a disruptive education model that recognizes student's unique information needs, learning styles, interest and abilities, this paper reveals how Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals in Nigeria are providing fit-for purpose user-centered services and activities to hype library services in a disruptive educational landscape; uncovers the opportunities presented by these disruptive technologies, and share experiences of the success story of selected academic libraries in Nigeria. The paper provides new insight and direction on catching up with digital disruption from the context of a developing nation.

Keywords: Disruptive Technologies, Generation Z, 5th Industrial Revolution, Fit-for Purpose Library Services, University Libraries

Introduction

In higher education, a diverse student population which describe individual differences (such as: life experiences, learning styles, personality styles) and group or social differences (such as race, socio-economic status, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, ability, intellectual traditions and other perspective) fosters plurality of perspective. Such diversity creates an opportunity for students to come together, challenge each other's ideas, learn new perspectives and grow as individuals. It is such diversity that create both richness and challenge within a campus setting, even in a disruptive environment.

It is worthy to mention that the disruptive environment in which university libraries operate and provide their resources and services is one of the biggest challenges to engage today's diverse students' population. This may be as a result of the limited amount of high-quality attention and time students have, to engage with what the library offers to them because disruptive technology is changing existing library practices by introducing new products, services and service delivery mechanisms.

In addition to the challenge of the globally disruptive environment in institutions where library operates, libraries also face a fundamental shift amongst its diverse students' population as the growing portion of undergraduate students are Generation Z or Gen Z, and differ from the earlier generations in terms of attitudes, expectations, strength, and weaknesses in their approach to the use of library and technology (Shorey, Chan, Rajendran, and Ang (2021; Shorey, Lopez, Chew, and Lau, 2022).

According to Seemiller and Grace, 2016; and Shatto and Erwin, 2017, the GenZ population are between the ages of 18 and 25 years, with majority being more 'connected,' 'technology savvy' and "self-assured" that technology will play a bigger role in the future. Similarly, Gen Z are the first generation to have grown up in a world where the Internet is ubiquitous. Mohr and Mohr (2017) refers to this group as the most diverse generation because they are digital natives, Ebay babies, google generation and information curators. Seemiller and Grace (2017) opined that the Gen Z have the “we-centric attitude as opposed to the “me-centric” attitude among the millennials.

Gen Z are often portrayed as confident, self-expressive, connected and open to change. They treat their multi-tasking hand-held gadgets almost like a body part. They embrace multiple modes of self-expression. They are inventors, creative, ambitious, bold, social, entrepreneurial and artistic (Lev, 2021; Wandhe, Dabre, Gaiki, Sirkirwar and Shirke, 2024). Examples of disruptive technologies they are now using even within university libraries include:

- ❖ New educational platforms such as Coursera, Udemy, etc
- ❖ Streaming services such as Netflix, Amazon, etc
- ❖ Machine learning application such as Artificial Intelligence
- ❖ Smart phones and other mobile devices
- ❖ Search engine such as ChatGPT, Google Bard, etc

Since diverse students' population in a disruptive environment exhibit a variety of different traits, it is expedient that Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals recognize such traits and support students' learning and research needs (Abram and Luther, 2004; Becker, 2019). Interestingly, studies have reported that university libraries in the United States of America, Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, China, and Africa have been deploying various products, services and technology to meet the needs of the Gen Z population but empirical evidence from libraries in Africa in this regards still remains inadequate. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to explore how university libraries in Nigeria are providing fit-for purpose library services in an era of disruptive technologies. The study provides answers to the following research questions:

1. What role (s) are university libraries playing in providing fit-for purpose services to diverse students' population in the era of disruptive technologies in Nigeria?
2. What type(s) of fit-for purpose services are university libraries providing to diverse students' population in the era of disruptive technologies in Nigeria?
3. What are the challenges and/or opportunities disruptive technologies posed to librarians working in university libraries in Nigeria?
4. What is the future of Nigerian university libraries in a disruptive environment?

Review of Related Literature

Traits and activities of Diverse Gen Z Student Population

Libraries, especially academic are dominated by four generations. According to Sardi (2022) the library users can be described as baby boomers, Gen X, millennials, and Gen Z with generations X have little time to search for information because they belong to the working age. The major means of communication for members of generation Z is social networking, such as: Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and faster. Generation Z generation are tech-savvy, internationally connected (in the virtual world), flexible and intelligent, and are also exposed to many cultural perspectives. Research shows that the Gen Z are communaholic (Francis and Hoefel, 2018). The authors explained that to be communaholic means that the Gen Zers are incredibly open-minded. They don't know the difference between friends they make online and friends they meet in person. They constantly move between areas, taking use of the high degree of mobilization that technology allows for the advancement of their causes. Online networks are important to Generation Z because they let people from all backgrounds come together and organize around shared interests and issues. This behavior of Gen should propel libraries and librarians to create a cohesive online and blended library services for the diverse population of students they serve.

Statistics show that in the US about 62% of Gen Zers use Instagram, TikTok and YouTube every day and moving to the newest and latest platform as often as possible (Kullolli, and Trebicka, 2023; Statista, 2024). The Gen Zs prefer to learn through auditory means, visual and haptic learning (touching and feeling) and for these reasons, the learning style of the Gen Z has serious implication for library service provision in the digital era.

Today's young people differ from yesterday's.

	 Baby boomer 1940–59	 Gen X 1960–79	 Gen Y (millennial) 1980–94	 Gen Z 1995–2010
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postwar • Dictatorship and repression in Brazil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political transition • Capitalism and meritocracy dominate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Globalization • Economic stability • Emergence of internet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobility and multiple realities • Social networks • Digital natives
Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idealism • Revolutionary • Collectivist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materialistic • Competitive • Individualistic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Globalist • Questioning • Oriented to self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undefined ID • "Communaholic" • "Dialoguer" • Realistic
Consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideology • Vinyl and movies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Status • Brands and cars • Luxury articles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience • Festivals and travel • Flagships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniqueness • Unlimited • Ethical

Figure 1: Today's young people differ from yesterdays:

Source: Francis and Hoefel (2018).

Winter (2019) found that the Gen Z are fond of nesting, blending, and multitasking. The author explained nesting to mean that filling a study space with personal items and home comforts and turning that place to a den by returning to that same area. He described blending as the use of study time to do more than one activity and moving between schedule fairly frequently such as reading, using phones and laptops, and chatting (i.e. multi-tasking). In meeting the information needs of the Gen Z, acquisition of digital content over print should be embraced so as to ensure access to library collection beyond library opening hours (MacDonald, 2018). From the forgoing narratives, libraries are no longer seen as quiet places but rather as place of warmth and emotional safety, "nesting" and "blending" for this generation (Winter, 2019).

At the **University of London**, the library meets the information needs of their diverse population through provision of a live chat service instead of just the conventional reference services and also have active social media presence (see <https://onlinelibrary.london.ac.uk/support/online-library-enquiry-service/ask-librarian-live-chat>). Similarly, at the **Lancaster University**, library provides a blended space: a space where students can read, socialize and relax (<https://portal.lancaster.ac.uk/ask/study-social-spaces/>). This initiative affirms that Gen Zers need a cozy library space to reflect their lifestyle, which is often flicking between activities rapidly, a familiar space to work alone, but near to their friends so that they can socialize and come together to eat or share stories/pictures on their mobiles.

A range of studies have explored the challenges and opportunities of library services to GenZ students. Mohr and Mohr (2017) emphasize the need for LIS professionals to understand and adapt to the unique characteristics of this generation, such as their reliance on technology and preference for self-directed learning and reading habit. Haseeb (2019) and Vinh (2020) both highlight the potential of blended and digital learning environments in meeting the needs of GenZ students, with Haseeb specifically noting the benefits of giving students control over their learning. The importance of embracing technology in the classroom and making leaning and library services to be more student-centered cannot be stressed enough. Recent studies also collectively underscore the need for librarians to be flexible and innovative in their approach to serving GenZ students (Badawy, AlAli, Khan, Dashti and AlKatheeri, 2024).

To foster a dynamic, welcoming, and collaborative environment, libraries have to respond positively and innovatively to the demands of the new revolution, popularly known as the fifth industrial revolution, so as to be able to meet the expectations of a diverse population by infusing technology into library services, and ambience. According to previous researchers (Yoo-Lee et al., 2013; Soroya and Ameen 2020), today's academic library user population, the Gen Z are more tech-savvy, active on social media, and well skilled at multitasking. Prior now, as libraries and librarians, from late 1999 to early 2000, we have been providing library and information services to a population known as the *Millennials*. Studies of Tapscott, (1999); Lenhart, Rainie and Lewis, (2001; Carstens and Beck, 2005; Sweeny (2005) and Becker (2009), described the generation of millennials as Instant-Message Generation; generation Y, the Net generation or the eco-boom generation. This is because *the Gen Z* were the first to have grown up immersed with computers, increased reliance on technology, and versatile in using technologies for instant communication and learning (Howe and Strauss, 2000; Pedró, 2008).

Studies on Gen Z and Millennial media habits and library use indicate a heavy dependence on digital resources and technology (Deyrup, 2020; Salubi, 2018). It is interesting to note that a majority of the Gen Z are on the social media every day to mingle with their friends (Berens and Noorda, 2023). There is no doubt that the hype is real and libraries are to uncover how they could adapt library services to meet the information needs of this digital-born generation (Weiler, 2005). In achieving this feat, Sweeney (2005) argued that library decision makers should be willing to transform, remodel or design library spaces that have a social outlook and rooms for collaborative study, research or learning. The author further suggested that another way of providing fit-for purpose service to this diverse population of library users is to render customized or personalized library services, and one-way of getting this done is to customize the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) in a way that it can retain/display user's favorite books, searches, and the last spot they left off.

The study of Somaratna (2019) indicates that a cozy and welcoming atmosphere, comfortable furnishings and physical amenities are a must have for the new generation of library users. Gen Z require a comfortable library area to match their fast-paced, frequently-changing lifestyle. They also require a familiar place to work alone that is close to their friends so they can get together for meals or to share stories or photos on their phones when they feel like it.

Disruptive technologies in university libraries

Globally, disruptive technologies such as Internet of Things (IoT), Smart library systems: IoT devices, Chatbots, IoT-based sensors, data analytic tools and so forth are permeating every sector, including the education sector. The 4IR era is a time of disruption for libraries (Janse van Vuren, 2022). However, the role of the academic library has been enhanced in light of the disruptive technologies by becoming the library of the future. The fifth industrial revolution is unique in the sense that the most important technologies of that era will still be the artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, 3D printing and digital platforms, Big data and Chatbot. Sarfraz, Sarfraz, Iftikar and Akhund (2021) argued that the current generation is gearing itself towards a more personalized future. These disruptive technologies are to influence librarians' thinking, attitude and approach in rendering smart library services (Mohideen, Sheikh, Kaur and Sukmawatid, 2022). The 4IR is challenging traditional thinking and understanding of the concept of libraries. These disruptive technologies have brought about transformation of library space, resources and services. Some of the transformation brought about in libraries by the disruptive technologies are open access initiatives and makerspace which has technologies such as virtual reality, use of self-checkout machines and RFID (Moonasar and Ngoepe, 2023). Sequel to this, Ali, Garba, and Adakawa (2018) submit that librarians are to embrace these disruptive technologies in order to meet up to the expectations of 21st Century students. Moreover, a transformation of digital libraries into smart libraries for Gen Zs and other millennials to access services such computer-aided design services, data mining services and multimedia services is imperative (Kaklauskas, et al., 2007).

New information service trends arising from the disruptions of the fourth industrial wave include free Wi-Fi in the libraries; 24/7 study areas and access to library resources on and off campus; research commons; makerspace; borrowing ICTs devices (e.g. laptops); e-resources; e-catalogues; research data services (RDS; RDM, IR) and open scholarship (Ocholla and Ocholla, 2020). Moreover, libraries have been directed to develop services that promote understanding of AI as part of information literacy (Cox and Mazumdar, 2022). For instance, Kim (2019) remarked that the University of Rhode Island Library has responded positively to the wave of the disruptive technologies of the fourth and fifth industrial revolution by having an Artificial Intelligence Lab which provides intelligent experimental space and services for their diverse user population.

Moonasar and Ngoepe (2023) reported that academic librarians at Durban University of Technology (DUT) have embraced continual professional development to counteract the disruption and keep up to date on new information and skills that will enable them to shift and adapt with changes in their field. The DUT library has responded to the disruptive technologies of the fifth way through open access initiatives, revitalizing library spaces, utilizing makerspaces outfitted with cutting-edge technologies like virtual reality, converting the circulation desk into an information desk, utilizing self-checkout kiosks, RFID, and establishing neutral spaces to promote inclusivity.

As a result of the impact of the fourth industrial and more recently the fifth industrial revolution on every sector, LIS professionals have been asked to shift their philosophy from the 'Library Centered' approach to the 'User Centered' approach, to make the libraries relevant with the changing times (Sudarshan, 2015). Extant literature also revealed that libraries must transform to encompass both the physical and virtual spaces as higher education institutions change due artificial intelligence (AI) and cyber-physical systems (Xing and Marwala 2017). Libraries and librarians should embrace the 4IR survival guidelines of agility, resilience, responsiveness, and adaptability in order to take the lead in developing both physical and virtual spaces because every user has the propensity to access a global library on their devices (Deloitte 2018). From the foregoing discourse in literature, it can then be emphatically said that these survival guidelines will also be applicable and relevant for survival in the fifth industrial revolution, though more survival gimmicks may unfold as we move into the future.

Method

The study adopted the qualitative approach to provide deeper insights into real world problems and inquiry raised in this research. The approach was chosen because it seeks to unearth the opinions, thoughts and feelings of participants (Dunwoodie, Macaulay and Newman (2023). Five federal universities were selected for the study because they are public funded universities and their year of establishment ranges from 1962 to 1988 (see table 1). The universities were purposely selected because they have applied ICT to their library activities and have deployed purpose-fit services to meet the information needs of their diverse

students' population. A total of 25 librarians working in the Reader's Services, Reference and Automation/ICT units in each of the selected institutions voluntarily participated in the study via telephone interview. The justification for adopting the sampling technique is to address time constraint factor and work with the available fund earmarked for data collection. All participants identified themselves as academic librarians, working in a variety of different roles. Their number of years of experience varied widely, ranging from 10 years to more than 30 years. They represented all levels of work experience from young librarians to senior librarians nearing retirement. Their level of familiarity with the subject matter was assessed based on an analysis of responses generated from them. The research instrument used to collect data was semi-structured interview conducted via zoom and mobile telephone from January to February 2024. Each interview session lasted for 30 minutes. The process allowed participants to look holistically at their experience and comment on the overall process of service delivery. Analysis of the responses was thematically reported.

Table 1: List of Selected Institutions

S/N	Name of Institutions	Year Established	Source of funding/Ownership
1	University of Lagos	1962	Federal
2	University of Jos	1975	Federal
3	University of Port-Harcourt	1975	Federal
4	Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta	1988	Federal
5	University of Nigeria, Nsukka	1960	Federal

Source: National Universities Commission <https://www.nuc.edu.ng/nigerian-universities/federal-universities/>

Findings

Some of the most significant findings from the study were:

- When the researchers asked the interviewees on the role(s) university libraries are playing in providing fit-for purpose services to diverse students' population in the era of disruptive technologies in Nigeria, majority of the respondents reported that the hype is real as the GenZ population are independently and remotely using library resources and services that technology is creating. Four respondents remarked that the diverse GenZ students' population on their campuses are no longer merely focusing on traditional library offerings. The respondents remarked that the proportions of the role librarians are playing in their libraries now include:
 - ❖ Managers of Institutional Repositories
 - ❖ Digital custodians promoting access to electronic resources, evaluating electronic materials and acquiring licenses.
 - ❖ IT support expert
 - ❖ Knowledge creator
 - ❖ Subject-based specialist
 - ❖ Digital officers developing relationships with database managers, electronic publishers, and partnering with other libraries to increase access to materials.
 - ❖ Public relations officer maintaining connections with community, institutions and other libraries, in addition to hosting events.
- In response to question about type(s) of fit-for purpose services university libraries in Nigeria are providing to diverse students' population in the era of disruptive technologies, the study found the following services: use of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology, collection management and QR codes, virtual library user registration, space transformation for collaborative study and introduction of social events. A librarian from the University of Jos remarked that institutional repository is the closest to the cloud computing services we have here in UNIJOS, which is an example of a disruptive technology. This is in addition to the use of Chat box and smart assistant in the library website (Respondent, UNIJOS).

Another respondent mentioned that their library usually organizes a programme tagged 'Library Hunt' at the beginning of every academic session in collaboration with the Student Union Body. The programme which is specifically tailored to promote awareness for the library holdings and its services is usually celebrated during student's Faculty and Hall week (Respondent, FUNAAB). In the last two years, the University of Port-Harcourt library introduced a game competition for its users as a way of creating visibility to the library and services provided therein.

The need to have a more welcoming library environment for all, and creating innovative spaces to foster collaboration and creativity among the diverse students' population was a major focus of providing fit-for purpose library services at the University of Lagos Library. A respondent from the University of Lagos Library noted that although creating access to library facilities and services is important for students, however, the library recognize that supporting their social wellbeing is also essential. Hence, the library introduced a social inclusion programmes tagged "Library Lover's Day" which was introduced in February 2022 and subsequently aimed to get students to celebrate Valentine's Day in the library where they can share views of what they love and/or hate about the library. The 3rd edition of the programme was held on 14th February, 2024. It was also reported that the library has deployed Artificial Intelligence to library service delivery since June 2020 (Respondent, UNILAG).

3. In response to the question of what is the future of Nigerian university libraries in a disruptive environment, it appears that the respondents were futuristic as 6 key areas were identified as the future of Nigerian university libraries. The area which attracted further questions and concern are as discussed:
 - i. **Society transformed:** As the population ages and becoming more diverse, what new challenges will librarians face and how will LIS professionals adapt to disruptive environment?
 - ii. **Technology transformed:** What will innovation like Artificial Intelligence, automation and new ways of communication mean for the role of a librarian? Which department or section of the library will face the greatest challenges?
 - iii. **Pattern of work Transformed:** Expectations of library employees are changing with a desire for more flexible, self-directed forms of work that allow better work-life balance. How will LIS professionals and Library Associations respond?
 - iv. **Lifelong learning transformed:** Upskilling and reskilling will become even important as learning processes transformed. How should librarians facilitate this?
 - v. **Leadership transformed:** With the traditional library management styles becoming extinct, what new leadership styles will evolve in librarianship?
 - vi. **Business transformed:** How can we ensure that rapid, disruptive business models are able to develop libraries? What will technology mean existing library system?
4. *In term of challenges university libraries are facing in providing fit-for purpose services to a diverse GenZ students' population, some respondents expressed that sustainability is a major challenge. In the words of a respondent, some of the tools, especially the Chat box tool introduced to provide fit-for purpose services in my library are not functional anymore (Respondent, UNIJOS. Other challenges reported include inadequate funding, lack of required skills, to effectively navigate in a disruptive environment, lack of a robust IT network and irregular electricity are what LIS professionals are facing providing services.*

Discussion

The study examined how university libraries in Nigeria are providing fit-for purpose library services in an era of disruptive technologies. The findings obtained from respondents revealed that the roles of librarians have changed from provision of traditional library services and becoming more robust and fit for the diverse generation they now serve. Some of the changing roles of librarians that were clearly derived from the study include institutional repository management, promoting access to electronic resources, IT support, developing relationships with database managers and publishers and public relations roles involving creating connections with communities, and organising and hosting social events. An institutional repository is a web based database that collects, stores and disseminate digital materials (Kaladhar, Doraswamy Naick and Rao, 2018). The intellectual outputs of universities archived in institutional repositories include conference papers, data sets, digitally captured course materials, multimedia simulations/visualizations, captured notes of faculty and lecture series material. Popescu, Popa and Cotet (2019) note that resources in the institutional repository are in digital form, and in conformity with the expectations and preferences of the Gen Zs. It is therefore not surprising to have found use of institutional repository as a fit for purpose type of cloud computing services. This finding conforms with Bogucki

(2021); Zainab, Chong and Chaw (2013); Alsaad, O'Hara and Carr, (2019) and Irenea, Tijani and Bakare (2018). The study aligns itself with Irenea and colleagues who concludes that librarians need to accept the fact that today's library users, now called the Gen Zs have altered their information seeking behavior and this calls for new ways of reaching them.

Another finding of the study is promotion of access to electronic resources, IT support, developing relationships with database managers which is in line with the findings of Schmidt (2013), who noted that libraries, especially those in higher institutions now provide access to online libraries and scholarly databases that are pertinent and contain accurate information. The finding on adoption and use of Chatbox and smart assistant as revealed in this is a new wave on leveraging on technologies of the fifth industrial revolution to meet the information needs of Gen Z. Moreover, the study revealed that libraries now organize programmes that support the social wellbeing of today's diverse user population. Such programmes are the Library Lover's Day, Library Hunt and game competition at the University of Lagos Library, Nimbe Adedipe Library, FUNNAB and University of Port Harcourt respectively. This is consistent with the findings of previous studies such as Merga (2021) and Shipman, Stoddart, Peay and Eccles (2013). Today's diverse user population also require library spaces that have relaxing and refreshing looks with beautiful and colorful furniture and a place that foster collaboration and connectedness (Willis, Hughes and Bland, 2019; Somaratna, 2019). These findings suggest that libraries should more flexible, more responsive and creative with their spaces in order to remain relevant (Auten, Norton, Tennant, Edwards, Stoyan-Rosenzweig and Daley, 2013).

Also, the study revealed an array of challenges hindering provision of fit-for purpose services to a diverse students' population in academic libraries. The major challenge as revealed in this study is sustainability of the AI technologies introduced to provide fit-for purpose services in libraries. Other challenges include inadequate funding, lack of required skills, to effectively navigate in a disruptive environment, lack of a robust IT network and irregular electricity supply. Relevant research has notably emphasised lack of skills on use of disruptive technologies among librarians, irregular power supply, and inadequate infrastructure for adoption of technologies of the fifth wave in libraries (Emiri, 2023). In support of Emiri's (2023) earlier observation, this study affirms that libraries stakeholders should organize a formal and requisite training for librarian on the use of artificial intelligence for library service delivery. Libraries should engage with the conversational design of chatbot in collaboration with the technology developers to make it suitable, useful, friendly, trustworthy and customisable (Mckie and Narayan, 2019).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The disruptive age is here and there is no running away from the opportunities it brings and the challenges it poses for the future of library profession in Nigeria. The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write but those who cannot adapt to positive change. Therefore, the Nigerian Library Association and LIS professionals, including those working in university libraries must rise to the occasion and help their institutions in particular, to drive the needed change in library service delivery. We must avoid a dystopia state where technology is used as a repressive tool and recognize that the future is not born of complacency! LIS professionals must recognise that it can no longer thrive on traditional mode of service delivery as usual, and the time to act is now!

As Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals form the backbone for information provision and dissemination to a diverse population, libraries should be ready to play significant role in providing fit-for purpose services to the students' population, especially the GenZs who are in the majority in most university campus in Nigeria.

To achieve this, LIS professionals should be ready to make **learning, unlearning and relearning** top priorities. Specifically, LIS professionals should learn the following:

1. Key technologies and methodologies
2. Agility and adaptability
3. Future-proofing skills
4. Empathy and emotional intelligence.

In the same vein, LIS professionals should be ready to unlearn the following:

1. Outdated library service delivery practices
2. Resistance to change
3. Fear of failure
4. Over-reliance on traditional library services metrics
5. Command-and-control leadership styles

Finally, in the current context of disruptive environment, LIS professional should be ready to relearn certain practices by building on previous knowledge and experiences to better understand new approaches such as:

1. Lifelong learning: Embracing the continuous acquisition of new knowledge and skills throughout their career as technological advancement like deployment of Artificial Intelligence and automation demand continuous learning and rapid reskilling.
2. Sustainability and ethical leadership: Integrating sustainable and ethical principles into decision-making processes,
3. Strategic agility: Developing the ability to adapt strategies and approaches quickly in response to unforeseen challenges
4. Effective communication: Honoring communication skills to quickly articulate strategies, inspire teams and build trust among library employees and library users.
5. Advocacy: Promoting library advocacy that translates into public support.

Limitation of Study

This study examined how university libraries have deployed fit-for purpose services to meet the information needs of diverse student population in Nigeria. The limitation of the study is that data was gathered from few federal universities and excluded state and private universities. This could affect the generalization of result. Despite the observed limitation, all necessary steps have been taken to ensure the validity of the findings presented in the paper.

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**PROVIDING LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES TO DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE
USERS IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA.**

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Abstract

This study examined the Provision of Library and Information Services to Diverse and Inclusive Users in University Libraries in Nigeria. The study adopted narrative content analysis to collect relevant data on the subject of the study. The study discussed the importance of embracing diversity and inclusion in library service delivery in university libraries. The study reviewed some subjects such as diversity, inclusivity, the need to embrace diversity and inclusivity in university library services, steps to follow to ensure diversity and inclusivity in university library services delivery in Nigeria, and the challenges of embracing diversity and inclusion in university library services delivery. The study concludes that, effective university library service delivery that embraces diversity and inclusion will showcase the quality of the university. The university library should therefore, ensure ethical practices and full competency in diversity and inclusion in service delivery that cater for diverse community, as the university library is meant to be a safe and connecting centre to the university community. The study recommends that, there are varied categories of university library users, the physically challenged for instance should be considered while library buildings and setting the library is to be put in place. This is to accommodate the peculiarities of persons with disabilities. And, the university library collections/resources should include the necessary assistive technologies that can aid the use of the digital resources by users with special needs.

Key Words: Diversity, Inclusivity, University Library, Service Delivery

Introduction

The university libraries' main objective is to foster an inclusive organization that embraces and celebrates diversity and equity as a fundamental principle in all facets of library services. Equity, diversity and inclusivity initiatives in university libraries are noble and commendable. The culture of the university library is a place where everyone in the university community is welcomed and encouraged in which all feel belong to pure and create knowledge. According to Jaeger et al (2015), the ultimate goal of diversity and inclusion initiatives is to make libraries and their workers integrated part of the communities they serve, with the awareness and knowledge of those communities and welcoming attitudes towards those communities. The university library's success is anchored on collections and services that reflect expertise and cultural sensitivity and spaces that meet and welcome all scholars, researchers and community members. The university library is dedicated to shaping an organization that actively operates with an education that enriches diversity, equity and inclusion, understanding that the library work is central to the fundamental mission of creating, sharing and preserving knowledge by all and for all.

The University of South Carolina states that, the library is committed to providing spaces and services that is accessible, safe, inclusive and culturally diverse. According to the University of South Carolina, if the university library is to remain an indispensable entity in their campuses. they must reflect to provide quality services to their increasingly diverse communities. University libraries are obliged as the intellectual centre of the university to proactively meet the needs of the various faculty, staff, visitors and students. The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) (2012) states that, if libraries are to continue being indispensable organizations in their campus communities, they must reflect the communities they serve.

Nigeria is a country with diverse cultures, comprising, Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba ethnic groups. These ethnic

groups have their different languages, cultures and beliefs. University libraries are known as nuclear social points, they are expected to play an important role in developing respect for people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Diversity should allow library users to develop cultural literacy and appreciation of their cultures as well as others. University libraries should offer accessibility to educational resources for all users, despite their language, economic and cultural background or distress. In fact, University libraries in Nigeria should develop respect for every library user, notwithstanding cultural and linguistic background.

University Library

The university is the lifeline of the growth and development of individuals and of every nation. University education in Nigeria needs to be given high priority to achieve individual and national growth as education is one of the fundamental rights of the citizenry.

The university library is the nuclear social point for knowledge acquisition. Obiyom, Adetona and Obiyom (2019) state that, university libraries are libraries domiciled in universities to provide the faculty, students and researchers easy access to information materials for learning, teaching, knowledge discovery and creation through research. According to them, to meet these requirements forms the objective function of building a quality collection that reflects the needs and objectives of the university as the parent body. The library plays important role in the development of people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the university. They are expected to offer accessibility to educational resources for all users, despite their language, economic and cultural distress. The university library is a place where the university community look for guidance and it would be very nice for libraries to perfect their services with inclusion and diversity for the community they serve.

Concept of Diversity

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, diversity is a range of many people or things that are very different from each other. Okeke (2018) states that, diversity is the strata of social class, gender, and religion. Diversity is an essential component of any civil society. It is a global necessity. American Psychological Association (2017) see, diversity as a complex and nuanced construct that represents an array of identity factors, such as race, ethnicity, gender and disability. Diversity and inclusivity look at feelings of inequality and marginalization, bias and, working against certain groups of persons who are different in terms of race, color, gender, disability, status, religions affiliation, political class, social class etc.

Diversity is a fundamental value for libraries, as it helps students develop critical thinking and analytical skills as they advance in knowledge. Diversity includes cultural awareness. It embraces all races, ethnicity, disability, gender, class, religion, etc. Washinton, DC states that, diversity is used to describe individual differences, eg. Life experiences, learning and working styles, personality types, group/social differences, eg. Race, social-economic status, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, ability, intellectual traditions and perspectives as well as cultural, political, religious and other affiliations that can be engaged to achieve excellence in teaching, learning, research, scholarship, administration and support services. Cruz (2019) examines diversity as a cornerstone of the library profession. Cruz outlined staffing, culture, collections, services and programs as good starting points for libraries to reflect on the current state of diversity in institutions to plan for meaningful change.

Concept of Inclusivity

According to American Psychological Association (2017), inclusion is the practice of providing equal access to opportunities and resource to ensure that, such classes or groups are embraced or accommodated in service delivery. Washington DC states that, inclusion is used to describe the active, intentional and on-going engagement with diversity in people, curriculum, co-curriculum, and in communities, eg. Intellectual, social, cultural, geographic with which individuals might connect.

In library service delivery, the concept of inclusivity is to serve with equity, encouraging participation, removing barriers of discrimination and oppression, and looking out for the wellbeing of students and library users. Inclusive library service is the process of addressing the varied needs of library users.

Diversity and inclusion are very important element in learning processes, students learn about the world, other cultures and technologies is through information found in library collections which influence their social and identity development. The goal of diversity and inclusivity is to foster an environment in which all members of the community are treated equitably, contribute fully to the university libraries mission, and embrace model values. Diversity and inclusivity are concepts that go with equity and equality.

Need to Embrace Diversity and Inclusivity in University Libraries in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, there are educational divide across the cultures of the society. Largely, perception and attitude to formal education varies among the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria which include: Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba. According to Tinuola (2011), anecdotal evidence shows that, the Yoruba embraced formal education, the Hausa are suspicious and do not welcome it, while the Igbos, though, majorly known for enterprise, do also accept formal education. Tinuola states further that, there is the issue of accessibility for

certain classes of persons as against other classes within the same ethnic group. For instance, accessibility of formal education and library services differ with respect to gender, physical ability/disability, location and age among other variations.

The university library is a place, where the university community would look for guidance and it will be nice, university libraries serve with diversity and inclusivity for the community. University libraries value the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion in service delivery. This is to enable all library users feel belonged and have full participation in using the library for knowledge acquisition. When the university library collections have intersecting characters with different backgrounds, family structures, sexuality, disabilities and colour, this will give more cultural insights to the library users. When students/library users feel represented and see similar identities in the materials they use, they have high interest and enthusiasm towards the course/material. The university libraries should acquire modern technologies to adopt library programs, services, facilities, and collections, so that, people of various cultures and diverse needs find those programs and services valuable and useful to them. This will make the university library, a welcoming place for users.

Inclusion & diversity influence social and identity development of users. Students normally learn the world around them and other cultures by social messages found in stories and other collections of the library. This will help the users perceive the realities of the world. Embracing diversity and inclusivity will help libraries to improve on effective service delivery. A diverse library staff should always help and encourage cultural awareness and represent users in their diverse cultures.

Importance of Diversity and Inclusivity in University Library Services in Nigeria.

Nigeria is a very diverse nation. Diversity is inherent in our languages, dressings, foods, family structures and culture. Integration of diverse cultures in library service provision will enhance interrelation among the communities. The main purpose of the library and librarians is to be readily, equally and equitably accessible to all library users. University library services are committed to fairness and equality. The library ensures to remove barriers to their services to promote the culture of inclusiveness and to maximise the personal achievement of users and the library staff. Libraries and librarians should improve on their service delivery and provide appropriate collections for the library users by imbibing diversity and inclusivity.

Moore (2023) states that, librarians in university libraries serve diverse communities to the best of their ability. This they do by setting the environment, providing the resources and helping people to access the resources needed. According to Moore, in diversity, the library collection needs to be diverse, containing materials, and literature/story books written by diverse people and in diverse languages. There should be subject librarians to interpret various materials for cataloguing and reference purposes. The library building should have some comfort like ramps, accessible restrooms, water, conveniences, quiet zones and spaces.

The University library services should be designed to strengthen the integration of diversity in culture, gender, religion, social class, physical disability, etc. Segregation among social identities, ethnicity, religion, gender and age among others will bring discouragement and dissatisfaction among library users in the university libraries. Relevant and appropriate materials will help users get more background on cultural awareness. Community events that highlight cultures should be promoted. Library collections should be diverse and inclusive. Students feel represented when they see similar identities in the materials they read and use, making their interest and enthusiasm towards the course rises. Appreciation of different faculties and cultures in the university library is a healthy way to embrace diversity and inclusivity in effective library service delivery, this will ensure lifelong use of the library by majority of the library users. There are varied categories of library users. The physically challenged for instance should be considered when library building and setting the library is to put in place. This is to accommodate the peculiarities of persons with disabilities. The library resources/collection should include the necessary assistive technologies that can aid the use of the digital resources by users with special needs.

Innovative activities like, group reading and gaming in the university library will help students and library users to understand similarities and dissimilarities in different cultures and the university system, and orchestrate mixture of ideologies. This will help students and library users to interrelate with one another, thereby, fostering respect and appreciation of other's faculty, courses, culture and ways of life. This will, in the long run, foster unity, love, and long-time friendship among students and library users.

According to UWA (2020), diversity and inclusion are essential in the library because, it helps students develop critical thinking skills, as libraries are uniquely equipped to lead the charge in celebrating diversity among students and library collections. UWA stated that, the American Library Association (ALA), highlights the ways, libraries can successfully eliminate barriers and become accessible when they create culturally equitable practices. These practices include:

- Offering new collections of books that sincerely present new cultural experiences across marginalized communities.
- Providing library service support to community events that highlight different cultures.
- Planning and implementing new services to respond to community needs
- Creating a diverse library staff to allow more people to see themselves represent in the physical

space.

- Librarians should be sensitive to what perspectives are represented in their collections
- Highlight characters with intersecting identities.
- Feature characters with different gender identities, family structures and disability
- Access social justice issues in the community, the nation and the world.
- Focus on the perspectives of people of colour.

One of the ways to improve diverse and inclusive services in the university library is to know and understand the library community and their needs. The university library community and their interest could be known by talking and interacting with them and through the courses and activities offered by the university. Based on these insights, the university library librarians will provide effective services and be able to fill the gaps, to be as diverse and inclusive as possible.

Steps to Provide Library and Information Services to Diverse and Inclusive Library Users

According to www.linkedin, the following steps are the procedure to follow for effective diverse and inclusive library service:

1. **Understand your community:** this is the first step to provide information services to diverse and inclusive library users. Know who the patrons are; their information needs, interests and goals. Understand their cultural, linguistic and social characteristics. Help them know how to access and use their information. By understanding your community, you can identify the gaps and opportunities in the service delivery and act accordingly.
2. **Develop your collections:** the university library collection should reflect the diversity and inclusivity of the community. Properly arrange the collections to ensure they are easy to find, browse and borrow and borrow the library collections. Cataloguing, classification and metadata can be used to organize and display the collection. Patrons of the library should be involved in the collection development process, feedback and suggestions should be solicited.
3. **Deliver your services:** Service delivery in the University library should be responsive, respectful, and relevant to the patrons information, needs and preferences. Various channels and methods should be used to reach and engage the library patrons. Tools such as websites, social medias, webinars, chatpots etc. can be used to communicate and interact with patrons. Collaboration with other libraries, partners and library and information stakeholders to provide holistic and integrated services is very necessary.
4. **Evaluate your impact:** Evaluation of impact on the services delivery to patrons is needed. Measure and Monitor the outcomes and effects of your services on the library patrons ie their satisfaction. This can be done through data analysis, from the library patrons, partners, staff and library stakeholders. This is to access the strength and weakness of the services rendered. The result of the evaluation should be used to improve and innovate the library services.
5. **Evaluate Yourself:** To provide library and information services to diverse and inclusive library users, the library should continuously update the knowledge and skills of the librarians in diversity and inclusion issues. Librarians should participate in professional development opportunities, such as conferences, workshops, webinars etc. One can as well learn from experts, mentors and role models in library profession. With these self education, one can enhance competence and confidence in providing effective library and information services to diverse and inclusive library users.
6. **Embrace your role:** Know and appreciate the importance and impact of the role of a library professional in serving diverse and inclusive library users. Acknowledge and address the challenges and barriers that one may face in the service, such as bias, discrimination etc.
Celebrate and share your achievements and successes as services are rendered. Inspire and support others for effective service delivery in the library profession. This will help foster a positive and inclusive culture in the library and library profession.

Challenges of Embracing Diversity and Inclusivity in University Libraries

Zaid and Zaid (2017) observed that, the challenges of embracing diversity and inclusivity are: inadequate library budget, poor information and telecommunication infrastructure, limited access to high-speed internet, a low take off of open access repositories and digital libraries, non-availability of adaptive technology and specialized software packages.

Conclusion

The importance of embracing diversity and inclusivity in library services delivery in the university libraries in Nigeria cannot be overemphasised. Effective library service delivery that embraces diversity and

inclusivity will showcase the quality of the university. The university libraries must ensure ethical practices and full competency in diversity and inclusion in service delivery that cater for diverse community, as the university library is meant to be a safe and connecting centre to the university community.

Recommendations

- ❖ The university libraries should be committed to removing barriers to library services, and promote the culture of inclusiveness and diversity to enable all users to make the best of the university library services.
- ❖ There are varied categories of university library users, the physically challenged for instance should be considered when library buildings and setting the library is to be put in place. This is to accommodate the peculiarities of persons with disabilities.
- ❖ The university library collections/resources should include the necessary assistive technologies that can aid the use of the digital resources by users with special needs.

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PROVISION AND SUSTENANCE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN SCHOOL LIBRARIES FOR EARLY HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATIVE DIGITAL INCLUSION IN CONTEMPORARY TIME: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract

Education is very essential to human capital development. The most vital form of education is that which is foundational with functional school libraries. Transforming societies requires adequate human capital development through adequate knowledge and education for contemporary capacity development. This is possible through access to adequate information, especially from the foundation of education, in which the school library is an integral aspect. The exclusion of certain underprivileged members of the society due to economic status has further depreciated the prospects of society in having an equitable access to the digital technologies. This denies young learners and teachers the access to the information and knowledge that can help them acquire competitive advantage to excel in personal endeavours. Therefore, it is vital to ensure that school libraries explore the potentials of digital technologies in providing equitable access to information in order to improve the prospects of human capital development. The realization of this goal is hindered by negative developments such as poor funding, non-recognition of the roles of school libraries, poor digital literacy skills, poor staffing policies in school libraries, inadequate library resources, inadequate digital resources among others. This paper therefore recommends the following training of library staff on digital inclusion and digital literacy, provision of digital inclusion policy in schools, employment of digitally-oriented Teacher-Librarian, partnership with public libraries for digital resources sharing, increased funding of school libraries by government and private owners, proper enforcement of school library standardization with the use of government approval mechanism requirements.

Keywords: Digital inclusion, digital technologies, school libraries,

Introduction

Human capital development is very essential to the sustainable development of every society. The value of every society is determined by the skills and competencies that members of the society can offer. The possession of the necessary capabilities to contribute to societal development requires the provision and use of the resources than can guarantee the acquisition of the necessary competencies for societal growth and development. Hence, knowledge is expected to be acquired by members of the society. The attainment of knowledge comes with the availability, accessibility and use of information and knowledge assets. Unfortunately, due to inadequate resources occasioned by several factors, certain members of the society have been excluded from the opportunity to gain access to, and use knowledge and information assets to enhance their potentials for human capital development.

Education is very essential to human capital development. And the most vital form of education is that which is foundational. The acquisition of sound education helps one to contribute greatly to the development of the society (Suleiman, Hanafi, & Thanslikan, 2018). This is why schools at the basic and secondary levels are expected to be equipped with adequate resources and facilities such as the school library, in order to support the development of human capital among learners. Akande and Bamise (2017) note that the school library compliments the work of the classroom teacher with the ultimate goal of ensuring that each student has equitable access to resources, irrespective of home opportunities or constraints. International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) (2015), states that a school library is a school's physical and digital learning space where reading, inquiry, research, thinking, imagination, and creativity are central to students' information-to-knowledge journey and to their personal, social, and cultural growth. The school library is so unique that it is the first form of formal library an individual gets in contact with. While other libraries are to be used in later years, the school library has the potential of being the one that integrates an individual into the information society and prepares the information user for life-long learning.

Modern technologies have permeated all facets of human lives, and the most affected is that of information management. As information is increasingly being recognized as a factor of production, the need to harness digital technologies in the provision of information services to members of the society is becoming more evident. However, and unfortunately, certain members of the society have been placed in disadvantaged positions due to inequality in the distribution of information infrastructure, the digital divide. It is therefore the objective of this paper to seek to address the problem of digital divide, from the perspective of school libraries, identifying how the school library can harness the potentials of digital technologies in bridging the digital divide and integrating the digitally excluded members of the society into the digital information landscape, thereby facilitating a more balanced and inclusive society, which is a basic prerequisite for sustainable development.

Concept of School Libraries

School libraries occupy a significant position in discussions on learning and many international studies have asserted the positive role school libraries have exerted on education, linking them directly to the improvement of students' academic performance, also in secondary education (Baro, & Eze, 2016). Arua and Chinaka (as cited in Benard, & Dulle, 2014) state that school library information resources are seen as all inputs which are utilized in the library in order to provide good learning environment for students and teachers so as to be able to achieve educational goals. This variety of library information resources is essential to facilitate the school library fulfill its functions among which are: to thoroughly provide information resources necessary for the school's educational programmes and to help in improving and rising the reading skills and learning habits of students. Joseph (as cited in Oduagwu, & Oduagwu, 2013) defines school library as an organized collection of books and other learning materials placed in a school for the use of teachers and pupils who are the major patrons in the school libraries.

Akande and Bamise (2017), school library is the type of library established in a primary or secondary school. It is an integral part of the school community. School library pursues the vision, principles of the school management. The school library compliments the work of the classroom teacher with the ultimate goal of ensuring that each student has equitable access to resources, irrespective of home opportunities or constraints. School library reflects and encourages collaborative learning and sharing of ideas. Okpa-Iroha (as cited in Owate & Iroha, 2013), opines that a school library is a collection of a wide variety of library materials and resources housed in each school, centrally organized by staff, professionally prepared to offer services to students and teachers that will enrich and support the educational enterprises. School libraries are known as learning laboratory for the school. They provide the total learning package required by the students and their teachers.

Explanation of Digital Technologies

Digital technologies denote a wide range of technologies, tools, services and applications using various types of hardware and software which facilitate services or activities by electronic means to create, store, process, transmit and display information. Broadly, digital technologies include the use of personal computers, digital television, radio, mobile phones, robots etc., (Vuorikari, Punie, Carratero, & Van de Brande, 2016). Digital technologies are electronic tools, systems, devices and resources that generate, store or process data. Well known examples include social media, online games, multimedia and mobile phones (State Government of Victoria, Australia, 2019).

Digital technologies and tools that are technologies relating to computers or the “Computer Age” (Gökçearsan, Solmaz, & Coşkun, 2017). Digital technologies denote a wide range of technologies, tools, services and applications using various types of hardware and software used to facilitate services or activities by electronic means to create, store, process, transmit and display information. Broadly, digital technologies include the use of personal computers, digital television, radio, mobile phones, robots etc (Tulinayo, Ssentume, & Najjuma, 2018).

Kumi-Yeboah, Sallar, Kiramba, and Kim (2020) define digital technologies as electronic tools, systems, devices, and resources that generate and store data from teaching and learning. It also includes learning materials that use technology across curriculum learning areas with examples such as online games, multimedia, cloud computing, 3D printing, and mobile computing.

Concept of Digital Inclusion

Digital inclusion is a facet of social inclusion and it provides the right access to the digital world for intellectual development and promotes spaces for significant cultural practice that allows individuals to be digitally literate (United Kingdom Government, 2014). According to the National Digital Inclusion Alliance (2023), Digital Inclusion refers to the activities necessary to ensure that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, have access to and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). This includes five elements:

- Affordable, robust broadband internet service;
- Internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user;

- Access to digital literacy training;
- Quality technical support; and
- Applications and online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation and collaboration.

The United Nations (2021) state that Digital inclusion is defined as “equitable, meaningful, and safe access to use, lead, and design of digital technologies, services, and associated opportunities for everyone, everywhere”. Digital inclusion is enabled by human rights-based, intersectional, and whole-of-society policies and multi-stakeholder approaches and actions that take into account the various barriers individuals face when accessing and experiencing digital technologies.

Rationale for Digital Inclusion in School Libraries

With the expansion of the digital society, an ever-increasingly internet and technology-driven world, privileged groups and members of the society have opportunities to become ethical and literate digital citizens using technologies to advance their causes, while the underserved populations are yet to catch up with the gap. The digital divide, which can be described as “the gap between those who have affordable access, skills, and support to effectively engage online and those who do not” (Scorse, 2021), affects such socioeconomically disadvantaged groups as indigenous, disabled, elderly, and rural communities at varying degrees (Jutras, 2023). Digital libraries in schools offer a vast collection of resources that can be easily accessed, searched, and utilized. It makes education more accessible and inclusive for students of all backgrounds (Sharma, 2023).

Strategies for Innovative Digital Services Inclusion in School Libraries

To improve the digital inclusion of the excluded school library users, school libraries will have to go beyond the present, the ordinary, and the normal, to a more creative and innovative paradigm shift. The following strategies and programmes are outlined for the attainment of digital inclusion by school libraries:

- *Collaboration with public libraries: The status of school libraries in Nigeria is not at par with counterparts in the global north. However, the school library must improvise to meet the requirements for digital inclusion. This is why school libraries will have to collaborate with public libraries in order to offer their users the opportunity to use some of the digital resources available in public libraries, which are rarely even utilized due to low patronage, as observed in some public libraries. School libraries cannot always complain and do nothing. They must work with the resources at their disposal through persuasive advocacy, often dealing with unsupportive parent institutions, legacy systems, and dated devices (Johnston, 2019). Public libraries sometimes receive more funding opportunities and can work to fill the gap in access outside of school hours, potentially offering higher quantities of devices and programs directed at educating youth on the best technological and online practices (Jutras, 2023). There is need to have strategies in place for collaboration and partnership efforts between public and school libraries in sharing knowledge in management practices and sharing of information resources (Malanga, 2017).*
- *Repositioning of school libraries to meet the standards for digital inclusion: While the school libraries must improvise, there should be simultaneous improvement of the resources and services of the school libraries through employment of digitally-oriented Teacher-Librarian, the capacity building of the library staff, acquisition of digital technologies, and the creation of interactive conducive environment for the use of digital technologies for teachers, students/pupils, and interested parents.*
- *Creation of improved access to digital technologies: The school library will need to ensure that the digital technologies are not just available, access must also be created under the leadership of trained digital competent Teacher-Librarian.*
- *Provision of digital literacy skills: Digital library users need to be provided with the skills for efficient and ethical use of digital technologies. Access, without the requisite skills will not enhance result-oriented and purposeful use of digital technologies. In a study by Reynolds and Chiu (2016), it was found out that there are adequate digital technologies available, and accessible, but access alone did not allow students to engage effectively with technology. Only after being exposed to well-rounded educational experiences did students' dispositions to engage in technology use emerge. Digital literacy is very central to digital inclusion. According to Inamdar (2021), libraries are uniquely positioned to help bridge the digital divide and ensure that everyone has access to the tools and resources they need to develop their digital literacy skills. By providing access to technology, digital resources, and training programs, libraries can help individuals of all ages and backgrounds to develop the skills they need to navigate the digital world confidently and effectively*

- *Parental enlightenment: Parents are major stakeholders in school administration, hence, they must be offered major roles to play in quest for the attainment of digital inclusion. This is why they must be made to understand and appreciate the need for digital inclusion, while guiding their wards appropriately in the ethical use of digital technologies. Apart from this, they must also be offered the opportunity to learn basic digital appreciation in order to be able to guide and encourage their wards on ethical and resource use of digital technologies.*

Challenges of Providing Digital Inclusion Services in School Libraries

School libraries worldwide are being ignored and not adequately resourced as they should be. As a result, they are not playing an effective role in supporting and enabling quality education (Shonhe, 2019). Attaining digital inclusion is often bedeviled by general issues globally, and issues specific to the Nigerian context. According to Ifijeh, Iwu-James and Adebayo (2016) affordability, illiteracy, lack of digital literacy skills, poor connectivity, technophobia have been identified as the challenges to digital inclusion in Nigeria. Township schools are situated in communities faced with socioeconomic challenges that exacerbate inequality and digital exclusion; a lack of ICT infrastructure during the COVID-19 pandemic was exposed as the main challenge in advancing online teaching and learning; participation is important in unlocking resources. If township communities and school stakeholders have no political voice, the transformation and social change agenda will suffer, widening the digital divide and leaving already disadvantaged schools further behind (Mhklze & Davids, 2021).

These challenges give negative perception of the school libraries. The result of this is a further degradation of the social status of school libraries as stakeholders have refused to perform their statutory obligations in uplifting school libraries to carry out digital inclusion services. Despite libraries' role at the heart of digital inclusion, the stereotype of dusty bookshelves persists (School Health, & Libraries Broadband Coalition, 2018). School libraries are increasingly expected to provide technological devices and instruction on interacting with the digital world appropriately (Jutras, 2023). However, while aiming to achieve this expectation, those libraries can experience many barriers (Connaughton, 2021). Schools in underprivileged areas and developing societies lack foundational internet infrastructure and other resources to provide high-speed internet access, and installing such structures requires more funding than is typically awarded (Hyunh & Malli, 2018).

Lawal-Solarin (2016) note that school libraries are not able to meet up to their mandates due to challenges such as lack of up-to-date facilities, inadequate staffing and funding, unavailability of a library within the school, inadequate government support, inadequate infrastructure and equipment, low level of information technology development. A combination of poor library staffing, absence of staffing policy, poor funding, poor ICT infrastructure, poor library facilities, lack of recognition of the roles of school libraries by school management affect the provision of standard school library services. These pose threats to the attainment of basic library services, and would be more complex for contemporary digital library services.

Conclusion

Transforming societies requires adequate human capital development through adequate knowledge and education for contemporary capacity development. This is possible through access to adequate information right from the foundation of education, in which the school library is an integral aspect. It is expected that school libraries should operate digitally at the level of their users. Therefore, it is vital to ensure that school libraries explore the potentials of digital technologies in providing equitable access to information in order to improve the prospects of human capital development. The realization of this goal is hindered by negative developments such as poor funding, non-recognition of the roles of school libraries, poor digital literacy skills, poor staffing policies in school libraries, inadequate library resources, inadequate digital resources among others.

Recommendations

This paper therefore recommends the following:

- Training of library staff on digital inclusion and digital literacy*
- Provision of digital inclusion policy in schools and incorporating the school libraries into the attainment of the goals of digital inclusion*
- Employment of digitally-oriented Teacher-Librarian to manage school libraries and implement the school digital inclusion policies*
- Partnership with public libraries for digital resources sharing*
- Increased funding of school libraries by government and private owners.*
- Proper enforcement of school library standardization with the use of government approval mechanism requirements.*

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PROVISION OF INCLUSIVE INFORMATION SERVICES FOR THE VISUALLY CHALLENGED PATRONS IN RIVERS STATE PUBLIC LIBRARY

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Abstract

This study examined provision of inclusive information service for the visually challenged patrons in Rivers State public library. Four research questions guided the study; descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of all the 20 staff in Rivers State Public Library Board. Total enumeration sampling technique was used to select all the staff at the Central library Bernard carr street, Port Harcourt and its branches, the Jubilee branch Library, Bori Branch Library and Ogoloma branch Library in Okirika. A four-point scale questionnaire was used for data collection. The reliability of the instrument was determine using the Cronbach alpha with a value of 0.77. Data was analysed using frequency and mean. Findings of the study showed that respondents highly agreed that the inclusive services provided in the Rivers State public library includes personalised reference service, current awareness service and selective dissemination of information but disagreed with book clubs for visually and lending service for the blind respectively. Respondents also agreed to the availability of collection development and accessibility policy, they highly agreed to audiobooks, speech input/output accessible mobile reading apps, braille. Findings also showed that the challenges against inclusive service for the visually challenged patrons to include poor funds, lack of awareness and training for library staff, lack of technological expertise among others. In conclusion, the visually challenged patrons should be considered in public library information service provision to ensure inclusivity. The researcher recommended among others that the government should improve on funds for public library, provide adequate training for staff to understand working with visually challenged patrons.

Key words: Inclusion, Public Library, visually challenged, Information services

Introduction

The society comprises of persons with disabilities such as the visually impaired who have their own diverse needs and challenges and deserve fair treatment, respect and decent approach. Just like all abled individuals, they need to be accorded equal access to opportunities that will help them better their lives and foster settings of inclusiveness without any bias. Trussler, & Robinson, (2015) posit that inclusion entails all deliberate efforts to counter inequality and adapts responses to diversity. Gaur, and Bhatt, (2016) opined that inclusion goes beyond tolerance to involving people who may have been traditionally excluded and treated unequally to actively participate in the same gainful activities as others without any discrimination. Also, John, and Wheeler, (2018) described inclusive practices as providing equal opportunities that suit their needs regardless of their disabilities. This concept goes across different sphere of life such as social, political, education and others. Looking at inclusion in the contexts of education and in the provision of library and information service in particular, it is aimed at fostering a sense of belonging, where everyone can have equal opportunities and access to use the available information resources and services for personal and societal development. Inclusive library is one that has an open hand to embrace all categories of users irrespective of situation surrounding them such as age, race, beliefs and physical challenges, sexual orientation and others (Grassi, 2013).

The Public library is a community learning center that, provide more than books to community members, it is an innovative development center that adapt and use modern enabling technologies to give access to learning resources and provide information services to her patrons. It provides access to knowledge,

information and works of literary imagination through a range of resources and services that are available to all members of the community regardless of their age, gender, religion, language, disability, economic status and educational attainment.

A fundamental principle of the public library is that, its services must be available to all and not directed to one group of patrons. Provision are made to ensure services are equally available to minority groups whom for reasons such as linguistic, minorities, people with disabilities or those that are divided by technology, urbanisation, level of literacy are not able to use the mainstream services. The design of libraries should be done in such a way to promote inclusivity and diversity.

The development of resources and service provision must meet the fundamental principle of access for all in formats such as, braille and talking books for people who are visually challenged. Information and communications technology must be exploited to provide improved service and operations in the library to allow access to the library collections that will enhance the provision of information resources for all patrons who will benefit from the library pool of resources funded by the taxpayers (IFLA/UNESCO, 2001).

The visually challenged are those with sight impairment, who are completely blind or partially sighted. Sambo (2016), pointed out that, library service to this user-group is often challenging and demands high level of competency and patience. However, technology integration has brought a paradigm shift in both utilisation and provision of information for the visually challenged as the use of assistive technologies such as audiobooks, text-to-speech software, large prints, speech-recorder, magnifier, braille and others are helping in ensuring the inclusivity in the library spaces all over the world (Akanwa and Chimdi, 2020; Steffen Lehmann, 2024).

Statement of Problem

Many potential users of the public library are denied access to information resources and services by the composition of collection development and provision of information resources in most public libraries which do not factor in people with special needs such as, the visually challenged patrons in the planning and building of their resources. These have greatly left a vacuum in attaining the fundamental principles of providing and facilitating access to information for all irrespective of while is true that most public libraries have unintentionally excluded the visually challenged persons from accessing information resources but due to the available provisions, they cannot provide access to information resources that will cater for the visually challenged patrons. Despite this limitation, it is necessary that study be conducted to know what some public libraries such as the Rivers State's is doing for the promotion of inclusivity in its provision of information resources and services to the visually challenged patrons in the State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the inclusive services for information provision for visually challenged patrons in Rivers State Public library?
2. What are the inclusive policies for information provision for the visually challenged public library patrons in Rivers State public library?
3. What are the inclusive resources for information provision for the visually challenged patrons in Rivers State public library?
4. What are the challenges against inclusive service for information provision among the visually challenged patrons in Rivers State public library?

Literature Review

There are numerous services provided by the public library that are carefully planned and implemented for the inclusion of visually challenged patrons (VCP), these are done according to their specific information needs and situations. However according to Osman, Imoro and Kwafoa, (2020), the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS) (2018) these services can be categorised under the following:

Personalized reference service: The visually challenged are offers one-on-one assistance that are customized and personalized to meeting their information needs, they are given support in locating specific information, accessing resources, and navigating the library catalog. Akanwa and Chimdi, (2020) are of the views that librarians help the visually impaired to provide detailed verbal descriptions, assisting them with technology to have access to materials.

Current Awareness Service (CAS) for VCP: According to Onoyeyan, (2019) this is a process of keeping users informed about new resources, events, and developments in their areas of interest. Visually challenged individuals benefit from staying up-to-date with the latest materials and technologies. Libraries offer curated lists of newly available audiobooks, braille materials and other digital resources. This service ensures that users with visual impairments have access to the most recent and relevant information in accessible formats.

Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) for VCP: This involves to proactively provide relevant information to users based on their preferences and interests, SDI for the visually challenged patrons ensures that information is tailored to their needs without being actively searching for it. Libraries can create profiles for users, including preferences for accessible formats, topics of interest, and preferred delivery methods. Abutayeh, and García-Orosa, (2021) are of the views that libraries have to continually adapt to the constantly turning cycles of technology such as open-source software, mobile technology, and voice-activated technology like Alexa, Google Home, Cortana and others to transmits relevant and accurate information pertaining to a particular profile.

As regard the available information resources for the VCP, Kapoor, (2012) in his studies revealed that there are numerous manual and technological driven resources that facilitate information provision for these categories of persons which include; assistive technologies like screen readers, magnifier, braille, among others. This will enable visually challenged individuals to navigate library services independently, fostering a sense of inclusion. Chijioke, Chigozie, and Igbokwe (2020) in their observation affirmed that libraries that offer services to people with disabilities have some common resources and equipment they associated with them, such as braille texts, talking books, playback machines, audiotapes, screen readers, signalling device, braille embossers, stylus, speech input/output and others.

On available policies of public library for VCP, Ndumbaro, (2019), opined that, to drive an inclusive public library, there must be a comprehensive policy documents to direct, monitor, regulate the activities and actions of the library staff and management in taking decisions that affect the interest of the physically challenged patrons. To ensure equitable access and inclusion of people with disability there must be implementation of policies particularly as regards their collections development, accessibility to resources, use of technological devices, lending of materials and privacy of their information (Tom-George, 2018 ; Zard, 2024).

However, some factors hinder the successful implementation of inclusive practices in public libraries. Iqal, Shahzad, Lateef and Azeeem, (2021) reported that public libraries face constraints in budgets, staffing, physical space, technological resources, and lack of training opportunities among others. These impede on their efforts to create inclusive environments for the visually challenged patrons. Zard, (2017) advocated for increase funds to public library to enable inclusive services, and stressed that available service of such should be advertised and promoted on library website.

Attitude of library staff may also affect service provision for the visually challenged patrons as some may not fully understand the importance of inclusion, diversity, and equity. Also, some staff may lack the cultural competence, leading to unintentional insensitivity or even exclusionary practices (Jaeger, 2018). It is necessary to understand and respect the cultural backgrounds and needs of diverse community in order to foster inclusion. Apparently, in an increasingly digital world, the digital divide can exclude individuals with disability with limited access to technology therefore, libraries should ensure that their services are accessible to everyone, regardless of their digital literacy. Moirangthem, and Phuritsabam, (2022) opined that legal and policy barriers such as censorship laws or restrictions on certain materials, may limit the library's ability to fully embrace inclusivity for the visually challenged persons, hence such should be addressed.

Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive survey design. The population of the study consisted of all the 20 staff in Rivers State Public Library Board. Total enumeration sampling technique was used to select all the staff in the central library Bernard carr street, Port Harcourt and its branches the Jubilee branch Library Port Harcourt, Bori Branch Library in Khana Local Government Area and Ogoloma branch Library in Okirika Local Government Area. The staff were considered as population of the study because they are in charge of collection development and provision of information in their library. A four-point scale of 'Strongly Agree', 'Agree', 'Disagree', and 'Strongly Disagree' response type questionnaires for data collection. The internal consistency of reliability was determine using the Cronbach alpha with a value of 0.77. Based on the coefficient obtained, the questionnaire was considered reliable. Answering the research questions, a mean response below 2.5 was adjudged as 'not agree', while the mean response of 2.5 was adjudged as 'agree' and mean response above 2.5 was adjudged as 'highly agree'. Data was analyzed using mean.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the inclusive services for information provision for visually challenged patrons in Rivers State Public library?

Table 1 Inclusive services for information provision for visually challenged patrons in Rivers State Public library

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	SD	REMARK
1	Personalized reference service	15	4	1	0	3.9	0.98	Highly agree
2	Current awareness services	10	5	2	3	3.2	0.89	Highly agree
3	Selective dissemination of information	10	10	0	0	3.5	0.93	Highly agree
4	Book clubs for visually challenged patrons.	3	2	5	10	1.9	0.89	Not agree
5	Book lending service for the blind	5	3	6	6	2.3	0.68	Not agree
	Grand mean					2.9		Highly agree

Table 1 shows the inclusive information services that are available for the visually challenged patrons in Rivers State public library. Respondents highly agreed that they offer personalised reference service with a mean of 3.9 and S.D 0.98. They highly agreed to current awareness services with a mean score of 3.2 and SD 0.89. They also highly agreed to selective dissemination of information with a mean of 3.5 and SD 0.93. Table 1 therefore shows that all the items listed above have mean values above the criterion mean of 2.5, more so, the grand mean (2.9) is greater than the criterion mean (2.5). However, respondents did not agree to book club and lending service for the blind with mean of 1.9 and 2.3 as well as SD of 0.89 and 0.68 respectively.

Research Question 2: What are the inclusive policies for information provision for the visually challenged public library patrons in Rivers State public library?

Table 2: The inclusive policies for information provision for the visually challenged public library patrons in Rivers State public library.

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	SD	REMARK
1	Collection development policy	12	5	2	1	3.5	0.98	Highly agree
2	Accessibility policy	0	2	3	15	1.2	0.58	Not agree
3	Technology and assistive devices	5	4	7	4	2.3	0.78	Not agree
4	Lending policy	15	5	0	0	3.7	0.99	Highly agree
5	Privacy and confidentiality policy	10	7	1	2	3.2	0.94	Highly agree
	Grand mean					2.7		

Table 2 shows the inclusive policies for providing information for the visually challenge patrons in Rivers State public library to include collection development, lending, privacy and confidentiality policy. But did not agree to accessibility and assistive technology use policy, Items 1, 4 and 5 all have mean values above the criterion mean of 2.5 showing that they are available, more so, the grand mean (2.7) is greater than the criterion mean (2.5) except item 2 and 3 that are not available.

Research Question 3 What are the inclusive resources for information provision for the visually challenged patrons in Rivers State public library?

Table 3: The inclusive resources for information provision for the visually challenged patrons in Rivers State public library.

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	SD	REMARK
1	Audiobooks	2	2	10	6	2.0	0.74	Not agree
2	Speech Input/output	0	0	16	4	1.8	0.70	Not agree
3	Accessible mobile reading Apps	1	2	7	10	1.5	0.64	Not agree
4	Braille and Audio reading Download (BARD)	2	2	12	4	1.5	0.64	Not agree
5	Braille and embroider	5	5	5	5	2.5	0.82	Agree
	Grand mean					1.8		Not agree

Table 3 shows the inclusive resources for providing information for the visually challenge patrons in Rivers State public library. Respondents did not agree to the availability of the items 1, 2, 3, and 4 with a grand mean score of 2.0, 1.8, and 1.5 which is less than the criterion mean of 2.5 except item 5 braille and embroiders which was indicated agree meaning available.

Research Question4: What are the challenges against inclusive service for information provision among the visually challenged patrons in Rivers State public library?

Table 4: Challenges against inclusive service for information provision among the visually challenged patrons in Rivers State public library.

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	SD	REMARK
1	Limited Resources	20	0	0	0	4.0	0.10	Highly agree
2	Lack of awareness and Training for library staff	18	2	0	0	3.9	0.99	Highly agree
3	Lack of technological expertise	5	5	5	5	2.5	0.83	Agree
4	Resistance due to cultural biases and prejudices	0	2	8	10	1.6	0.66	Not agree
5	Legal and Policy Barriers	4	2	7	7	2.1	0.76	Not agree
						2.8		Highly agree

Table 4, respondents highly agreed to limited resources and lack of training as challenges. They also agreed to lack of technological expertise with a mean score of 2.5. Respondents did not agree to resistance due to cultural biases, prejudices and policy barriers with a mean score of 1.6 and 2.1 respectively. More so, with a grand mean of 2.8 it is clearly shown that respondents highly agreed to all these items as challenges.

Discussion of findings

The findings of this study on inclusive service and information provision for the visually challenged patrons in public library Port Harcourt indicated that the inclusive services available for providing information for the visually challenge patrons in this public library include personalized reference service, current awareness services, selective dissemination of information, the study discovered that there is no book clubs and book lending service for visually challenged patrons. The unavailability of a book club and lending could be as a result of the limited number of book materials for this category of users. This finding is in line with the findings of Osman, Imoro and Kwafua, (2020), who found that customize reference services are integral part of public library service for the visually impaired users. Also, it is of the same view of Onoyeyan, (2019) who affirmed that current awareness service, selective provision of information for the blind are major services of the public library for the visually challenged users. This is therefore not in conformity with the findings of Akanwa and Chimdi, (2020) whose result indicated the availability of organized book club and lending service for visual impaired public library users.

Also, on the inclusive policies for providing information for the visually challenge patrons result indicated that respondents highly agreed to collection development policy, but disagreed on lending policy which may be because of the absent of borrowing in this library. They agreed to the existence of privacy and

confidentiality policy but did not agree to accessibility and assistive technology use policy. This is in conformity with the findings of Ndumbaro, (2019), Tom-George (2018) and Zard (2024) who all in their different studies reiterated the need for an operational policy to guide the provision of information for the visually impaired in public library. The study also shows that respondents on the resources agreed to audiobooks, speech input/output, and braille embroider but disagreed to the availability of accessible mobile reading apps and braille and Audio reading Download (BARD). The study observed that lack of funds, lack of awareness and sensitization, and lack of access to technological devices such as computers/laptops and other assistive technologies were some of the major challenges to information provision for the visually challenged patrons in public library. However, the problem of poor funding and inadequate ICT infrastructure can be said to be perennial problems facing the different institutions in Nigeria and the public library is not an exception as affirmed by Aiyebilehin (2018). This finding is in agreement with the findings of Iqal, Shahzad, Lateef and Azeem, (2021), Zard, (2017) who also found that poor funding, lack of access to computers, poor attitude of library staff also affects service provision for the visually challenged patrons in public libraries.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Inclusion is an important concept that need to be implemented in every organization, no one deserve to be denied of any opportunity to better his life because of disability, culture religion or race. Everyone should be respected, valued and accorded a pride of place in whatever their peers are benefiting without been excluded. This work revealed that respondents highly endorsed certain inclusive services such as personalized reference and current awareness services, while expressing dissatisfaction with others like book clubs and lending services for the blind. Additionally, respondents affirmed the availability of collection development and accessibility policies and expressed positive attitudes towards audiobooks, mobile reading apps, and braille materials. However, challenges including inadequate funding, lack of staff awareness and training, and technological limitations were identified as barriers to providing effective inclusive services.

From the result of the study the following recommendations are made:

1. The government and donor agencies should increase funding for public libraries to enable an improve collection development and services for the visually challenged patrons.
2. The library should provide adequate training for staff to better serve visually challenged patrons
3. There should be increase access to technological devices among staff and patron to improve provision and accessibility to information among the visually challenged patrons as this will enhance diversity and inclusivity in library service.

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**RECOGNIZING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVENESS IN LIS EDUCATION IN FEDERAL
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
IKOT-ABASI AKWA-IBOM STATE**

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Abstract

This study examined the positive or negative opinion of students of Library and Information Science [LIS] on the recognition of diversity and inclusiveness of Library and Information Science Education in the Federal University of Technology, Ikot Abasi. A descriptive research design was adopted. The two objectives of the study are; To ensure participants understand diversity and inclusiveness in LIS Education and how the diversity and inclusiveness can be enhanced to improve students' level of understanding LIS Education. Total enumeration of 28 (100%) students was used to collect pertinent data from an open-ended survey instrument. Data was gathered from both qualitative and quantitative formats 23 representing 82% responses returned. Qualitative data was thematically analysed while the quantitative data was analysed using percentages and frequency counts, representing the results in tables. The findings indicate that, the students are novitiates to the diversity and inclusiveness of LIS Education, the study concluded that, at every entry into the university, LIS Educators should organise an elaborate orientation of an inclusive exposition of LIS course titles with an integrative skills acquisition. The study suggests that, LIS Educators should print hand books course outline to get students informed of their requirements at entrance into the university for proper knowledge of LIS diversity and inclusiveness.

Key Words: *Recognizing, Diversity, Inclusiveness, LIS Educators, FUTIA,*

Introduction

The Federal University of Technology Ikot Abasi (FUTIA) was established by the Federal Government of Nigeria precisely in June 2021. The University is one among the two universities of technology established in the geopolitical zones in Nigeria, one is sited at Jigawa in the North-West and the eminent South-South geopolitical zone is sited at Ikot Abasi. A Local Government Area along the coastline in Akwa-Ibom State Nigeria. It may interest you to know that the major language spoken in this area is Ibibio, it has diverse cultural heritage and tradition. The University has about twelve undergraduate programs viz; The School of Computing and Information has the following; Department of Computer Science, Department of Cyber Security and Department of Library and Information Science and the Department of Software Engineering. There are two other Schools; Engineering and Technology where the following Departments are housed under it; Aerospace, Civil Eng, Electrical/Electronic and Mechanical Engineering. Then the School of Pure and Applied Sciences has the following degree programs in; Biochemistry, Mathematics, Microbiology and Physics. This university is a thriving hub for innovation and learning, it has been accredited and recognized by the NUC respectively. Indeed the institution is rooted in innovation, quality and excellence. A plethora of undergraduate programs tailored to meet the needs of the modern world in the south south zone of Nigeria.

The researchers focus on the recognition of diversity and inclusiveness of LIS Education in this institution which relies on the already established LIS curricula, however, being a newly established University, the students are also in their early years in the Department with novice ideas on the course outline they are expected to offer. The teething issues of scouting for experienced lecturers as well as administrative staff obviously can be challenging. It is a pertinent reason to carry out this research because there has not been any in respect to recognizing the diversity and inclusiveness of LIS education.

Statement of the Problem

Library and Information Science students via for admission without the prior knowledge of what they would experience in the course at their sojourn in the university. This is because, there are no such available subjects in the secondary schools unlike other subjects areas e.g English, Government, Mathematics, Biology, Integrated Science, Social Studies e.t.c. There is no preliminary study of Library Science in the Secondary Schools, they could only tell you about visiting or use of the school library for literary works alone and that would be all their understanding of Library and Librarians as store house of information and keepers of books respectively. This study is therefore sacrosanct to address; inclusiveness and diversity in LIS Education for new students into the program of study.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine the positive or negative opinion of students of Library and Information Science on the recognition of diversity and inclusiveness of Library and Information Science Education in the Federal University of Technology, Ikot Abasi. The specific objectives of the study are as follows;

1. To determine the LIS students level of understanding diversity and inclusiveness in LIS Education and
2. To determine the diversity and inclusiveness can be enhanced to improve students level of understanding LIS Education.

Research Questions

- I. What is the level of LIS Students understanding of diversity and inclusiveness in LIS Education?
- II. How can diversity and inclusiveness in LIS education be enhanced to improve students understanding?

Literature Review

The era of the 21st Century in Library and Information Science education has witness the surge in advanced usage of information technology which clearly informs the gradual rotation in the fourth industrial revolution era as suggested by (Akileswaran and Hutchinson, 2019) in Amuda, Ajani and Ogwo (2023). Their assertions implies that, diversities interconnects technological advancements such as greater automation, Blockchain, Artificial intelligence, Internet of Things (IoT), 3D to 5D printing, Cloud Computing, Advanced Robotics, Virtual reality was suggested by Ajayi and Adepoju (2023).

Diversity as a noun was defined by the Oxford Dictionary and it states that, it is variety and secondly, it is a practice or quality of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds. In the same way to be sure, the definition of inclusiveness is the quality of covering or dealing with a range of subjects or areas. Relatively, the meaning of these words predisposes library and information science education to diverse professionalism and using its inclusiveness for further discoveries of how library and information science education has a range of specialties to savour pragmatically. Diversities in library and information education has inclusiveness of training the students to become self reliant in the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills. Olubukola and Adebawale (2023) are of the opinion that Universities should introduce entrepreneurship education courses through out the undergraduate students program year to keep abreast with knowledge that is necessary for entrepreneurship in LIS education such as; Publishing Jobs, Content Creation, Blogging, using the social media platforms which are peculiar to Librarianship courses. There are samples of successful electronic publishing services in academic libraries around the globe, e.g America, Library Publishing Coalition et al (2018). In a study by the Kauffman Foundation (2000) it was found that entrepreneurship education positively impacts the attitudes of students and increases the probability of starts-ups hence it enhances the likelihood of economic reward and self satisfaction of inclusiveness in generating GDP entirety of a Nation called Nigeria. Udo, Akwang and Umoren (2023) opined that entrepreneurship in Librarianship fosters inclusiveness, creativity, inventiveness and there is need for pragmatic initiative toward taking advantage of budding business

opportunities for profitability and self-sustainability in library settings. The packaging and repackaging of existing information for sale to information seekers for profit provides need-base information services to individuals and organizations. In the same vein, the Syracuse University school of Information Studies (2021) asserted that entrepreneurship in librarianship, requires librarians to use their energy, ideas and intellectuality to reinvent and enhance their works to improve services to users and in turn converting ideas into money through creative, innovative, proactive and critical thinking.

It is demanding of note that LIS, Education is required to indulge in inclusiveness of the following areas of endeavour; Infonomics, Cyber Security, Blockchain, Artificial intelligence, Internet of Things (IoT), 3D to 5D Printing, Cloud computing, Advanced Robotics, Virtual reality, Networking, Intranet and Extranet to forestall exclusiveness. The current Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) teaching requirement for undergraduate program in the university eco system have been developed to train graduates with theoretical and practical knowledge of Library and information Science, which is the area concerned with the acquisition, processing, preserving and disseminating of needed items of information and information itself. In the ever-evolving landscape of knowledge acquisition and dissemination, Library and Information Science fields holds the key to management of information resources, notably, its inclusiveness of services rendered, serves as a hub of intellect, exploration and innovation shapes the future of knowledge management, research and practice. Library and Information Science Education is the pillar on which the whole world rests her quest for nurturing the minds of generations, present, past and future. Ntuk and Nongo (2023) opined that the support resource services approved by government for career progression includes; School Library, and Recreational facilities, Workshops, Information Technology Hardware and Software Laboratories, These facilities are necessary infrastructures for the promotion of information technology at all levels. Some of the technology future-ready skills are encompassing as; Competencies in operating system of computers, Educational Software packages education program languages e.g Abs, Online searching skills, Artificial Intelligence, Cloud Computing, Block-Chain, Robotics, Spreadsheet, Word-processing, Microsoft Applications, Excel, Corel Draw, Publishing, Cyber Security, Web navigation and Internet and networking.

The Oxford Languages Dictionary (2021) defined Education in a formal context as “ a process of giving knowledge; the process of training and developing knowledge, skills, mind, character etc, especially by schooling, teaching and training”. Education in any human society is perceived as a process, for life long changes. The importance of education in any field of human endeavour cannot be over-emphasized. This is because, it is through the instrument of education that societies transmit values to the upcoming generation, this was posited by Kalu, Onwe and Chikezie (2021). Therefore, every society designs, a system of education that would enable it transmit it's culture and values to the younger generations. It is a process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at School or University. How then would a school curricula include Library and information Science subjects for an initial knowledge acquisition or education which could via the younger precepts of continuing education in Library and Information Science at the tertiary level. There is a missing gap in this area of inclusiveness, perhaps the need to indulge in this particular study. We found a mismatch in the philosophy of continuous education from subjects of requirement for entrance into the university and read to acquire a degree in LIS program. There is a fundamental issue in the foundation of a potential LIS undergraduate. It is noticeable that emerging technologies has evolved and school libraries has turned from zones of silence to bustling learning hubs in the era of the 21st Century (Bamigbola and Babalolo 2023).

This study adopted a schematic model which portrays LIS Education for diverse attainment of Professional cadres in Librarianship which are; Graduate Assistant to rise through an organised promotion regulations to Professorial cadre for the Educators, while it is relatively at par with the Academic Librarians guidelines and regulation for progression as well. However, headship of Libraries is yet another diverse position held. The regulatory bodies such as NUC, NPE controls and guides the philosophy of LIS Education and the inclusive dynamism of skills acquisition is enforced by the professional bodies such as; LRCN, NLA and NLN.

Schematic Model of LIS Education Diversity and Inclusiveness

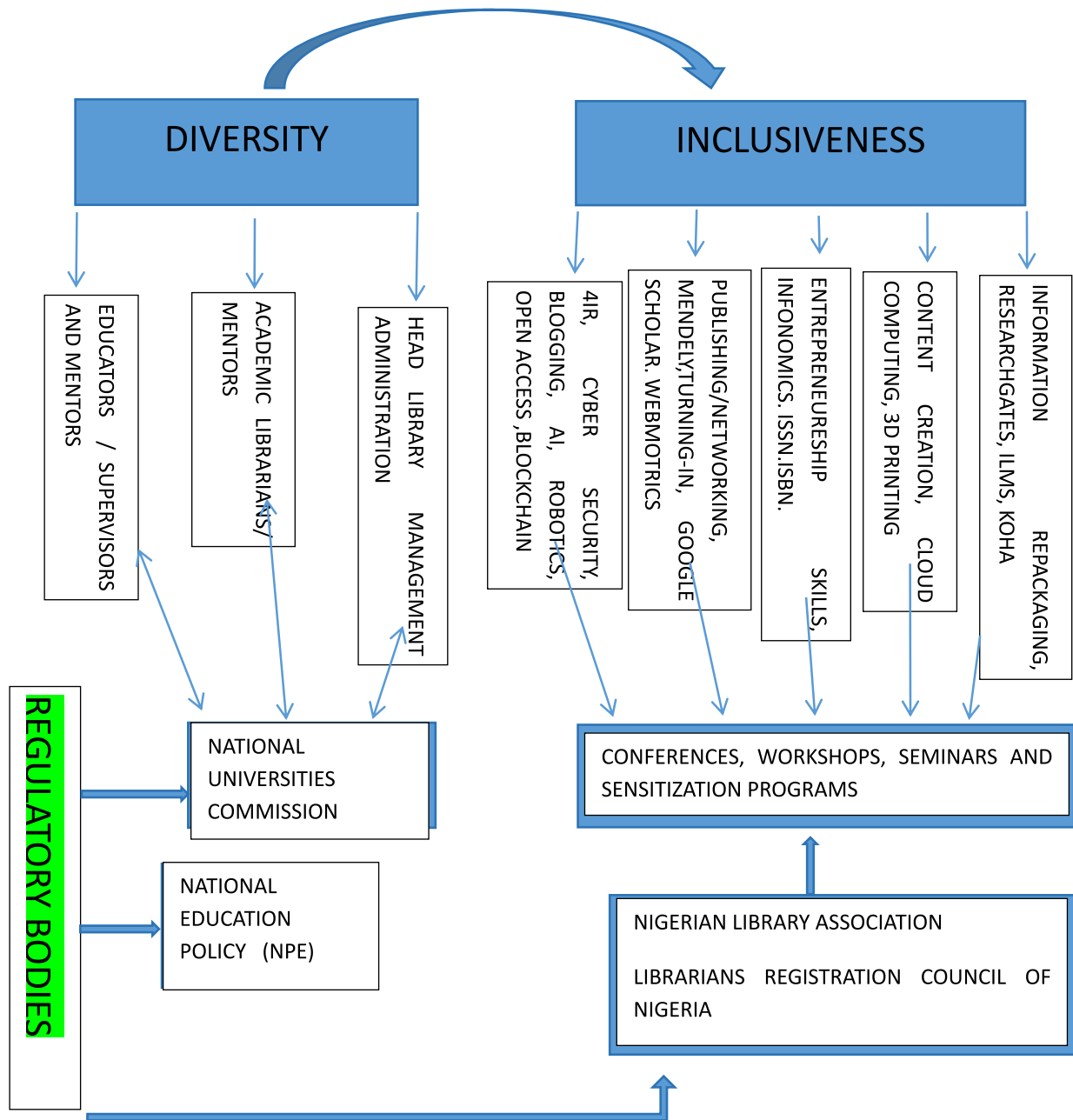


fig. 1. (Nongo 2024)

Design and Method

The procedure used to conduct this study was discussed in this section. It comprises the design, population, sample, data collection instrument, administration procedure, data analysis, and results presentation. This study used the descriptive method. A qualitative and quantitative survey designed was used in this study. Research question 1, what is the level of LIS Students understanding of diversity and inclusiveness in LIS Education had interview session for all the participants. Research question 2 had a cluster of 5 items each was distributed to the individuals who agreed to return the questionnaire within one week due to proximity from the university. This method is mixed, it allows for both the participants and the researchers to probe and question further details based on responses to understand their predicaments better on recognizing the diversity and inclusiveness of LIS Education. This approach is also less expensive especially when it is self administered by the researchers. However, there are many different kinds of qualitative research methods available, it is suggested by (Creswell and Poth, 2018), this particular method was chosen because it is most practical and bond consciousness was experienced.

Population and Sampling Size

The Population of the LIS students in Federal University of Technology Ikot Abasi (FUTIA) at the time of the study was twenty three (23) 100%. Therefore, total enumeration of the sample was used to administer the Questionnaire (RODIE) and interview session was granted by the students of LIS in FUTIA.

Instrument

The instrument used for the study was an open-ended survey questionnaire (RODIE) used to cover both objectives of the study. A total number of 23 questionnaire representing 82.14% responses was received duly usable for computation of the results of the study. It was reported that about 5 students were not members of the Department hence the non return of the questionnaires which is expected.

Table 1: Survey Administration

	MALE	FEMALE	PERCENTAGE TOTAL %
TOTAL	16 (69.6%)	7 (30.4%)	23 (100)

Table 1 above shows the survey administration of the questionnaire. It shows that 16 respondents are Male representing 69.6% which is higher than the female course mate who are just 7 representing 30.4%.

Data Analysis

Data was gathered in both quantitative and qualitative formats. The qualitative data was thematically analysed while the quantitative data was analysed using percentage and frequency counts then the results were represented in tables.

In this section, it provides the details of the results obtained from the analysis of both the questionnaire and the thematic presentation of the interview. Below is the thematically presentation of the research question 1.

Research Question 1: What is the level of LIS Students understanding of diversity and inclusiveness in LIS Education? The participants were asked if they understand the concept of diversity and inclusiveness in Library and Information Science Education. The Schematic model was described to them as a guide to the researchers enquiry of their understanding. There was a chorus from the students that they have no idea of what diversity and inclusiveness in LIS Education meant. The findings revealed that the student require an orientation both from the department, student advisor and students hand book to enable them figure out what diversity and inclusiveness in LIS is all about.

Interestingly, one Student said his understanding of diversity of LIS education is that, "He is aware that LIS Education trains Librarians and other staff of the library which he has seen and he is aware of. His main issue is the inclusiveness, he tried to say he knows that Library and Information Science use the Computers for some of their duties. His explanation gave another student an idea to speak out.

The second student said " Diversity and Inclusiveness in LIS Education is about the Cadre of Educators is different from the Librarians, that Educators move to the rank of Professor, while Librarians move to the rank of Deputy Librarians."

A third student said "her understanding of diversity in LIS Education as regards to Orientation or sensitization on campus is not enough to give her sense of understanding of what diversity and inclusiveness of LIS Education is all about".

Fourth student said " I was given this admission to read Library and Information Science, this is my 2nd year, I cant identify what the understanding and inclusiveness is all about". At this juncture about 10 other members of the class supported his assertion as to no idea of diversity and inclusiveness of LIS Education in any way to the best of their knowledge.

A singular student buttressed, how this study can be included in the secondary school curriculum among those in the social science category, for them to have a prior knowledge on library and information science.

Research Question 2: How can diversity and inclusiveness in LIS education be enhanced to improve students understanding?

The objectives was to look into the areas of inclusiveness and diversity as it relates to the understanding of the student in LIS Education. They were asked to indicate how can diversity and inclusiveness be enhanced for students understanding in LIS Education

Table 2: Diversity and inclusiveness in LIS Education

S/No	Suggested items for enhancing understanding of the undergraduate LIS Students	AGREE	NOT SURE	DISAGREE
1	Departmental Orientation	19(82.6%)	1	3(13.%)
2	Students Hand Book	20(86.8%)	1	2(8.6%)
3	Student Advisors	18(78.1%)	0	3(13.%)
4	Notice Boards	1(4.34%)	1	20(86.8%)
5	Inclusion in Secondary School Curricula	21(91.1%)	2	0

Table 2 above shows that 21 (91.1%) of the students agree that diversity and inclusiveness of LIS education would enhance their understanding, if there was ample inclusion of the subject in the secondary school curricula. It means, they was no informed education. The LIS Education Students prefers to have knowledge of LIS education in their secondary school education, which would have given them an edge to make cognitive decision on making a choice to read the course at the tertiary education level. This result corroborates the definition of education as asserted by Kalu, Onwe and Chikezie (2021). That it is through the instrument of education that societies transmit values to the upcoming generation. The National Education Policy as a regulatory body has implied duty to review its policy on Library Education in Secondary Schools and also review its curricula as well. In the same vein, 20 (86.8%) of the students agree that if the Students Hand Book is domesticated with details of requirement of learning LIS education with course contents, they would understand better the diversity and inclusiveness of LIS Education. The schematic model for LIS Education is explicit on the need to understand the Educators as Mentors who should develop Mentor- Men-tee relationship using the students hand book as a tool for educating new students. Departmental Orientation was selected by 19 students representing (82.6%) which portrays, affirming posture of the schema showing both the Educators and Academic Librarians as both professionals in diverse mentorship for a for LIS education. During the Orientation, students would have the privileged to librarianship professionals disseminating information services in Libraries. While Students Advisors was also selected and agreed by 18 students representing (78.1%), it signifies that the educators have more defined capacity to advice new students intending to read LIS education for their ample understanding of diversity and inclusiveness in their future career. Lastly, 20 students, representing (86.8%) disagree that the Notice Boards is diminutive to give enough information on diversity and inclusiveness to LIS students understanding of LIS Education.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated the diversity in LIS Education profession and its inclusiveness in training information professionals to understand and acquit themselves ready to render current trends technological library services to meet global best practices and forestalling negativism in professional practices and library services.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were suggested.

1. A new institution is not diminutive of teething issues among which are; funding and bureaucracy in policy implementation, It is therefore pertinent to have a proactive management who is predisposed to public relations and friendship which could foster funding provisions early enough to carry out inclusive sensitization for Library and Information Science Students awareness of Library diversities by physical visits to the Academic Library.
2. Educators should as a matter of urgency request for funds to print hard copies of the LIS Course Outlines for all admitted students into the LIS program. Taking into cognizance the current CCMAS guidelines regarding movement of LIS into the School or Faculty of Social Sciences and
3. The Collaboration between Educators and Service Providers in the Academic Libraries should be emphasize. We are advocating for inclusiveness, therefore the sensitization program should include Academic Librarians who would demonstrate their actual services to the students who are expected to spend 6months during their students industrial work experience service. A prior sensitization gives a boost to the students understanding of the LIS education diversities and inclusiveness and aspire for skill acquisition.

Suggestions for further studies

This study examined LIS Students understanding of diversity and inclusiveness of LIS Education in Ikot Abasi federal university of technology. It obvious that researches are not always perfect, there are and would be limitations. It only focused on LIS students in one federal university in the Zone. Therefore, extending the research to include other tertiary institutions in the State will yield an interesting and useful results for comparison as well as applied to other zones in Nigeria

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ROLE OF LIBRARIES IN BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE FOR TECHNOLOGICAL INCLUSION

By

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Abstract

In an increasing digital world, access to technology and information is essential for full participation in information society, digital environment and among community of learners. However, many individuals, institutions, and communities, face barriers to accessing and using technology for knowledge development, resulting in a digital divide that exacerbate, existing inequalities. This paper examines the role of libraries in bridging digital divide and promoting technological inclusion. Libraries serve as crucial community hubs that provide access to technology, digital resources, information literacy and training programs that empowers individuals to develop digital skills. By offering free internet access, computer facilities and technology-related services, libraries can play vital role in ensuring that all members of society have the opportunity to engage with, and benefit from technology. Through innovative programs and partnerships, libraries can help bridge the digital divide, promote digital equity and foster a more inclusive and empowered society.

Keywords: Digital, Digital Divide, Technology Inclusion, Libraries

Introduction

The digital divide is characterized by two crucial problems, viz: limited and costly infrastructure; and limited literacy in low/middle income communities. Digital divide refers to the gap between those who have access to and the ability to use contemporary information technology, such as the telephone, television, and internet, and those who do not (Ogunmodede, Adio, Aboyade, Ebijuwa & Oyetola's 2023). It can be used to characterize the disparities between those who access and utilize contemporary information and communication technology (ICT), such as desktop computers and the internet, and those who cannot. However, the instantaneous access to information through the internet has made vast amounts of information and data available to anyone with a computer, a modem and a provider. Hence, in this information intensive society, libraries and librarians have recognized that the most critical divide is between those who have the understanding and capabilities to operate effectively in the society and those who do not, and this constitute the information literacy divide, of which the so called digital divide is one aspect which libraries tend to bridge.

The concept of libraries has changed from being mere storehouses of collection of books, to dynamic service center. They allow for the creation of equal opportunities for all, ensuring that no one is left behind due to lack of technological skills. In this regard, libraries now serve as learning environment where traditional, archaic, obsolete and analog system are replaced with modern, efficient and well-designed modern building with technological space as an epitome of use of leisure through exposure to contemporary world of libraries. Gainfully, libraries are special agents that develop, organize, provide, enhance easy access to and preserve information materials to meet the needs of information users. To fulfil this mandate effectively, modern libraries deploy technological utilities to bridge and enhance timely information delivery to client. However, the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) is tremendously improving libraries effectiveness and efficiency, provided such library could afford the infrastructure and resources provided. Mello Carnegie (2015) sees the 21st century library as a world where digital is becoming the default format for information; the library remaining a vital presence in educational institution and provide opportunities for interactive research and study environment. These makes the library to be seen as an information hub and agent of civilization (learning), as they continue to play a central role to sustain her roles.

By and large, therefore, there is critical need for libraries to bridge the digital gap and be alive to their responsibilities of information provision. Similarly, an informed person is likely to commit fewer mistakes when compared to an uninformed individual. Hence, the library is the last resort and hope where the digital divide can be bridged. In the light of the above, there is need to look at the roles of libraries in the era of digital divide.

Understanding the Digital Divide

Digital divide is an emergency concept. The ability to read and write assure an individual of being literate and able to cope with digital environment. Although providing tools is not enough but helping people by providing both education and access to tools becomes significant. The digital divide is a

significant issue in today's society because it can exacerbate existing irregularities and limit opportunities for those who lack access to technology. Scorse (2021) affirm that digital divide is the gap between those who have affordable access, skills, and support to effectively engage online and those who do not. Recent development in information and communication technology (ICT) have transformed how individuals learn. It has acquired a prominent role in the learning process, both in the educational system and at home. The pressure to educate individual of all ages about technology, using advanced forms of technology, is only increasing, yet assets (funding, programs, etc) to provide professional development, update technology tools, and new educational resources are decreasing (Johnston, 2018). As a result, the learning process increasingly requires the ability to access, locate, extract, evaluate, organize and present digital information (Argentin, Gui, Pagani & Stanca, 2014). Thus, bridging the digital divide is crucial for promoting digital inclusion, ensuring equal opportunities for all, and building a more equitable and connected society.

Digital divide encompasses the difference between having e-skills, particularly those related to internet use, and not having them create a new kind of information gap. At present, there has not been uniformity in accessing information by using ICTs effectively by all the people in the society. This becomes a major concern to institutions and academic environment (i.e library, in particular), as it is leading to a kind of digital divide among academic community of learners. Therefore, digital divide is also being referred to "haves or have not's"; the literacy or skills or the ability to use ICTs and digital contents (Rajneesh & Rana, 2013). Also, digital divide is determined by access to information and communication technologies and to media that the different segment of society can use. With regards to internet, the access is only one aspect, while the quality of connection, as well as the availability of access at an affordable cost and quality is another aspect.

Digital divide is inequality in access, distribution and use of information, communication and technologies between two or more population. Unfortunately, ICT has become a basis for disparity among nations and community of users. This disparity has been termed as digital divide (Ifijeh, Iwu-James & Adebayo, 2016). Thus, the digital divide has become an extremely important issue for many international organizations and a major challenge for policy makers and academic researchers. More so, such divide are also driven predominately by the educational background of the different groups; and can be called the digital difference, which could be smoothen or arrested from further widening by proper planning and proactive policies. Hence, the digital divide exist globally and nationally. Drori (2010) observed that the causes of the global digital divide depend on income or wealth differential (the complex array of economic, political and socio-cultural matters. Though efforts are being made to address the problem of digital divide, it will exist and it particularly affect older people, those with lower level of education, those with lower income and those who live in geographically remote areas will be out paced by those who are ahead in the ability to select and process information.

Digital inequality is evident between communities living in urban areas and those living in rural settlements, between socio-economic groups, between less economically developed countries and more economically developed countries, between the educated and uneducated population. Notably, there are two primary ways in which the gap is enacted, through lack of technical skills and through physical limitation on access to technology. Arguably, the digital divide is caused by and reinforces traditional systems of inequality such as race, socioeconomic status and gender. People caught in the divide are disadvantages in their access to social interactions, health and governmental information, general educational opportunities and access to some services such as healthcare, financial and educational services. Similarly, the digital divide is composed of both a skill gap and a gap of physical access to information technology.

The digital divide as a term, is increasingly used to explain the social implications of imbalanced access in some sectors of the community to information and communication technology and to the achievement of necessary skills (Afzal, Khan, Daud, Ahmad & Butt, 2023). Sadly, inequalities in digital access are now a global problem in areas as diverse as education, employment, race and gender. Undoubtedly, those on the wrong side of the digital divide may face challenges in accessing essential services, education, job opportunities. Thus, digital divide is not marked only be physical access to computers and connectivity but also by access to computers and the additional resources that allow people to use the technology well, such as content and language, literacy and education; and community and institutional structures.

Importance of Digital Inclusion

Digital, inclusion is seen as equitable, meaningful, and safe access to use, lead, and design of digital technologies, services, and associated opportunities for everyone, everywhere. Digital inclusion needs, aim towards inclusion being equitable. However, as more people are getting connected, the risk of digital inequality rises if those with already fewer opportunities are left behind. Digital inclusion encompasses approaches to narrowing the digital divide and increasing digital literacy and use of information and communication (ICT) (Sharp, 2022). Notably, digital inclusion include not only internet access, but also hardware and software availability, related content and services, and training in the digital literacy skills required to use ICT effectively.

Digital inclusion is therefore seen as bridging the digital divide by ensuring that people have the access, skills, and ability to use digital devices and content confidently. Also, safely and effectively. Thus, it holds significant impact to civic engagement, career opportunities and even social networks. Digital inclusion in today's increasingly digital society is relevant for several reasons:

Equal access to opportunities: Digital inclusion aim to produce digital citizens who are not only well informed but also socially and physically integrated. Enhancing ICT access and utilization which aim at producing digital citizens, capable of leading happy and healthy lives. Without digital inclusion, individuals and communities may be left out behind in the digital age, limiting their ability to participate fully in societies.

Civic Participation: Digital natives possess fundamentally different conceptions of citizenship and civic action than their predecessors. Digital inclusion provide numerous avenues for digital natives to engage in active citizenship and enable individuals to stay informed, voice their opinions and participate in decision making processes.

Innovation and Creativity: Digital inclusion foster innovation and creativity by providing individuals with the tools and resources to create, collaborate, and share ideas. Hence, developing creativity and innovation demands the formation of a suitable environment that promotes the flow of new ideas, curiosity and innovation. This indicate that the knowledge society depends on technology to improve the quality of life and acquire a variety of opportunities such as the generation of economic, social interaction and so on.

Education and Lifelong Learning: the benefit of inclusive education are numerous and digital inclusion can support education and lifelong learning. This implies the integration of contemporary technology into existing learning theory, the evaluation of the usefulness of technology within instructional contexts, and the trials of successful technology integration. In the digital age and from the perspective of the new, digital inclusion bring important collaboration to pedagogical practice and the educational system, demonstrating the importance of updating knowledge to accompany society in its content changes.

The Role of Libraries in Building a more Inclusive Society

Library is a place for knowledge creation and sharing. Despite the type and where a library is situated, their roles remain the same; to select information resources in both print and electronic formats, acquire, organize and disseminate the resources to the immediate users and beyond; and to educate the users on how to use her resources (Omeluzor, Bamidele, Ukangwa & Amadi, 2013). Although, libraries are more than just books, and banks of computers, the paly a great role of facilitating conducive places where individuals gather to explore, interact and imagine the creativity of humankind. It emphasis the notion of which the nature of society has changed from industrial society to information society. Informed society is more advance and productive society and in the spread of information among people, libraries are in the center. Similarly, the library reflects the variety and character; and the desires and expectation of our community.

In an information-driven, internet –enabled environment, access to digital resources is a critical component of inclusive and social engagement. As services and resources become increasingly available only online, the ability to access these resources becomes paramount. Thus, digital inclusion encompasses approaches to narrowing the digital divides and increasing digital literacy of which the library are stronghold. If the digital divide and digital literacy are the problem, digital inclusion is the proposed solution and the library is at the peak acting upon the ideas of digital inclusion and thereby bridging the digital divide through knowledge communication. Libraries as agent of social communication help to bridge the awareness and information gap among members of the society (Ifijeh, Iwu-James & Adebayo,2016). Hence, libraries and their sphere of influence are defined by the community/clientele they serve. To attain sustainable development, it is very important to take digital inclusion into cognizance, because it helps to create an informed society, such has made the value of libraries and their user communities has become increasingly important during recent decades. More so, all libraries emphasize their role in maintaining social equilibrium, diminishing social inequality, ensuring the right to know for everyone that is the foundation of any democratic society.

Moreover, libraries aim to create a conducive learning environment that allows cooperation and social interaction between different people, especially information seekers (Mahwasane, 2017). As such, the library space, physically or virtually, is not only a home for books and documents, but instead an environment full of emotions and history that is transferred from generation to generation. Libraries are critical to digital adoption, but they face consideration limitations, including a lack of technical training and expertise, resource and budget constraints hamper their ability to develop strategies for addressing those impediments. Thus, libraries being a heritage of spiritual knowledge of the world, become new educational and informational centers, especially when today's circumstances concentrate on methods and technics that secure information seekers readiness of applying knowledge in real everyday life, in everyday problem-solving.

This quest for knowledge knows no bounds and limits and is never satisfied libraries remains the prime commodity of present age. Thus, libraries acquired a great importance in the knowledge society. Libraries which have been variously referred to as the purveyor of information, the custodian of knowledge and the house of learning plays a vital role in the development of any society by catering for the information needs of thousands of people within a particular community. To build a more inclusive society, libraries play the following crucial roles:

- *Facilitate equal access to information regardless of socioeconomic background of the information seekers.*
- *Promoting diversity and understanding and respect for different communities and individuals.*
- *Supporting continuous learning and skill development.*
- *Fostering a sense of belonging and connection among community members.*
- *Sustaining digital inclusion, by providing access to technology and digital resource for those who may not have them at home.*
- *Providing specialized services and resources to support marginalized group.*
- *Maintaining a valuable culture of records that can be made available for later use.*
- *Integrating existing or new strategies, especially in promoting the adoption and use of digital technologies (e.g providing access to computers, laptops and devices).*

However, the role of libraries do not stop at providing sources and materials but also to encourage equity and social inclusion of different groups and individual within a community.

The Library as a Catalyst for Change

Libraries are institutions of basic learning with the mission of providing collection of services to meet information needs of the academia and other individuals who may have need of their services. Libraries have been through profound socio-economic and technological transformations over the years, but currently the phenomenon of collaborative and user-generated content, facilitated by technologies is taking this process of profound change to a new level. As such, libraries from ancient times through the classical and medieval periods and into the twenty first century have continued to change in response to social needs. Aboyade, Oyebanji & Amusan (2014) noted that the dawn of the 21st century ushered in a quite number of changes in information provision. And has made libraries to have little or no choice than to adopt to some of these changes that characterize the current evolving and dynamic information environment. In the same vein, libraries fulfil certain roles which propel them to be an integral hub. To David (2014) such roles consist of their performed functions in this changing information society which includes:

Repository role: storage and management of society's documents by acquiring (collecting, preserving 'conserving', describing the document created by humanity.

Information role: dispersion of the collected data (Information).

Education role: connects the function of the prompter of formal and informal learning, function of organizing teaching, consciousness, etc.

Social advocacy: converts functions such as dispersion of library resources in the society. This role relate to the document task of the library, effective services, inclusion of socially sensitive groups to social and cultural activities and other functions.

As such, libraries are considered as catalyst for change due to the following reasons:

Promoting literacy and education: Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential; and to participate fully in their community and wider society (Nkammebe & Nkammebe, 2018). Literacy is an entrance for the world, Popovic (2016) argued that literacy is not just concerned about reading the word but principally a basic right and a means of achieving other rights. It is unthinkable to achieve a modern and literate society without libraries, which according to IFLA (2015) are uniquely situated to promote literacy. Library is therefore a veritable instrument for the promotion of inclusive literacy and education, as they play a vital roles in giving the information seeker a chance to acquire literacy by producing access to information materials and services. More so, by encouraging reading and promoting literacy through inclusive library and information services, libraries provide a space for learning, reading and research; and help individuals develop new skills and improve their educational attainment.

Community engagement: community engagement encompasses a variety of approaches whereby public service bodies (libraries) empower citizens to consider and express their views on how their particular needs are met. Interestingly, the library is a hub for community engagement, information shelter and continual learning (Umahi & Ekenna, 2021). Hence, they are repositories of knowledge, collaborators of projects, and hosting of various activities (workshops, seminars & conferences), that bring people together and foster a sense of community. Also, libraries ensure partnership working and continuously involving in information dissemination to community of users.

Promoting Diversity and Inclusion: Libraries are inclusive spaces that welcome people from all backgrounds and walks of life. Libraries offer essential services that include reliable access to books and the internet. These sources provide academic development, employment, and entertainment options for all members of the communities they serve and foster an inclusive environment, both internally and externally that respect, appreciate and embraces differences in ideas, perspectives, backgrounds, roles and identities that reflects the diversity of the human experiences. Diversity and inclusion, thus implies understanding community engagement in the context of information services, developing users-centric leadership and management skills, honing critical thinking and problem solving skills, and fostering communication, collaboration in a culturally diverse environment.

Advocacy and Social Change: Libraries have changed tremendously and generated service skills to serve the local community by providing information access and services that individuals in the community ordinarily could have gotten access to. Advocacy focuses on building or promoting activities to raise awareness for the position of a particular cause or policy. American Library Association (2010) explain that advocacy is an ongoing process in which support and understanding are built increasingly over an extended period time using a wide variety of marketing and public tools. Library advocacy provides reassurance that the right thing is been done and to advocates for position changes in communities. David-West & Bassey (2017) affirmed that library advocacy process ensure the facilitation of advocacy effort, creation of awareness, book fair and use of professional lobbyist ; and rural support. More so, libraries often serve as advocates for social change by providing information on important issues, promoting civic engagement, and supporting initiatives that addresses social justice and equity. Thus, the main guiding philosophy behind library advocacy is the assumption and reality that libraries irrespective of kind exist to cater for the information needs of her heterogeneous clientele and the value of her information resources and services that reflect her core values.

Strategies for Bridging the Digital Divide

Building the digital divide is a new model of engagement designed to encourage people in the use of digital technology and the internet. Libraries have traditionally served as gatekeeper of knowledge, providing access to information and resources for the betterment of society (Ogunmodede, Adio, Aboyade, Ebijuwa & Oyetola, 2023). They serve as intermediaries, facilitating access to information and technology for those who may not have the means or skills to do so on their own. As such libraries have continue to uphold their role as intermediaries, facilitating access to information and technology for those who may not have the means or skills to do so on their won, and allowing individuals to search for jobs, access to educational materials and engage in online communication(Koontz,2016). Therefore, it is never an understatement that libraries and librarians occupy a functional place as an information providers both the educated and the uneducated in the era of digital divide.

Also, in bridging digital divide, libraries and librarians need to establish functional resource sharing schemes, if they must bridge the digital divide. Ogunmodele, et al (2023) assert that a critical examination of the present age, that is characterized by information explosion and proliferation of information, engulfed by high cost of information resources bedeviled by budget cuts may demand that librarians and libraries share what they have efficiently. Once people are equipped with correct information, the challenges of the ear of the gap in knowledge occasioned by the use of internet will drastically reduce.

Libraries should provide individuals with core capabilities to achieve valued output in life. In corroboration of the above, UNESCO (2011) describes digital literacy as set of basic skills required for working with digital media information processing and retrieval. A key point raised by UNESCO is that digital literacy improves one's employability because it is considered a 'gate' skill required by employers. Knowing how to apply technologies in new, innovative and responsible manner is equally important as using the technology itself, hence a catalyst to bridge digital divide. Thus, the critical components of digital inclusion can be access to digital tools and services of either individual access or through community infrastructure, enhanced digital literacy through awareness, training and capacity building and sustained usage through providing agencies to reduce confusion and duplication. The strategies to bridge the digital divided must be tailor made, with due attention to information needs, extent of access, digital literacy level, institutional facility, etc. In the same vein, other strategies to be considered include:

- Investing in infrastructure to expand broadband internet access to underserved areas.
- Providing affordable internet access options and technology devices to low-income communities.
- Establish community technology centers to provide valuable resources to underserved population.
- Leveraging emerging technologies for digital inclusion.
- Collaboration with public and private sector institution, so as to implement digital inclusion and equity.
- Adoption and implementation of digital inclusion policies.
- Facilitating community engagement and outreach programmes.
- Integrating digital literacy and technology education into institutions of learning.

Conclusion

The role of libraries in bridging the digital divide for technological inclusion has highlighted the crucial importance of these institutions in fostering digital literacy and access to technology for underserved populations. By providing affordable access to computers, internet connections and digital resources, libraries play a vital role in ensuring that individuals have the necessary technological tools and skills to thrive in today's digital world. Moreover, libraries serve as community hubs where individuals can receive assistance, guidance and support in navigating the complexities of the digital landscape. The study underscores the indispensable role of libraries in promoting technological inclusion and equity, ultimately contributing to a more digitally inclusive and empower society. It is essential for policymakers, stakeholders and communities to recognize and support the pivotal role that libraries play in bridging the digital divide and ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to benefit from the advantages of technology.

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ROLE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN THE PROMOTION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper explores the role of public libraries in the promotion of inclusive education which was anchored on six specific objectives. It uses the conceptual and documentary method by using the various related literature to achieve the six stated objectives. The paper further examined issues relating to the roles of public libraries in enhancing inclusive education and they include: educational services, information and outreach services, accessibility to inclusive collections, redesigning and modification of public library building, modernization of library services delivery, collaboration among stakeholders, training program for library staff and restructuring of children literature unit. Findings showed that public library services and inclusive education cannot exist with challenges thus include: inadequate funding, inaccurate data on children with disabilities, lack of awareness, and ignorance of inclusive education and urban-rural dichotomy. Based on the identified challenges, the paper recommends the government commitment to adequate funding of public libraries and education, conducting of nation-wide census on physically challenged people, timely review of National Policy on Education among others.

Keywords: Collections, Disabilities, Inclusive education, Nigeria, Public Libraries, Services, Stakeholders.

Introduction

The concept of diversity means differences in all aspect of human life in terms old ethnic, socio-economic, geographic, academic/professional background, religious beliefs etc. Inclusiveness means involvement of different types of people thereby providing equal access to opportunities and resources. However, Onuigbo and Eseadi (2022) maintained that inclusion is a right-basic approach to learning with the view of the identifying and removing all barriers that can prevent children from receiving education in formal schools. An approach to acknowledge, recognize and accept differences and diversities in learners.

Therefore, inclusive education is the provision of quality education for all citizens without any differences or discrimination. It is the tradition of providing education for students with disabilities in general education setting. (Iwuamadi & Obasino). Inclusive education eliminates the differences among learners with respite to geographical location, tribe, physical abilities and disabilities, but education for all. However, there are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of UNESCO out of which goal number 4 addressed inclusive and quality education which states that every country should make provision equitable quality inclusive education. To support the goal number four, UNESCO in World Vision (2012) provide educational, social and economic reason in support of inclusive education thus:-

Education is a fundamental human right of all regardless of any form of disability. That is inclusive education creates a society without discrimination i.e equality and right are guided. It is cost-effective and quite sustainable. Inclusive education is very important to students with special needs as it promotes social and academic interaction among children with and without special needs. It promotes healthy relationship and friendship among students with or without special needs. (Onuigbo and Eseandi, 2022).

This paper centered on three types of disadvantaged groups based on Ozioko (2015) write-up which includes: socially disadvantaged, physiologically disadvantaged and naturally disadvantaged groups. The socially disadvantaged groups include unemployed, peasant workers, university students from poor

families, inmates, criminals. The physiologically disadvantaged groups are people with disabilities, old aged women and children. Naturally disadvantaged groups include those who live in poverty mainly due to out-of-way geographical location. The National Policy on Education (2014) classified disabilities into three categories (disabled, disadvantaged and gifted /talented). For the purpose of this paper, discussions are based on physiological disadvantaged group i.e disabilities.

While academic library cater for the information needs of students and faculty members, special library caters for the information needs of experts in specialized field, school library thus focus on the provision of information resources to support teaching and learning program/activities of teachers and pupils/students. Public library services cut across every individual in community i.e. students, children, civil servants, business men and women, farmers, teachers/lecturers and host of other users. Thus public library is that type of library that is established out of public funds whose use is not restricted to any particular group of individuals but for all in respective of ethnic, religious, socio-economic status, gender, disabilities etc. Shehu (2022) perceived public library as public institution charged with the responsibility of acquiring information resources, serve generality of mankind; funded by public fund and its use is open to general public. The author further outlines some objectivities of public library to include:-

- to provide current and reliable information from all disciplines in the community.
- to provide free services to entire community without any discrimination.
- to act as avenue for relaxation and recreation centre for the users.
- to expose users to self-research.
- to provide a quiet and conducive environment for reading.

From the above enumerated objectives, public libraries has roles to play in the promotion of diversity and inclusive education taking note of people from different ethnic, cultural and geographical spread as well as taking every individual along in the service delivery. By the inclusive education, public library is expected to have exact knowledge of the characteristics of users so as to determine the types of information resources and services to acquire and render although according to IFLA/UNESCO (2001) and Bello, (2014) , users of public libraries include: children, young adult, adults, people with disabilities, prisoners, aged nursing mothers respectively (Bello, 2014), although include children, young adults, adults, disabilities, prisoners, aged nursing workers.

Objectives of the Paper

This paper is aimed at examining the role of public libraries in the promotion of inclusive education in Nigeria. However, the specific objectives are to:-

- examine the acquisition and provision of inclusive collection (educational services)
- examine inclusive library services,
- propose the redesign of public library building and structure,
- propose for the training of public library staff,
- modernize public library services,
- examine challenges in the discharge of roles of public libraries towards the development of inclusive education in Nigeria.

Methodology

Methodology used for this paper was the (conceptual or)-substitute literature analysis on public library services in relation to inclusive education thus it is documentary method of research involving careful gathering of literatures (textbooks, journals, chapter-in-books, conference proceedings etc. issues pertaining to title and variables of the objectives of the paper are identify, perusal, consulted, reviewed and cited respectively.

Results/Findings

Findings from the literature search, analysis and write-up revealed the roles of public libraries in relation to inclusive education in Nigeria and are enumerated below:

Role of Public Libraries

Public libraries by their nature and objectives are saddled with the responsibility of serving the entire community without discrimination. All forms of education is offered by public library as it provides information resources for teachers, pupils, students, children (Bello, 2014). There is the need for public library to take into consideration the disabilities in inclusive education. Based on the view of Bello (2014) and those of other scholars, public libraries in particular be restructured so as to acquire and preserve inclusive collections, introduce inclusive services, redesign the library buildings and structures thereby enhancing the role of public library in the promotion of inclusive education i.e. to support basic, post-basic and adult education respectively.

Educational Services

Public libraries are expected to acquire current but relevant information resources especially those that have to do with disability. Inclusive information resources and collection to be provided by the public library that will help children with disabilities include physical books (fiction and non-fiction) as well as toys, colourful pictures and there should be easy access them by the people with disability. This can be achieved by turning physical books to audio format by way of recording, creating pictures. Books can be preserved and ensure durability through lamination (Osadebe, Njoku & Babarinde, 2022).

Public libraries can also acquire braille text resources and machine, blind-aiding technologies and blind people can now visit public libraries to read and use these inclusive collections. According to Okafor (2020), public libraries do not only acquire, process and organize but also disseminate information free to citizens.

Information and Outreach Services

It is believed that reasonable percentage of Nigerians live in remote areas (rural areas) and accessing public library resources and services become difficult. As such public libraries organize outreach programmes (services) i.e. public enlightenment programmes by way of sensitizing the people with disabilities in particular on the need for them to visit and use public libraries as well as making reading materials available to them at door step. Various media can be explored e.g. organizing film shows, group discussions on library books; adult education. Other services to be provided by public libraries include: politics and governance, organizing and disseminating information, referral, Selective Dissemination of Information, Current Awareness Services, contemporary issues, Internet, photocopy services (Okafor 2020, Amkpa et'al, 2022).

Accessibility to inclusive collection

One of the roles of public library in terms of inclusive education is make access to variety of information resources to meet the needs of people with disabilities. It is evident the public library is a library with its doors open to citizens regardless of their dignity, ethnicity and status but “is the right of every citizen” and a key to fostering natural integration for development.

Redesigning and Modification of Public Library building and structures

Public library building i.e. its structure should be redesigned to take care of people with disabilities (deaf and dumb, cripple, visually-impaired). For public library with Storey-buildings, smooth flight stairs be constructed and wheel chairs be provided so that physically challenged people (blind and cripple) can have access to use inclusive collection.

Collaboration among School, Public libraries and Stakeholders in Education sector

To be able to acquire inclusive collection and provide inclusive services, there is need for collaboration between School, public libraries and stakeholders in education sector particular basic and post-basic, adult and literacy, Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council and College of Education (Special) as well as Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), National Universities Commission (NUC), Nigerian Library Association as well as Librarian's Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) and Nigerian Library Schools in the areas of curriculum planning, design implementation and review as well as production of instructional materials. To buttress further Nimmak and Zingman (2020) posits that facilities for hearing, light braille, projectors and host of other equipment are currently available to solve the problem of communication and to enhance the communication and spread of information between students with disabilities and normal students.

Training Program for Library Staff

Management of public libraries and of course various State Library Boards should organize timely and regularly training programmes for public library staff with particular reference or special emphasis on the management of users of disabilities. The training programmes to be organized include: workshops, seminars, and conferences and should cover aspects of inclusive collection, services offer to this category of public library users as well as the management of users with disabilities. It is in line with this assertion that Bello (2014) posits that “public libraries should regularly train their staff especially in recognizing the peculiarities inherent in exceptional audience”. In a related area, Ozioko (2015) asserted the training for library and information services provision to the disadvantaged groups being categorized into three (3) – socially, physiologically and naturally disadvantaged groups. Library schools are urged to provide a variety optional training programmes for library staff including special national training, organizing workshops or continuing education stating the justification for a particular training programme.

Modernization of Public Library Services Provision

Public library services should be designed in such a way that users with (disability) can stay in their homes and access library resources and services. In this case public libraries in Nigeria should digitize their print

collections, (catalogues, books, journals etc) and put them on the web so that the cripple, deaf and dumb, and visually impaired persons can have access through smart phones, computer and other ICTs. Access to digitized collection can be made easier for this category of users and that public libraries should strive to train them on the operation of computers (Bello, 2014).

Restructuring of Children Literature

Children literature unit in public libraries need to be restructured in terms of collection, furniture and hours of operation. The collection should contain fiction and non-fictions, cartoons, games, poems, children's magazine (Okafor 2020) as well as books on inclusive education. Furniture (tables and chairs) should be redesigned for disability/cripple children for maximum use of the unit.

Challenges to Public Library Services and Inclusive Education in Nigeria

Literature search reveal quite a number of impediments to the development of public libraries in terms of service delivery on one hand and the challenges to inclusive education in Nigeria. As for public library services in Nigeria, the following challenges exist:-

Inadequate educational funding: - The provision of educational services is adversely affected by poor funding This single challenge is affecting the activities and service provision of public libraries in Nigeria as government fail to commit adequate fund to procure current books and other resources. Because of inadequate funding to education, other challenges emerge such as poor condition of services, shortage of professional/skilled library staff, outdated and limited collection and teaching materials, dilapidated buildings, insufficient and absence of ICT infrastructure (Okafor, 2020; Mainoma and Tanko, 2020)

Urban- Rural Dichotomy

In Nigeria public libraries are located mostly in urban areas and as such services are mostly concentrated in urban areas leaving the rural dwellers with abject information poverty. Majority of Nigerian population concentrated in rural areas including children and adult with disabilities. A book mobile or mobile library services which was in existence in 1960s and 1970s according to Ebiwolate (2010) was not sustained anymore due to certain factors which the author enumerated as “bad roads, long distances and use of dilapidated vehicles”. In summary the public library services are offered in urban areas and not extended to rural areas. This has further compounded the issue of digital divide between urban and rural areas in Nigeria hence many people in rural areas have no access to Internet or modern technology (<https://www.quora.com/what-are-the-challenges-of-public-libraries-in-Nigeria#>).

Inclusive education and provision of public library services in Nigeria is beset with the following challenges were discovered:-

1. *Facilities and other educational materials such as inclusive books and instructional material fall short and not standard especially students with disabilities thus making it impossible to meet the demand of inclusive education. (Angwao-maodoko, 2023). Teachers in specialized areas are lacking e.g. blind children, deaf and dumb need special education teachers to handle them.*
2. *Inadequate trained personnel:- There are inadequate trained teachers in the field of inclusive or special education in Nigeria Iwuamadi & Obasi(nd), Eleweke and Rodda (2002). Facilities and other educational materials such as inclusive books and instructional material fall short and not standard especially students with disabilities, thus making it impossible to meet the demand of inclusive education. (Angwaomaodoko, 2023). Teachers in specialized areas are lacking e.g. blind children, deaf and dumb needs special education teachers to handle them.*
3. *Problem of awareness, and ignorance: - Majority of teachers and parents in a state in Nigeria indicated and claimed not to have come across the term inclusive education.*
4. *Inadequate Funding:- The children with disabilities need specialized resources that are completely different from the ones used in teaching the normal children. For example for blind children/persons, we need brail machine, cripple students need wheel chair, walking sticks and all these facilities require adequate funds to procure them.*
5. *Inadequate data on children with Disabilities: - Government is handicapped in terms of having accurate record (data) of children with disabilities, nation-wide. This is a challenge to government as it affects planning for the needs disable children thus Iwuamadi and Obasi(nd) justify the need for keeping accurate to cater for different kind of disabilities hence every disability requires special care. National Primary Censors does not adequately take into consideration the accurate data/record of children with disabilities in Nigeria.*

Conclusion and Recommendations

Both public libraries and various institutions in-charge of training children with disabilities are under education sector. However, both information and education centre perform compliment role. While various schools and stakeholders design curriculum and inclusive learning resources, the public libraries acquire process, organize and disseminate inclusive collection for consultation by disable children. Public libraries and the training institutions in the area of inclusive education provide unique educational services and enlightenment programmes and thus teachers need to undergo special education while library personnel apart from acquiring specialized skills to handle this category of users, they also provide specialized services thereby meet the demand of inclusive education respectively.

Based on the enumerated issues on public library services and inclusive education, the paper recommends that:

1. *The three tiers of government should commit adequate funds for the procurement of inclusive instructional, learning and information resources in primary and post primary schools and there libraries as well as public library. This is to take care of conditions of teachers; quality personnel, acquire adequate collection and ICT infrastructure respectively.*
2. *State Library Boards in Nigeria should ensure that public libraries restructure, redesign and modernize their services especially to take care of users with disabilities. By this, we mean public libraries should acquire inclusive collection and print collections should undergo digitization while public libraries with Storey buildings should provide smooth stair-case; while wheel chairs be provided and brailed equipment be supplied to cripple, deaf and dumb users.*
3. *The three tiers of government should establish public libraries in rural areas and equip them with ICT infrastructure so as to bridge gap created as a result of digital divide among urban and rural dwellers.*
4. *Dedicated unit for disabilities: The management of state library boards should create unit dedicated for users with disabilities. This unit should be stocked with inclusive collections or special collections for users with disabilities and services be provided to this category of library users.*
5. *National Population Commission should conduct Census of physically-challenged adult and children in Nigeria.*
6. *National Policy on Education should undergo timely review to further take care of “inclusive education”. Part of the review should capture the establishment of special primary and/post-primary schools in the country to take care of handicapped of special need student. School libraries be attached to these schools and follow the objectives of their establishment.*

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REVOLUTIONIZING EDUCATION IN AFRICA: THE IMPACT OF IMMERSIVE TECHNOLOGIES ON DIGITAL LITERACY PROGRAMS IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

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Abstract

The evolving landscape of education embraces immersive technologies like Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and Mixed Reality (MR), integrated into digital literacy initiatives in academic libraries to enhance learning experiences, though challenges such as resource allocation and accessibility persist. Interest is growing in Africa regarding the impact of these technologies on higher learning institutional libraries. This research aims to examine the implications of immersive technologies on educational paradigms within academic libraries in Nigeria and Tanzania. Through surveys, the study seeks to assess the current landscape of digital literacy programs, identify the availability and acceptance of immersive technologies, and explore the relationship between immersive technologies and digital literacy programs. The research also aims to provide recommendations for effectively integrating immersive technologies into digital literacy programs in academic libraries, contributing to the broader discourse on the role of libraries in advancing digital literacy and lifelong learning initiatives. By adopting the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as a theoretical framework, the study aims to provide valuable insights into the factors influencing the successful deployment of immersive technologies in academic library environments. The findings of this research will contribute to informing decision-making, policy development, and best practices in integrating immersive technologies into digital literacy programs in academic libraries in Nigeria and Tanzania, ultimately enhancing information literacy skills and user experiences in the digital age.

Keywords: Academic Libraries; Augmented Reality (AR); Digital Literacy; Immersive Technologies; Librarians; Nigeria; Tanzania; Virtual Reality (VR).

Introduction

The landscape of education is undergoing a profound transformation propelled by rapid advancements in technology. In this digital age, higher learning institutional libraries serve as vital hubs for information access, research support, and lifelong learning initiatives (Marpelina, 2024). Recognizing the imperative to equip students, faculty, and researchers with essential digital literacy skills, libraries have increasingly integrated technology-driven approaches into their educational programs (Oladokun et al., 2023). One such transformative trend is the incorporation of immersive technologies, including virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and mixed reality (MR), into digital literacy initiatives hosted by higher learning institutional libraries (Hui et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2023; Sviridova et al., 2023).

Hui et al., (2022; Shahzad & Khan, (2023) express that immersive technologies offer unparalleled opportunities to revolutionize education by providing immersive and interactive learning experiences that transcend the limitations of traditional instructional methods. Within the context of higher learning institutional libraries, these technologies hold immense potential to enhance digital literacy skills, foster lifelong learning habits, and empower library patrons to navigate the complexities of the digital age with confidence and competence.

Liu, (2021); Oladokun et al., (2023); Tella et al., (2023) explain that historically, libraries have played a central role in fostering information literacy and promoting lifelong learning among students, faculty, and researchers. However, in the face of rapid technological advancements and evolving information landscapes, libraries must adapt their educational offerings to meet the changing needs and preferences of

their patrons. Immersive technologies present a compelling solution to this challenge, offering innovative tools and resources to engage learners, enhance comprehension, and promote critical thinking skills (Alam & Mohanty, 2023).

Despite the growing interest and adoption of immersive technologies in educational settings, there remains a need for comprehensive research to explore their impact within the unique context of higher learning institutional libraries (Tang, 2023). This research will contribute to the broader discourse on the role of libraries in advancing digital literacy and lifelong learning initiatives. By examining the integration of immersive technologies into digital literacy programs, this study seeks to uncover best practices, identify challenges, and provide insights into the transformative potential of these technologies in revolutionizing education within library settings in Nigeria and Tanzania.

Moreover, Sviridova et al., (2023) stress that as higher education institutions grapple with the dual challenges of technological innovation and the democratization of knowledge, libraries must position themselves as dynamic and forward-thinking entities capable of meeting the diverse needs of their patrons. By embracing immersive technologies and leveraging their potential to enhance digital literacy programs, higher learning institutional libraries can reaffirm their relevance and significance in the digital age, empowering learners to thrive in an increasingly complex and interconnected world (Adeyemi & Sulaiman, 2023; Tella et al., 2023).

Statement of the problem

Haleem et al., (2022) express that education is a lifelong process, essential for fostering continual growth and adaptation in an ever-evolving world. With the rapid advancement of technology permeating various aspects of society, the integration of immersive technologies into educational frameworks, particularly within higher learning institutional libraries, heralds a transformative shift in educational paradigms (Gadelha, 2018; Sviridova et al., 2023). Augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and mixed reality (MR) present unprecedented opportunities to revolutionize digital literacy programs, offering innovative approaches to teaching and learning (Gadelha, 2018; Tang, 2023).

The utilization of AR, VR, and MR in digital literacy programs within higher learning institutional libraries represents a dynamic departure from traditional instructional methods, promising enhanced engagement, interactivity, and effectiveness (Liu et al., 2023). These immersive technologies have the potential to transform the educational experience, providing learners with immersive and interactive environments that stimulate curiosity, deepen understanding, and facilitate skill development (Camilleri, 2023).

By engaging with AR, VR, and MR technologies, library users can explore concepts, environments, and scenarios in ways previously inaccessible through conventional means. Whether through interactive simulations, virtual tours, or immersive storytelling experiences, these technologies offer novel avenues for learning and knowledge acquisition (Adeyemi & Sulaiman, 2023).

However, Sarkar, (2023) explains alongside the transformative potential of immersive technologies lie significant challenges and considerations. The integration of AR, VR, and MR into digital literacy programs necessitates careful planning, resource allocation, and pedagogical innovation (Shahzad & Khan, 2023). Furthermore, issues related to accessibility, equity, and digital literacy skills among librarians must be addressed to ensure that all users can benefit from these immersive learning experiences.

Given the profound implications of immersive technologies on educational paradigms, there is an urgent need to critically examine their impact within the context of digital literacy programs offered in selected academic libraries in Nigeria and Tanzania. By conducting a thorough exploration of the opportunities and challenges associated with the integration of AR, VR, and MR into digital literacy programs, researchers can provide valuable insights to inform decision-making, policy development, and best practices within library settings (Taha, 2023).

Therefore, this research endeavours to critically examine the implications of immersive technologies on educational paradigms within higher learning institutional libraries. By analyzing the opportunities and challenges presented by AR, VR, and MR in digital literacy programs, this study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the integration of technology into education, ultimately fostering a deeper understanding of how immersive technologies can revolutionize learning experiences in library settings.

Research Objectives

The research aims to explore the following key issues.

- i. Assess the Current Landscape of Digital Literacy Programs in academic libraries in Nigeria and Tanzania;
- ii. Identify the availability of immersive technologies in academic libraries in Nigeria and Tanzania;
- iii. Examine the technology acceptance level of immersive technologies digital literacy programs of academic libraries in Nigeria and Tanzania.
- iv. Determine the relationship between the use of immersive technologies and digital literacy programs in academic libraries in Nigeria and Tanzania.
- v. Provide Recommendations for integrating immersive technologies in digital literacy programs in academic libraries in Nigeria and Tanzania.

Research Questions

- i. How do librarians perceive the effectiveness and relevance of existing digital literacy programs in addressing the information needs of users in academic libraries in Nigeria and Tanzania?
- ii. What is the level of awareness and utilization of immersive technologies among librarians in academic libraries in Nigeria and Tanzania, and how do they perceive these technologies in terms of enhancing user engagement and learning?
- iii. What factors influence librarians' acceptance or resistance towards the integration of immersive technologies into digital literacy programs within academic libraries in Nigeria and Tanzania?
- iv. How do librarians perceive the impact of integrating immersive technologies into digital literacy programs on user engagement, learning outcomes, and overall library services in academic libraries in Nigeria and Tanzania?
- v. What strategies and best practices can be recommended for effectively integrating immersive technologies into digital literacy programs in academic libraries in Nigeria and Tanzania to enhance information literacy skills and user experiences?

Hypothesis:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between the use of immersive technologies and digital literacy programs in academic libraries.

Theoretical framework

One of the most suitable frameworks is the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), developed by Fred Davis and Richard Bagozzi in the 1980s, is a widely used theoretical framework for understanding users' acceptance and adoption of new technologies. TAM posits that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness are key determinants of users' attitudes and intentions toward adopting a technology (Davis, 1993).

Perceived Usefulness: This aspect delves into the degree to which librarians perceive that the incorporation of immersive technologies into digital literacy programs will improve library patrons' digital literacy skills, interaction with library resources, and overall educational outcomes. Examining librarians' perceptions of the usefulness of immersive technologies provides valuable insights into their readiness to embrace and include these technologies in their educational endeavours.

Perceived Ease of Use: This section explores the ease or difficulty experienced by librarians when engaging with immersive technologies in digital literacy programs conducted by academic libraries. Elements like the design of user interfaces, accessibility features, and support mechanisms for instruction can impact librarians' views on the ease of using immersive technologies and consequently, their inclination to integrate them into educational programs.

Attitudes towards Use: Through an analysis of librarians' attitudes towards the integration of immersive technologies in digital literacy programs, this aspect identifies the factors influencing their perceptions, convictions, and preferences concerning these technologies. Positive attitudes towards immersive technologies are likely to foster greater acceptance and adoption by librarians, while negative attitudes may hinder their willingness to include these technologies in their educational provisions.

Behavioural Intention to Use: This part investigates librarians' intentions to incorporate immersive technologies into digital literacy programs, exploring the motivators and barriers affecting their readiness to embed these technologies into their educational initiatives. Understanding librarians' behavioural intentions can guide strategies for promoting the uptake and integration of immersive technologies in academic library contexts.

Through the adoption of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as a theoretical foundation, this research systematically scrutinizes librarians' perceptions, attitudes, and intentions regarding the integration of immersive technologies in digital literacy programs. TAM offers a comprehensive framework for comprehending librarians' acceptance and adoption of new technologies, providing valuable insights into the factors influencing the successful deployment of immersive technologies in academic library environments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Immersive technologies in libraries across the world

Hill, (2019) explains that in 1999 U.S. Army established the Institute of Creative Technologies (ICT) at the University of Southern California, to expand immersive technologies to enhance training and education benefiting not only the military but also the society at large. In the early 2000s, academic libraries began experimenting with incorporating digital literacy programs into their services, focusing primarily on basic computer skills, internet browsing, and information retrieval. Immersive technologies were in their infancy during this period, with limited applications in educational settings (Anthes et al., 2016). However, some pioneering institutions started exploring the potential of technologies like virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) for educational purposes (Chang et al., 2023; Enakrire & Fasae, 2022).

Throughout the 2010s, immersive technologies such as VR and AR began to gain traction, fueled by advancements in hardware and software capabilities. Academic librarians recognized the potential of immersive technologies to enhance learning experiences and started experimenting with integrating them into digital literacy programs (Chang et al., 2023). Early initiatives included VR simulations for information literacy instruction, AR overlays for library tours, and virtual collections accessible through immersive interfaces (De Sarkar, 2019).

Dalili Saleh et al., (2022); Suen et al., (2020) showed that, as immersive technologies became more accessible and affordable, academic librarians worldwide showed increasing interest in their educational applications. Libraries began investing in VR headsets, AR devices, and software platforms to develop immersive digital literacy programs. Collaborations between librarians, instructional designers, and technologists led to the creation of innovative VR and AR learning experiences tailored to the specific needs of academic communities (Dalili Saleh et al., 2022).

In recent years, academic institutions have provided greater support for immersive technology initiatives in libraries, recognizing their potential to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. Librarians have conducted research studies to assess the effectiveness of immersive technologies in digital literacy instruction, exploring their impact on information retention, critical thinking skills, and user satisfaction (Suen et al., 2020; Yavarkovsky, 2013).

Professional organizations and conferences have devoted sessions and workshops to immersive technologies in academic libraries, facilitating knowledge sharing and collaboration among practitioners (Ogbomo, 2022; Roy et al., 2022; Suen et al., 2020).

Academic librarians are increasingly integrating immersive technologies into curriculum-aligned digital literacy programs, collaborating with faculty to incorporate VR and AR experiences into course modules. With the shift towards online and hybrid learning environments, libraries are exploring virtual platforms and simulations to deliver digital literacy instruction remotely, ensuring accessibility and flexibility for students (Grant & Rhind-Tutt, 2019; Ogbomo, 2022).

According to Fujiuchi & Riggie, (2019); Margam, (2023); Suen et al., (2020); and Witt et al., (2015) stated the history of immersive technologies with digital literacy programs among academic librarians worldwide reflects a trajectory of experimentation, innovation, and growing recognition of the transformative potential of these technologies for teaching and learning in higher education.

Academic libraries on immersive technologies with digital literacy programs across Africa

Academic libraries across Africa have been actively involved in digital literacy programs and the integration of immersive technologies (Inskip, 2020; Khumalo, 2022; Patrick & Tweve, 2022). These programs aim to enhance the digital literacy skills of library professionals and user communities, particularly in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the increasing importance of digital skills (Inskip, 2020).

Libraries in Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, and Uganda have implemented various initiatives to teach digital literacy and provide access to ICT resources (A et al., 2022; Inskip, 2020; Khumalo, 2022). According to Khumalo, (2022), Subject Librarians in academic libraries in South Africa have used information and communication technologies (ICTs) for digital literacy instruction, although there is a need for further training in this area.

The role of academic librarians in the digital environment and their pedagogical competencies are also being explored, with a focus on integrating suitable technologies with teaching methods. Overall, academic libraries in Africa are actively engaged in promoting digital literacy and leveraging immersive technologies to enhance teaching and learning experiences (Daniel, 2015; Isa, 2023; Ogbomo, 2022; Tella et al., 2023).

According to Gastinger, (2006) libraries have to be focused on cost-effectiveness, performance measurement, quality standards and user acceptance to enhance significant status in their workplace. Academic libraries worldwide have enthusiastically embraced immersive technologies, such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR), to elevate their digital literacy programs (Almeida et al., 2016; Enakrire & Fasae, 2022; Khan et al., 2023).

These remarkable technologies have revolutionized the way users are taught and have greatly enhanced their learning experiences within academic libraries (Chang et al., 2023). The advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, coupled with the ever-growing influence of technology on pedagogy, has brought about an overwhelming wave of change in the role of academic librarians, transforming them into online educators (Hussain, 2020; Levien & American Library Association, 2011).

Nonetheless, academic librarians must acquire proficient pedagogical and digital skills to effectively educate in a digital environment. The vital role that subject librarians play in digital literacy instruction cannot be overlooked, but regrettably, there is a dearth of adequate digital literacy skills among them, thus compromising their ability to offer pertinent training (Crueru, 2013; Shahzad & Khan, 2023).

The stance of academic libraries towards immersive technologies with digital literacy programs varies, but there is a growing recognition of the potential benefits and opportunities these technologies offer for enhancing educational experiences (Almeida et al., 2016; Ogbomo, 2022; Suen et al., 2020).

Some key aspects of their stance include:

Recognition of the importance of academic libraries in Africa: acknowledge the importance of digital literacy in today's world and understand that immersive technologies can play a crucial role in promoting digital literacy skills among students and faculty.

According to Adetayo, (2023); Bala & Bala, (2022); Granchak & Bondarenko, (2021); Grant & Rhind-Tutt, 2019; Greene & Groenendyk, 2018; Phetteplace, 2015; Roy et al., (2022) and Yavarkovsky, (2013) elaborate that Academic libraries, including those in Africa, are increasingly interested in utilizing immersive technologies like VR, AR, and MR to enrich educational experiences. There's a strong focus on ensuring accessibility and inclusivity, particularly in underserved areas, with librarians actively working to make these technologies available to all students and faculty. However, Bala & Bala, (2022); Granchak & Bondarenko, (2021) challenges such as cost constraints and the need for staff and user training are acknowledged, alongside the importance of adapting initiatives to local contexts to ensure effectiveness and relevance.

Despite recognizing the potential of immersive technologies, academic libraries face hurdles such as cost constraints and infrastructure limitations, particularly in African contexts. Yet, efforts are underway to adapt these technologies to local needs, considering factors like language, culture, and educational requirements (Camilleri, 2023; De Sarkar, 2019; Sarkar, 2023). Collaborative endeavors with stakeholders help overcome challenges, emphasizing the importance of shared resources and expertise to maximize the impact of digital literacy initiatives (Buckland, 1992) while maintaining a commitment to accessibility and relevance within higher education institutions (Camilleri, 2023; Chang et al., 2023; Haleem et al., 2022).

Immersive technologies with digital literacy programs status among Academic Libraries in Nigeria and Tanzania

The intersection of immersive technologies and digital literacy programs in academic libraries presents a dynamic landscape for enhancing educational outcomes and empowering learners in diverse contexts. This section explores the current status of immersive technologies within digital literacy programs in academic libraries, with a focus on Nigeria and Tanzania. As two prominent countries in Africa, Nigeria and Tanzania share common challenges in advancing education and digital literacy, while also exhibiting unique socio-cultural and infrastructural contexts influencing the adoption and implementation of immersive technologies.

Immersive technologies like virtual reality and augmented reality are gradually gaining ground in educational settings, but specific data on their integration into academic libraries in Nigeria and Tanzania is limited. In the African context, electronic resources are available, and librarians show willingness to embrace digital literacy programs to incorporate immersive technologies; however, access can sometimes be hindered by several factors such as internet connectivity issues, lack of electricity, or limited knowledge on the use of Information Technology (James Mwamasso & Oduor Onyango, 2020; Patrick & Tweve, 2022; Wema, 2021).

In Tanzania, for instance, a study at Teofilo Kisanji University showed that internet resources are significantly deployed, indicating a shift from print to digital learning resources (Alphonse & Mwantimwa, 2019). While this demonstrates a move toward embracing digital resources, it doesn't specifically highlight the use of immersive technologies in libraries.

The role of libraries is evolving, and there is a push for librarians to reimagine their roles in the context of modern technology. Librarians are becoming more involved in facilitating digital literacy and managing technology-driven projects (Bourdeaux, 1981). As immersive technologies become more accessible and affordable, it is likely that academic libraries, including those in Nigeria and Tanzania, will begin to explore their potential to support digital literacy efforts more actively (Ogbomo, 2022; Tella, 2020; Tella et al., 2023).

However, for a more accurate picture of the current integration of immersive technologies with digital literacy programs specifically in academic libraries in Nigeria and Tanzania, a direct investigation into these countries' educational institutions would be necessary.

Nigeria and Tanzania are grappling with the imperative to integrate digital technologies into educational settings to meet the demands of the 21st century. Academic libraries in both nations serve as crucial hubs for providing access to information, supporting research endeavours, and promoting digital literacy among students, faculty, and researchers (Adetayo, 2023; Mwilongo & Kotoroi, 2023; Sife & Matto, 2022). Understanding the status of immersive technologies within digital literacy programs requires exploring the contextual factors shaping educational practices and technological adoption in Nigeria and Tanzania.

In Nigeria, academic libraries increasingly recognize the potential of immersive technologies such as VR and AR to enrich teaching, learning, and research experiences (Enakrire & Fasae, 2022). Initiatives like establishing VR labs and partnerships with technology companies signal growing interest. However, challenges related to infrastructure limitations, funding constraints, and technological readiness persist, impacting widespread adoption (Adetayo, 2023; Enakrire & Fasae, 2022; Margam, 2024; Oladokun et al., 2023).

Contrastingly, Tanzania is also witnessing efforts to integrate immersive technologies into digital literacy programs within academic libraries. Government initiatives and partnerships with international

organizations have facilitated the introduction of immersive learning experiences. Despite similar challenges as Nigeria, Tanzania's unique socio-economic context shapes the trajectory of adoption and implementation (Margareth, 2017; Mgaya, 2018; Ministry of Information, 2023; Oreku, 2022).

Both countries exhibit emerging trends and innovations highlighting the evolving nature of immersive technologies within digital literacy programs. Strategies range from developing locally relevant educational content to exploring low-cost VR solutions for resource-constrained environments (Ogbomo, 2022; Oladokun et al., 2023; Sife & Matto, 2022).

While there's growing recognition of the potential benefits of immersive technologies in enhancing digital literacy programs, empirical research is needed. Exploring stakeholders' experiences and perspectives, including librarians, educators, students, and technology developers, offers valuable insights and informs future strategies for integration.

In Nigeria and Tanzania, academic libraries play a vital role in promoting digital literacy and are increasingly exploring the potential of immersive technologies such as virtual reality and augmented reality to enhance educational experiences. While immersive technologies hold promise for enriching learning and aiding in the development of digital literacy skills, their adoption within the academic library landscape faces various contextual factors that can affect implementation and success.

For Nigeria, there seems to be a growing interest in immersive technologies, with some universities establishing VR labs or collaborating with tech companies to support digital literacy (Dalili Saleh et al., 2022). Despite this interest, widespread adoption faces challenges like infrastructure and funding limitations, technological readiness, and the need for skilled personnel to manage and integrate these technologies effectively (Ogbomo, 2022; Oladokun et al., 2023; Tella et al., 2023).

In Tanzania, while there is evidence of a transition from traditional learning resources to electronic ones, indicating an acknowledgement of digital trends in education, the specifics of immersive technologies in academic libraries are less clear (James Mwamasso & Oduor Onyango, 2020; Kirita & Mwantimwa, 2022; Patrick & Tweve, 2022; Wema, 2021). There are general challenges similar to Nigeria, like internet connectivity, reliable electricity, and tech proficiency that can hinder the integration of advanced technologies (Anthes et al., 2016; De Sarkar, 2019; Tella et al., 2023).

Therefore, there is interest and potential for immersive technologies to play a significant role in digital literacy within the regions' academic libraries, the realism of this vision depends on overcoming infrastructural, economic, and educational barriers that currently exist. The success of these initiatives requires strategic investments, better infrastructure, professional development for librarians, and collaborative efforts to develop locally relevant and sustainable programs that leverage advanced technologies for educational excellence (Granchak & Bondarenko, 2021; Haleem et al., 2022; Isa, 2023; Lockwood, 2004).

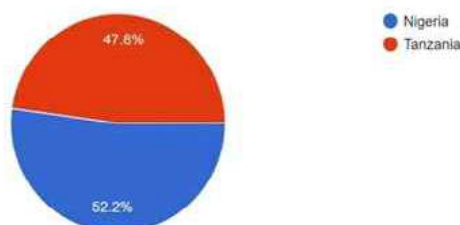
Overall, both Nigeria and Tanzania are witnessing increasing interest and adoption of immersive technologies in their academic libraries. Collaborative efforts, research initiatives, and a focus on access and inclusivity are essential for leveraging immersive technologies to enhance digital literacy education and empower learners effectively.

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology centers on a dual approach of survey-based data collection and comprehensive literature review. Surveys, meticulously designed and distributed among stakeholders in Academic libraries, aim to gather diverse perspectives on the integration of immersive technologies into digital literacy programs. These surveys target librarians to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Complementing the survey data, a thorough literature review sourced from reputable platforms such as Emerald Insight, Springer, and Research 4Life provides scholarly insights into the topic.

The survey-centric approach is anticipated to yield a substantial volume of quantitative data, facilitating in-depth analysis of opportunities, challenges, and recommendations related to immersive technology integration in academic libraries. By focusing exclusively on quantitative data, the research aims to provide a robust foundation for understanding the complexities of this integration. Additionally, the inclusion of a sizable sample size, with 265 responses targeted from academic libraries in Nigeria and Tanzania, ensures geographic diversity and captures regional nuances in technology adoption and implementation. This is shown in Figure 1.

Academic Library Affiliation



This comprehensive methodology, integrating surveys, literature review, and a significant sample size, aims to provide valuable insights into digital literacy programs within academic libraries. By leveraging diverse perspectives and scholarly research, the study seeks to offer nuanced understanding and recommendations for the effective utilization of immersive technologies in educational settings. Emphasizing quantitative analysis to triangulate findings and validate results effectively, this streamlined approach ensures a nuanced understanding of the research topic, enhancing the validity and reliability of the study's conclusions, particularly within the context of digital literacy programs in higher learning institutional libraries.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The collected data was analysed using percentages, bar charts and graphs and the result is attached as a Google Drive Link (<https://shorturl.at/drwWX>) and as an Appendix. This section will further discuss the findings from the analysis.

In recent years, there has been a burgeoning interest in harnessing immersive technologies to transform educational practices, particularly within the African context. Academic libraries, serving as pivotal hubs of knowledge dissemination, play an integral role in this paradigm shift by offering digital literacy programs designed to equip learners with essential skills for navigating the increasingly complex digital landscape (A et al., 2022; Inskip, 2020).

The present study seeks to delve into the impact of immersive technologies on digital literacy initiatives within academic libraries across Africa, with a specific focus on the contexts of Nigeria and Tanzania. Framed within this overarching objective, the research endeavours to achieve five distinct aims: to assess the prevailing landscape of digital literacy programs in academic libraries within Nigeria and Tanzania, to identify the availability and adoption of immersive technologies within these library settings, to gauge the level of acceptance and utilization of immersive technologies among stakeholders involved in digital literacy programs, to explore the relationship between the use of immersive technologies and the efficacy of digital literacy initiatives, and to propose recommendations for integrating immersive technologies into digital literacy programs within academic libraries in Nigeria and Tanzania.

A comprehensive analysis of the study's findings offers a nuanced understanding of the demographic profile of participants engaged in digital literacy programs within academic libraries. Notably, the data reveals a discernible concentration of highly educated individuals, with a substantial proportion holding either Master's degrees (39.1%) or PhDs (39.1%). This demographic composition underscores the imperative of tailoring digital literacy initiatives to accommodate the diverse educational backgrounds represented within the learner community, thereby fostering inclusivity and ensuring equitable access to educational resources (Khan et al., 2023; Patrick & Tweve, 2022).

Furthermore, the findings shed light on the utilization and adoption of immersive technologies within the academic library landscape. Specifically, the study unveils a considerable level of engagement with immersive technologies, with approximately half of the participants actively participating in programs incorporating these innovative tools. Such findings underscore the growing interest and acceptance of immersive technologies as enablers of enhanced learning experiences within academic settings (Bresnahan & Yin, 2017; Fujiuchi & Riggie, 2019; Isa, 2023).

As the study advances, it elucidates the prevailing challenges and opportunities associated with the integration of immersive technologies into digital literacy programs. These challenges range from technical hurdles and infrastructure limitations to the imperative of capacity-building initiatives aimed at enhancing stakeholders' proficiency with these emerging technologies. Despite these obstacles, the study highlights the potential of immersive technologies to augment digital literacy efforts, particularly in facilitating interactive and experiential learning modalities (Daniel, 2015; Enakrire & Fasae, 2022).

In light of these insights, the study culminates in a series of recommendations aimed at fostering the seamless integration of immersive technologies into digital literacy programs within academic libraries in Nigeria and Tanzania. These recommendations encompass a multifaceted approach, including investment in infrastructure upgrades, the provision of specialized training programs, and the cultivation of collaborative partnerships to harness the transformative potential of immersive technologies effectively (Granchak & Bondarenko, 2021; Greene & Groenendyk, 2018).

The findings of this study offer valuable insights into the intersection of immersive technologies and digital literacy initiatives within the academic library context in Africa. By elucidating demographic trends, utilization patterns, and challenges encountered, the study paves the way for informed strategies aimed at leveraging immersive technologies to enhance educational outcomes and foster digital literacy proficiency among learners across diverse educational landscapes.

Current Landscape of Digital Literacy Programs in Academic Libraries in Nigeria and Tanzania

According to the study findings, the analysis of responses about the utilization of Digital Literacy programs and engagement with immersive technologies unveils notable trends and insights. Specifically, data indicates that 30.4% of respondents reported utilizing digital literacy programs every week, followed

closely by daily engagement at 21.7%. This pattern suggests a consistent and regular uptake of these programs among respondents, reflecting a significant level of engagement with digital literacy initiatives within academic libraries (Buckland, 1992; Patrick & Tweve, 2022; Schmidt Hanbidge et al., 2018).

The data reveals that approximately half of the participants (52.2%) have actively participated in programs featuring immersive technologies, indicating a growing interest and adoption of these innovative tools within educational contexts. Moreover, when examining the types of immersive technologies experienced, the data shows that Virtual Reality (VR) is slightly more prevalent compared to Augmented Reality (AR) and Mixed Reality (MR), with VR being reported by 41.7% of respondents, while AR and MR are reported by 33.3% and 41.7% respectively. This suggests a higher degree of implementation or accessibility of VR technologies within academic settings compared to other immersive technologies (Anthes et al., 2016; Isa, 2023; Suen et al., 2020).

The perceived usefulness of immersive technologies is also evident in the data, with 35% of respondents expressing a positive experience. Additionally, the data highlights that interactivity and hands-on learning are perceived as the most beneficial aspects of immersive technologies, with 35% of respondents highlighting these features. Such recognition underscores the potential of these technologies to enhance educational outcomes and facilitate active engagement among learners (Davis, 1993; Yoon et al., 2022).

However, alongside the reported benefits, a myriad of challenges are also identified in the data. Technical issues and infrastructure limitations emerge as primary obstacles to the effective implementation of immersive technologies in academic settings. These challenges are echoed by the data, which shows that 100% of respondents reported encountering challenges such as adjusting to the scenery, bandwidth issues, challenges of internet connectivity, and inadequate tools meant to enhance learners' experiences (Adetayo, 2023; Isa, 2023; Tella et al., 2023).

Availability of Immersive Technologies in academic libraries in Nigeria and Tanzania

This study unveils significant insights into the current state of technological infrastructure in academic libraries, with statistics revealing prevailing trends. It indicates that while a majority of libraries are moderately equipped with digital resources, only a relatively small proportion offer immersive technologies. Specifically, findings show that approximately 43% of libraries possess a moderate level of digital resources, while only 4% are advanced with immersive technologies. Additionally, regarding awareness among librarians, the data suggests a mixed level of familiarity with immersive technologies, with 43% demonstrating moderate awareness and 48% displaying low awareness (Adetayo, 2023; Ogbomo, 2022; Sviridova et al., 2023; Tella et al., 2023).

Analysis of specific immersive technologies available in academic libraries reveals that only a small percentage offer these resources. For instance, only 17% reported having Virtual Reality (VR) technologies available, while Augmented Reality (AR) and Mixed Reality (MR) technologies are available in 13% and 22% of libraries, respectively (Lockwood, 2004).

In terms of initiatives integrating immersive technologies, the data indicates that 35% of libraries report ongoing projects, showcasing a fair amount of activity in this area. However, challenges persist in implementation, with infrastructure insufficiency being the most prominent hurdle, as highlighted by 52% of respondents. Strategies to overcome these challenges include increased funding allocation and specialized training programs, which are commonly adopted by 35% and 26% of respondents, respectively (Khan et al., 2023).

The impact of immersive technologies on learning and research is perceived positively by a significant majority of respondents, with 78% acknowledging a positive impact. However, there is a notable variation in experiences among users, with 35% finding immersive technologies very useful while 26% consider them not useful (Adeyemi & Sulaiman, 2023; Almeida et al., 2016; Mwilongo & Kotoroi, 2023).

Despite the enthusiasm surrounding immersive technologies, challenges such as infrastructure limitations and technical issues persist, hindering widespread adoption in academic libraries. For instance, over half of respondents cited insufficient infrastructure as a barrier to implementation, reflecting the sentiment of 52% of participants. Addressing these challenges necessitates a multifaceted approach, including investments in infrastructure upgrades, capacity-building initiatives for staff, and collaborative partnerships with external stakeholders (A et al., 2022; Allen et al., 2015; Z. Liu et al., 2023).

The technology acceptance level of immersive technologies digital literacy programs of academic libraries in Nigeria and Tanzania

The examination of technological infrastructure within academic libraries reveals a prevailing trend: the majority of libraries are moderately equipped with digital resources, indicating a baseline level of technological advancement, although there is room for improvement. Specifically, data indicates that 43% of libraries are moderately equipped with digital resources, while 30% have basic infrastructure primarily consisting of traditional library resources. This observation suggests a foundational infrastructure to support digital literacy initiatives but also underscores the need for ongoing improvements and investments to enhance technological capabilities within these institutions (Buckland, 1992; Inskip, 2020; Lockwood, 2004; Roy et al., 2022).

Regarding awareness among librarians, the findings indicate a mixed level of understanding regarding immersive technologies. Approximately 43% demonstrate moderate awareness, while 48% exhibit low awareness, suggesting a need for targeted education and training initiatives aimed at enhancing awareness and utilization of immersive technologies among library staff and educators. Such initiatives could facilitate the effective integration of immersive technologies into digital literacy programs, thereby maximizing their potential impact on educational outcomes (Inskip, 2020; Sarkar, 2023).

Furthermore, the data on specific immersive technologies available in academic libraries underscores the challenges associated with adoption. Despite the growing interest in immersive technologies, only a relatively small proportion of libraries offer immersive technologies, with VR reported by 17%, AR by 13%, and MR by 22% of respondents. The relatively low availability of immersive technologies within these settings highlights barriers such as cost constraints and technical expertise requirements. Addressing these challenges necessitates concerted efforts to overcome barriers to implementation and ensure equitable access to immersive technologies for educational purposes (De Sarkar, 2019; Sviridova et al., 2023).

Infrastructure insufficiency emerges as a major barrier to the effective implementation of immersive technologies within academic libraries. The data underscores the critical need for investments in technology infrastructure to support the seamless integration of immersive technologies into digital literacy programs. For example, 22% of respondents reported insufficient infrastructure as a significant challenge, highlighting the imperative of infrastructure upgrades to support the integration of immersive technologies (Camilleri, 2023; Gadelha, 2018; Shahzad & Khan, 2023).

In response to these challenges, the strategies reported by respondents reflect proactive approaches aimed at overcoming implementation hurdles. Increased funding allocation and specialized training programs are cited as common strategies employed to address infrastructure insufficiency and enhance staff proficiency with immersive technologies. Such proactive measures demonstrate a commitment to fostering an environment conducive to the effective utilization of immersive technologies within academic libraries (Dimitrov, 2023; IFLA, 2020; Inskip, 2020; Wema, 2021).

In conclusion, the findings underscore the importance of addressing challenges related to technological infrastructure, awareness among stakeholders, and implementation barriers to maximize the potential impact of immersive technologies on digital literacy programs within academic libraries. By leveraging proactive strategies and targeted initiatives, institutions can overcome barriers and create an enabling environment for the effective integration of immersive technologies into educational practices (Enakrire & Fasae, 2022; Hussain, 2020; Suleski & Draper, 2013; Tella et al., 2023).

The relationship between the use of immersive technologies and digital literacy programs in academic libraries in Nigeria and Tanzania.

The findings reveal a significant level of importance attributed to the ease of use of immersive technologies in influencing willingness to engage with digital literacy programs. Specifically, 39.1% of respondents indicated that ease of use is very important, while 52.2% considered it important. This underscores the critical role of user-friendly interfaces and intuitive design in facilitating effective engagement with immersive technologies within educational contexts (Haleem et al., 2022).

Moreover, respondents exhibited overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards the integration of immersive technologies into digital literacy programs. A striking 82.6% of participants expressed a positive overall attitude, indicating a strong endorsement of the potential of immersive technologies to enhance educational experiences and foster digital literacy skills among learners. Conversely, a smaller proportion (17.4%) reported a neutral stance, suggesting opportunities for further exploration and clarification of the benefits and implications of immersive technology integration (Grant & Rhind-Tutt, 2019; Khumalo, 2022; Shahzad & Khan, 2023).

The willingness of respondents to embrace immersive technologies within digital literacy programs is evident in their expressed intentions. A resounding 87% of participants indicated that they would be willing to use immersive technologies if made available in their academic library, with an additional 13% expressing a probable inclination towards adoption. This high level of willingness underscores the perceived value and potential impact of immersive technologies in enriching educational practices and advancing digital literacy initiatives within academic settings (Chalukya, 2015; Davis, 1993; Phetteplace, 2015).

This symbiotic relationship between immersive technologies and digital literacy programs in academic libraries in Nigeria and Tanzania. The findings highlight the importance of ease of use, positive attitudes towards integration, and willingness to adopt immersive technologies among stakeholders, signalling a promising trajectory for the advancement of digital literacy initiatives through innovative technological solutions.

Recommendations for integrating immersive technologies in digital literacy programs in academic libraries in Nigeria and Tanzania

The perceived positive impact of immersive technologies on learning and research activities aligns with the overarching goal of revolutionizing education in Africa. For instance, 78% of respondents reported that

immersive technologies have positively impacted learning, research, or other academic activities. Anticipated future trends, such as increased integration of VR technologies (35%) and exploration of new applications, signal a promising trajectory for digital literacy programs in academic libraries (Bourdeaux, 1981; Hill, 2019; Inskip, 2020).

Several recommendations emerge for the integration of immersive technologies into academic libraries in Nigeria and Tanzania.

Firstly, a significant emphasis should be placed on investment in infrastructure. According to the data, 43% of libraries are moderately equipped with digital resources, indicating a need for increased investment in technology infrastructure to support immersive technology integration. This investment should prioritize upgrading hardware, software, and network capabilities to ensure compatibility and functionality with immersive technology solutions (Hussain, 2020; Khan et al., 2023; Tella et al., 2023).

Secondly, capacity-building and training initiatives are paramount. The mixed level of awareness among librarians regarding immersive technologies, with 43% demonstrating moderate awareness and 48% showing low awareness, highlights the necessity for comprehensive training programs. These programs should provide hands-on training on the use of immersive technologies, equipping staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively integrate these technologies into digital literacy programs (Bala & Bala, 2022; Chang et al., 2023; Suen et al., 2020).

Collaborative partnerships also hold immense potential for advancing immersive technology integration. According to the data, 35% of respondents reported ongoing initiatives or projects integrating immersive technologies into library services, indicating an existing interest in collaboration. By engaging with technology vendors, educational institutions, and other stakeholders, academic libraries can access the expertise, resources, and support necessary for successful implementation. Exploring collaborative opportunities can facilitate the sharing of knowledge and best practices, accelerating progress in immersive technology adoption (Adeyemi & Sulaiman, 2023; Almeida et al., 2016; Hussain, 2020; Sviridova et al., 2023).

Moreover, promoting accessibility is imperative. Immersive technology solutions must be designed with accessibility considerations in mind to ensure inclusivity and equitable access for all learners. This involves addressing barriers to access and ensuring compatibility with assistive technologies, thereby catering to the diverse needs of learners, including those with disabilities (Haleem et al., 2022; Tella et al., 2023).

Pedagogical integration is equally critical for effective immersive technology implementation. Aligning immersive technology initiatives with educational objectives and fostering active learning experiences requires innovative instructional approaches. According to the data, 82.6% of respondents expressed a positive attitude towards the integration of immersive technologies into digital literacy programs, indicating a favourable environment for pedagogical innovation. Educators and librarians should explore pedagogical strategies that leverage immersive technologies to enhance learning outcomes and engage learners effectively (Ecem Gürsen et al., 2023; Haleem et al., 2022; Isa, 2023).

Furthermore, continuous evaluation and assessment are essential for monitoring progress and measuring the effectiveness of immersive technology initiatives. According to the data, 87% of participants indicated a willingness to use immersive technologies if made available in their academic library, highlighting a strong interest in evaluation and adoption. Academic libraries should develop robust evaluation frameworks and assessment tools to gather feedback, make data-driven decisions for improvement, and ensure accountability in immersive technology integration efforts (Hussain, 2020; Ogbomo, 2022).

Engagement with the broader community is vital for the success of immersive technology initiatives. By fostering a culture of collaboration and participation, academic libraries can solicit input and feedback from stakeholders, ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of immersive technology integration efforts.

Lastly, promoting research and innovation in immersive technologies is fundamental to driving advancements and uncovering new possibilities for educational applications. Academic libraries should support research endeavours and provide access to resources to foster a culture of experimentation and exploration in immersive technology integration (Haleem et al., 2022; Mwilongo & Kotoroi, 2023; Tella et al., 2023).

Implementing these recommendations, academic libraries in Nigeria and Tanzania can effectively harness the potential of immersive technologies to revolutionize digital literacy programs, enhance educational experiences, and empower learners in the digital age.

Conclusion

In conclusion, immersive technologies have the potential to revolutionize education in Africa by enhancing digital literacy programs in academic libraries. Despite challenges, there are opportunities for innovation and collaboration to leverage these technologies effectively. By addressing the needs and preferences of diverse learner populations, academic libraries can play a pivotal role in fostering a culture of lifelong learning and innovation in the digital age.

The data highlight the importance of investment in infrastructure, capacity building, collaborative partnerships, accessibility considerations, pedagogical integration, continuous evaluation, community engagement, and research and innovation to facilitate the effective integration of immersive technologies.

By prioritizing these recommendations, academic libraries can harness the potential of immersive technologies to revolutionize digital literacy programs, enhance educational experiences, and empower learners in the digital age.

Overall, the findings underscore the transformative impact of immersive technologies on education in Africa, offering new possibilities for advancing digital literacy and promoting lifelong learning. However, it is essential to address challenges such as infrastructure limitations, awareness gaps, and accessibility barriers to ensure equitable access and maximize the benefits of immersive technology integration. With concerted efforts and strategic initiatives, academic libraries can play a pivotal role in driving innovation and revolutionizing education through immersive technologies in Nigeria and Tanzania.

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SCHOOL LIBRARY INCLUSIVENESS: IMPERATIVES FOR NATIONAL, STATE AND LOCAL ATTENTION

BY

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Abstract

School libraries are the nerve centre of primary and secondary schools where they are located. This paper defines the school library and its objectives which show its multiple contributions to the teaching and learning process. Much as this is important, there are policies and strategies that have been formulated to ensure its functionality but unlike what is obtainable in academic, special and other types of libraries, the implementation is never given attention. One wonders why the disparity and why school libraries are not inclusive. The study adopted literature search approach to gather information on the state of implementation of policies, the state of school libraries in the country and level of inclusiveness of school libraries. Literature reveals failure in its operation in terms of staff, staff capacity building, funding, accommodation and resources. These reveal a clear case of non-inclusiveness of school libraries and therefore recommendations are made among others that there should be radical advocacy for enforcement of NLA's recommendation of regulatory bodies setting and enforcing standards that promote professionalism and excellence in the library profession; that employers of labour should not employ non-professionals to man school libraries; and that government at different levels should set aside funds for school library development.

Keywords: Technology savvy, marginalization, inclusiveness, truncated outcomes.

Introduction

School libraries are an integral part of primary and secondary school system. They exist to complement teaching, support learning and implement the curriculum. School libraries existed in Nigeria as far back as the 16th century with the advent of missionary activities when precisely the Catholic Mission established schools in Benin and Warri in 1570 and in 1842 the Methodist Mission established CMS Grammar school in Badagry. By 1846 the Scotland Mission opened the Hope Wadell Training Institute in Calabar and 1894, The Qua Iboe Mission established Etinan Institute Etinan. So school libraries are not new to Nigeria. They have been operational in the above schools for the past six centuries. One therefore wonders why the progress of school library development in government schools is very slow or non-existent.

Concept of School Library

A school library or school library media centre is a library within primary or secondary school where students, staff and parents have a variety of information resources. It is a type of library that supports school programmes as well as the teaching/learning process. School libraries are known to be laboratories where children and adolescents find unlimited opportunities for participating in individualized learning process. A school library is attached to a school to serve as a recourse centre and a centre for informal education where pupil/students receive information, inspiration, enlightenment, entertainment and preparation for life-long learning. International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA, 2015) defined the school library as a physical and digital learning space where reading, enquiry, research, thinking, imagination and creativity take place. School library is also defined as a library that uses all types of media, is automated and utilizes internet as well as books for information sharing. It is the school library that lays the foundation for studies at the tertiary level of education. Failure to lay a proper foundation at this level, has brought about the truncated outcomes that are seen in tertiary institutions today. (Ekpo, 2020). The aim of a school library is to become a force for educational excellence. (Kumar, 2008).

Udofia (2000) and Elaturoti (1998) presented the following as purposes of the school library:

- a) to act as an information centre for the support of the institutional curriculum;
- b) to be a clinic for intellectual development and the development of special gifts and talents;
- c) to help children and young adults to become skilful and discriminating users of libraries and of printed and audio-visual materials;
- k) to afford learners the ability to learn, acquire knowledge, assimilate knowledge, analyse, critically appraise it and come up with an appreciation and understanding of the knowledge acquired.
- d) to collaborate with classroom teachers in the selection and use of all types of library materials while contributing to the teaching programme.

- e) to enhance children's knowledge of listening, speaking, reading and writing for understanding and enjoyment;
- f) to foster individual and collaborative students' enquiry;
- g) to provide an opportunity through library experience for boys and girls to develop helpful interests, to make satisfactory personal adjustments and to acquire desirable social attitudes of students with vocational information leading to choice of career.
- h) to integrate information and instructional technologies into classroom teaching and learning;
- i) to motivate the love for reading and life-long learning;
- j) to encourage students to become information literate, independent learners, socially responsible in their use of information technology.

In order to achieve the above, the school library must provide open access to its users. In consonance with the above, the National Policy on Education (2004) states that “the aim of basic education is “to equip individuals with such knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to live meaningful and fulfilling lives, contribute to the development of society, derive maximum social, economic and cultural benefits from the society and discharge their civil obligation”. School libraries remain the places that can help children through the provision of information and ideas that are fundamental to their functioning as stated above and through independent study; learn how to satisfy their curiosities. School libraries should therefore provide information that can help children function in today's information and knowledge – based society and to inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through exploration, the school librarian being the pivot of the process (Archibong and Okon, 2011).

With the realization of the strategic position school libraries play in children's educational and developmental process, so much is left to be done in terms of provision of accommodation, resources, services and most importantly staffing, When Nigerian Library Association, Akwa Ibom State Chapter in her “Save the Library Project”, visited especially public schools, the state school libraries was not encouraging. In some schools, rooms were tagged library but books kept under lock and key for fear of book loss. Then one would ask, what is the use of the locked up books to the children? Or where resources are not there at all, how can the children develop the skills stated above. Omokaro's Press statement of April, 11 2024 decried the deplorable state of school libraries in the country. In his words, “the school library system has totally collapsed; we do not have librarians manning the school libraries”. This he said six years after Akerele et al had decried the poor state of school libraries in his article “School Library Challenges in Nigeria” where he listed the challenges in Ogun State which is also applicable to other states to include:

- *Old uninviting resources, uncondusive school library accommodation, space inadequacy, insufficient resources, lack of trained personnel, absence of media resources (such as maps, charts, CD ROM, tapes, TV and computers); and absence of furniture (e.g. Circulation desk, catalogue cabinet etc).*

On the above, Alabi and Elaturoti (2009) identified poor funding as the problem. This calls for a re-examination of standards which have been set since 20th century and what is happening in Nigeria.

School Library Standards

School libraries being the nerve centre of knowledge in primary and secondary schools have the school library guidelines which envisions a world of inclusion, equity of opportunity and justice to be implemented in the 21st century context (AASL, 2018). This is in recognition of the impact school libraries have on the learning process and general development of the child and it is the librarian's job to create facts and promote active reading for meaningful learning, not only in classroom lessons but to be generally knowledgeable.

Udofia (1997) stated that the government of Nigeria realizes that the library is indispensable to children's learning, therefore the National Policy on Education articulated government's role in ensuring actualization of school library roles in the learning process. It stated that:

government will provide junior libraries for primary school children.
Libraries are already being incorporated into new primary schools being put up as part of the plan for Universal Free Primary Education (UFPE) Scheme.

It went on to add that

government will ensure that suitable textbooks and libraries are provided for schools to promote sound and effective teaching (NPE, 1989).

The above shows clearly the neglect of the role of the librarian whereas this was not so at the international scene.

As far back as the 20th century precisely in 1999, the Association of American School Libraries (AASL) articulated in the vision of New School Library Standards that its development required the services of qualified school library personnel.

On this IFLA in collaboration with UNESCO (IFLA, 2022) recommended in its manifesto that government through their ministries be responsible for education urging them to develop strategies and policies and plan to implement the principles of the manifesto which included among others;

- *Equitable access to learning commons in primary and secondary school library environments, resources and differentiated instructional opportunities for all ... regardless of age, gender, race and orientation.*
- *Access to school library program services and collections should be based on the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and should not be subject to censorship.*

It also articulated that the school library programme is essential to every long-term education and that it is the responsibility of the local, regional and national authorities to support school library programs through legislature and policies which ensure adequate and sustained funding for

- *qualified library professionals*
- *materials*
- *technologies*
- *facilities*
- *life-long professional learning and*
- *must be free of charge.*

One begins to wonder looking at our schools today; some without what can be called a library at all, others with designated rooms without resources, in some such rooms the designated libraries house the establishment's junk Where is the inclusion, where is the “show of value” (inclusiveness for the school library?).

Nigerian government, which according to IFLA/UNESCO recommendation has not been ignorant of the plight and marginalisation of school libraries and absolute non-inclusiveness at the helm of library services came up with the Ministerial Strategic Plan for Education (FMOE Strategic Plan; 2017) tagged “Education for Change” in recognition of the critical role of the school library in improving teaching outcomes decried these challenges facing school library services to include:

- *Inadequate funding*
- *Absence of professionals especially at the basic education and post-basic education levels*
- *The dearth of functional libraries*
- *Absence of National School Library Policy*
- *Inadequate application of information technology (IT)*
- *Inadequate capacity building for librarians*
- *Poor attitude and perception of library as necessary education support*
- *Obsolescence of available resources (or complete absence of resources)*
- *The pupils/students textbook ratio is identified as 1:5 – 1:9.*

To address the above issues, the strategic plan recommended the following strategies

- *increase in budgetary allocation*
- *recruitment and development of qualified/certified librarians to manage libraries*
- *enhance compulsory professional development*
- *equip libraries with current collection in hard copies and electronic formats*
- *establish functional libraries in schools*
- *motivate librarians and library officers.*

Provision Version Implementation – Literature review

The above show problems identified and solutions proffered. But how much attention has been given to the implementation of the strategies proffered? This is the problem at hand and the need for a voice for school library development.

Inadequate Funding

The strategic plan identified inadequate funding as a major problem of school library development and recommended increased budgetary allocation. Interestingly, this condition has been allowed to linger till today. A study conducted by Elaturoti as reported in Akerele, Afolabi and Awoniyi (2018) concluded that poor funding was the bane of school library development and suggested that measures be put in place to arrest the ugly situation. In another study conducted by Udofia and Aloysius (2018), school principals were discovered to either be unaware of the availability of any such provision or have never accessed it. This makes it difficult for school libraries to receive attention, contrary to the provision of the policy.

This also contradicts Udofia & Aloysius's (2018) assertion, quoting Aguolu & Aguolu (2002) that libraries are meant to give their users unlimited opportunities for reading. They also added that children are to participate in today's individualised reading process. Children, they asserted should be given access to the overloaded information resources available globally just as they are fully utilized by patrons of academic and special libraries. This puts school library users in a disadvantaged position, makes them marginalized and non-inclusive.

Absence of Functional Libraries

Functional libraries consist of qualified staff, availability of resources and competent services. The alternative is what is obtainable in Nigeria. This has been identified by the Nigeria Strategic Plan as a problem and the solution was to be that libraries should be equipped with current collections hard copies and electronic formats.

If hard copies of resources are hard to find in school libraries; even with the given ratio of 1:9. Where is the hope of finding electronic resources? A study conducted by Hassan as quoted in Udofia and Aloysius (2018) reported that “hardly can one find a school library media centre (SLMC) in Nigeria with internet facilities.

Staff Recruitment

On the issue of recruitment and deployment of qualified and certified librarians to manage school libraries, this is only a mirage. As observed in the strategic plan and generally, many school managers do not even seem to recognize the need for specialists running school libraries. Recently, a study conducted on the state of school libraries in Uyo had a change of title because public schools could not be studied as they hardly have libraries at all; let alone staff. The system has failed to recognise the right personnel for school libraries hence the employment of other people to man school libraries thus bringing about inefficiency and underdevelopment of children and their learning skills. This corroborates with Gbadamosi's (2011) assertion that for school libraries to function effectively the factor of qualified personnel must be considered. The question now is “Are there no qualified librarians to man school libraries?” Elaturoti (2011) as reported by Shabi & Oyedapo (2021) had it that in most secondary schools, it is the English or Literature teacher that is usually saddled with the additional responsibility of manning the school library in addition to his teaching. “The teacher opens the library when he is free, otherwise the library is kept under lock and key” when library schools are graduating librarians every year.

Staff Underdevelopment

Being a teacher librarian in Nigeria is a dead end job (Shabi & Oyedapo, 2021). The policy stipulates that there should be mandatory compulsory development. That is, that capacity building for the teacher librarians or information specialists is imperative. Refusal to implement this policy poses a big threat to viable school libraries. Qualified staff are neither employed nor developed for effective service delivery, especially to cope with current global trends. Even government owned secondary and primary schools have no standard libraries with qualified and competent staff. At the international level, Dike, Pederson, Oberg & Wright quoted by Ngwuchukwu (2021) reported that in their own various countries, that school libraries began to develop only when the government recognised the need for school libraries/librarians and supported them by setting aside funds and making laws for school library development.

Poor Attitude and Perception of School Library as Necessary Education Support

Lastly, in 2018, a festschrift was written in honour of Professor D. F. Elaturoti on “Library Automation: The Nigerian Experience”. One would have thought that with all his innovation, training and advocacy for school media librarianship, experts in this area would write articles on school libraries and their state of automation in the country. Ironically, only three chapters were written on school libraries. The rest, fourteen in number were on academic libraries. This is only eighteen percent (18%) of the research in the festschrift of the Father of school Librarianship in Nigeria. This is a clear picture of the state of marginalization and non-inclusiveness of school libraries on the whole even among librarians.

If inclusion is the act of ensuring that all feel a sense of belonging;

- *where then is the inclusiveness of the school library?*
- *whereas today's school library user is technology savvy, why is he denied the opportunity to use technology the guided way by his school library?*

- *why is he allowed to just roam the net using Facebook, etc and face the danger of being misinformed?*
- *where is the equity, fairness and strong sense of belonging for school library users?*

Should the SLMC users continue to operate in hope, optimism and action, hoping that stakeholders' promises will come to fruition for necessary facilities to be put in place?

This is not inclusiveness.

Conclusion

From the foregone, it is seen that there is no inclusiveness for school libraries. Whereas school libraries should also enjoy rich libraries and updates of stock using print resources and online resources, the reality is a far cry. This makes school libraries feel unvalued and unintegrated in the information service world. School libraries will only serve their purposes when the provision articulated matches the implementation.

Recommendations

To forestall the problems listed above:

Increased budgetary allocation is recommended as lack of funds has been identified as a major source of underdevelopment of school libraries to enable school library users also feel a sense of satisfaction in their information service delivery as in other sectors.

The Nigerian Library Association should place an embargo on the employment of non-librarians to the position of librarians with such designation and as stated in the Ministerial Strategic Plan, ensure the need for school libraries to be supplied with relevant textbooks, media and IT resources to enable them to attain learning outcomes benchmarks.

The school libraries sector of NLA should make a strong case for inclusiveness so that the sector does not become moribund. There is an urgent need to call for the formulation of a functional National Library and Information Services Policy for all library sectors.

The Nigerian School Library Association should make a case for a feasible school library policy formulation and implementation and emphasise implementation through periodic checks just as they check other facilities in the academic institutions.

Federal Ministry of Education must be made aware that all library users whether children or adults, in academic or school libraries, should be treated with dignity and respect and deserve equal attention in information services.

Lecturers who teach courses in SLMC and others should make a strong case to the State Ministries of Education for the development of school libraries knowing that the failure to lay a proper foundation at this level has brought about truncated outcomes that are seen in tertiary institutions today.

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SOCIAL MEDIA AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: THE ROLE OF LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIANS IN PROMOTING INNOVATIVE SERVICES

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Abstract

The researchers adopted contents analysis and literature search to highlight the importance of social media and community engagement, and how librarians has embraced the use of social media to provide services to various communities it served. Librarians are at the front of providing information services to respective communities by repositioning its services to meet the information needs of the society at large. Again, librarian played significant role in promoting innovative information services, it importance to note that service delivery is geared towards meeting the information demands of users. The paper concluded that with the inclusion community engagement, librarians and libraries will continue to be relevant as they strive to surpass the information needs of the community they serve. The paper recommended that; librarians and libraries should as a matter of urgency, embrace the use of social media and other online technologies to enhance effective information services delivery to the community it serves. There is need for librarians to engage in more ICT capacity building to obtain digital competences to meet the demands of the digital era. The parent bodies of all types of libraries should adequately fund the library for optimum service delivery. Finally, the library managers should embrace motivational strategies that will help to reposition librarians for best standards and practices.

KEYWORDS.. Social Media, Libraries, Librarians, Community engagement, Innovative.

INTRODUCTION

Social media sites are fast becoming very popular means of both interpersonal and public communication in Nigeria. Social networking sites are modern interactive communications channels through which people connect to one another, share ideas, experiences, pictures, messages and information of interest. Boyd and Ellison (2007) defines social networking sites as: web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. They are interactive networks which information and communication technology (ICTs) be quench to the modern society though the instrumentality of the internet and the telecommunication gadgets.

Social Media is a tool that can be used to engage and communicate with multiple audiences (Oladipo, 2024). She continued, Social media encompasses all the platforms and apps that allow people, creators, and businesses to communicate with one another, create [online communities](#), exchange ideas, and share content. From Instagram and TikTok to YouTube and WhatsApp, the social media platforms that users have at their disposal are endless. While social media is mainly used by individual people, brands and content creators, librarians can also use social media to connect with the large community of users, build their brand, and shared valuable information.

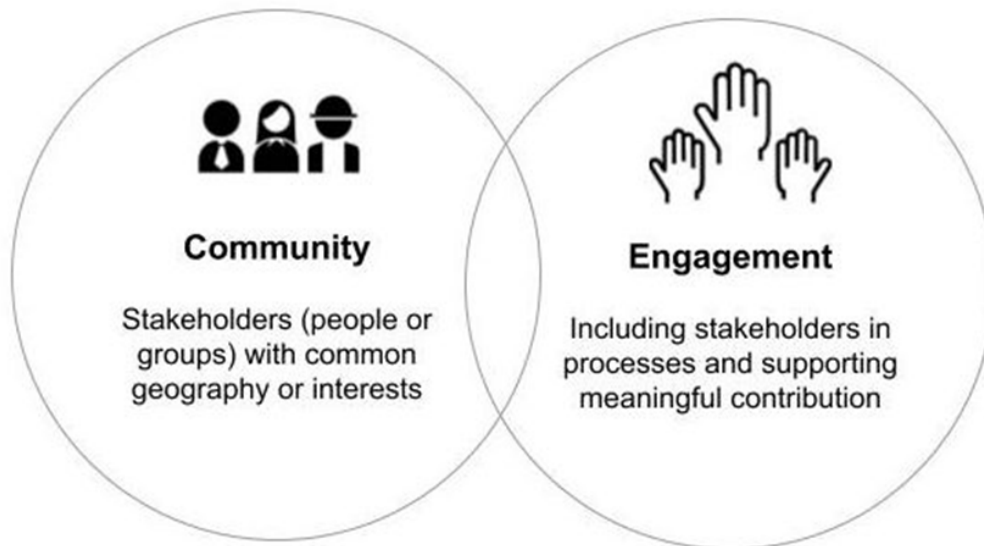
Chinemerem (2022) stated that, Social media has completely revolutionized the way modern-day society communicates and shares ideas, information, and content. What really separates social media from other types of media is that it's a two-way style of communication rather than a one-way communication style built to deliver information with no way to reply back, such as newspapers, radio, and television (Emily, 2023). The internet makes it possible to expand the networks and to increase the possibilities for communicating with wider audience on the globe. The interactive area of the new media confers an unprecedented popularity on them. Also the ubiquity of the social networking sites within their short period of arrival is unparalleled in the aims of media industry.

University of Florida (2023) clearly stated in a research that As of January 2023, there are [4.76 billion active social media users](#) around the globe, which means about 59% of the total global population uses social media.

This number increased by 3% compared to the previous year. Here are the [top 6 social networking platforms of 2023](#), ranked by Monthly Active Users (MAUs):

1. **Facebook:** 2.96 billion MAUs
2. **YouTube:** 2.2 billion MAUs
3. **WhatsApp:** 2 billion MAUs
4. **Instagram:** 2 billion MAUs
5. **WeChat:** 1.26 billion MAUs
6. **TikTok:** 1 billion MAUs

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Community engagement involves taking a *strategic* approach to an organization's community-based [stakeholders](#). This includes building relationships, developing communications, and managing interactions in order to achieve specific outcomes for the organization and the community itself (Hussey, 2023). Emily (2023) explained, Community engagement is the action of interacting with your audiences on your social media platforms with the purpose of building a positive, trusting, and loyal community. Community engagement is always linked with social media engagement which is the measurement of how people are communicating with the social media accounts and content, refers to likes/favorites, comments, direct messages, shares, retweets, saves, link clicks, and mentions. You can see how these two terms go hand-in-hand, the more community engagement you engage in, the better your social media engagement numbers should be.

Likewise, these engagements with your community go beyond promoting your products or services but include serving as a information tool for the community, speaking on important societal, political, and education topics, and showing support for key players in your industry. To expand further this concept, Hussey continued by stating that, community engagement is a *type of stakeholder engagement*. Other terms used to talk about community engagement include [civic engagement](#), public consultation, public participation, community consultation, community collaboration, [stakeholder management](#), and community management.

To better understand the meaning of community engagement, Ryan, et al (2022) went further to break down each word:

- **Community** – Groups of people based on common geography (country, state, region, suburb, neighbourhood, etc.) or common interest (customs, values, religion, needs, etc.), which may include citizens, businesses, residents, stakeholders, and more
- **Engagement** – The act of including stakeholders in activities and communications and allowing them to contribute in a meaningful way

The [United Nations Community Engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace](#) also includes a usual definition for what community engagement is: "Community engagement" is a strategic process to directly involve local populations in all aspects of decision-making, policy development and implementation to strengthen local ownership, capacities and community structures as well as to improve transparency, accountability and optimal resource allocations across diverse settings. **LIBRARIES**

Library may be seen as a vital organ, the *primus inter pares* component of formal education and partners' education in the socialization and perpetuation of the human race. The library remains one of the critical educational facilities any institution cannot do without in its bid to maximally achieve its goals and objectives. The role of libraries in research, teaching and learning processes in the institutions of higher learning cannot be overemphasized. This is the case since the development of any meaningful educational program greatly depends on the library. Thus, the quality of the library in terms of the holdings to a great extent determines the quality and rate of any socio- economic and political development of a nation. A library could be special, national, public, school or even academic in nature. Special libraries are found in specialized institutions such as banks, law firms, companies etc, National and public libraries are located in countries and states similarly while school libraries are those found in primary, secondary and Teacher Training Colleges. Academic libraries are those found in tertiary institutions like polytechnics, colleges of education and universities. For the purpose of this study, the university library is the main focus (Ubochi, 2022).

The major aim of establishing a library remains, to provide information, dissemination of information to the large community, learning and research activities of the society. The library is one of the vital infrastructures, if not the most vital, in securing maximum returns from a well-designed academic curriculum. It is assumed to be the heart of any university without which the university will not be able to survive on its own.. In this age of knowledge globalization and information explosion, libraries play varied and vital roles in the community where they exist, that is beyond traditional library responsibilities. Libraries therefore serve two complementary purposes namely: provision of information and current awareness services for the immediate community and, the preservation information materials (Ubochi, 2021). Consequently, the library provides an alternative that can make available the information resources for the intellectual growth of both students and lecturers of the university community (Ofodile & Ifijeh, 2013).

Information according to Chinaka in Aliyu (2013) is one of the indispensable agents in human society and is termed a connection

LIBRARIANS

Just as not everyone who works in a hospital is a doctor, not everyone who works in a library is a librarian. There are wide varieties of jobs to be done, and all are important. Whether it's putting the books on the shelves, paying bills, answering questions, hiring staff, or preparing a story time, they all must be done to keep the library running. They are; Pages, Library Assistants or Technicians, Librarians, Library Managers, College/Chief librarian/ Directors and Other Professionals (Oak 2011).

He went further to state that Job titles and descriptions of a librarian;

Librarians; help people with homework and research questions, decide what items to purchase and to discard, offer programs and training, help people use the internet, build websites, and more. Specialized librarians may run computer systems, work with seniors and carryout interlibrary activities, become specialists in a specific subject area, or maintain the records for the online catalogue. Librarian jobs are often full-time, although most libraries also rely on a core of part-time and "substitute" librarians to help cover all of the hours many libraries are open (Nwosu 2009).

According to Asogwa (2014) In a library, you may find several different types of librarians, in addition to a well-trained support staff. Research librarians will help you map out a search effort, while instructional librarians teach you how to access materials. Acquisitions and collections librarians work with one another to obtain new materials and develop existing collections. Children's librarians are experts in early childhood learning. Some librarians have expertise in specific fields like music or medical science, while others specialize in catalog management. Most librarians have specialties that dictate the type of library they work in—public, academic, school or corporate libraries.

Staff of libraries may differ in names because of the peculiarities of the institutions establishing them; but generally they are made up of librarians (professionals) library officers (Para-professionals) library assistants, library attendants, and library porters (non-professionals) (Asogwa 2014). Librarians can be seen as the professionals in the library due to their academic qualification obtained through the institution of higher learning. These set of people are trained in business of obtaining information, maintenance, preservation, dissemination of information to its users through the right means(Ubochi, 2022). The qualifications involve B.LS, M.LS, and PhD in library science and with other professional courses.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Social media is a social instrument of communication. It is a strategy and an outlet for broadcasting/communication. Social media has been defined in several ways. Zhou et al (2022) define social media as websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. According to Bradley (2012) the term Social media refers to the use web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into an interactive dialogue. Kaplan & Haenlein in Saidu & Sani (2022) have described social media as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content.

One-to-, to a many-to-many model, rooted in conversations between authors, people, and peers. Based on the above definitions and the researchers own point of view, Social media can be described as a group of web-based and mobile applications that allow users to share and create knowledge in a real time social interaction. It is user-centric, multi-purpose and it is not time and location bound. Social media consist of various user-driven marketing channels, eg. Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, Youtube, Whatsapp, Instagram, Wechat etc. Social media is being used world-wide for diverse purposes in libraries and information centers for marketing, branding, building customer relationships, reference services, quick dissemination of new information resources. Today technology has endowed information seekers with varied options to satisfy their information needs. Through social media, every librarian can connect straight away with the community using a range of social media channels according to Chore 2023. Ezeani and Igwesi in Saidu& Sani (2022) also noted that social media networks are viable tools for cooperation and sharing of knowledge in an open access platform. Hence, people with common interests are able to share information with each other via a huge variety of social networking sites created specifically to make sharing, communicating, and creating information as simple and efficient as possible. Therefore, Implementation of social networking tools in academic libraries is extremely useful for the improvement and promotion of qualitative library service especially in the public libraries. Libraries need to connect for they no longer have the traditional monopoly of being the only information providers. New technology has confronted librarians and information professionals with a huge challenge to survive and thrive in this digital age, where user community can access online information resources at any time of the day from where ever they are. Therefore all types of libraries and information centers need to engage their immediate community with the available information resources more than ever before.

Social Media use and community/user engagement in library is to connect with library users and to make library programs and services accessible. Social media helps in provides general university news and library events, announcement of new books useful for education and research purposes. Awareness of the library resources and services via social media is to interact with online users (Blakeman and Brown, 2020). Similar attempt by Khan & Bhatti (2022) which reported that social media is important to capture the attention of online users and helps in distance learning and knowledge sharing. Li et al. (2012) further identified marketing of library resources as the most notable achievement of many libraries that have adopted social media. Furthermore, Palmer (2014) has reported that social network advertising is effective in promoting the library at minimal financial cost and its usage is substantial to complement their existing marketing efforts. Alkindi& Al-suqri (2013) further reported that most public libraries use Facebook as a place for marketing themselves and promotes their collections and services.

In relation to the benefits or impact of using social media, prior literatures found the libraries experiencing a gradual increase in library communities such as increase number of followers. Twitter was also found to have higher conversion (click through) rate than Facebook. Taylor and Francis (2014) highlighted that the social media has positive potential to increase engagement between users and library staff and an effective outreach tool which helps librarians to promote the work of their faculty and to connect with broader library community.

Community/Users Engagement with Social Media

Previous studies have shown the positive impact of users' engagement with social media on harnessing library use and establish a networking with library community. Social media tools especially Facebook was found applicable in engaging to college students especially in libraries (Mack, Behler, Roberts & Rimland, 2017). Graham (2020) affirmed that Facebook had facilitated the development of professional relationships in and beyond libraries. He further highlighted that social networking sites (SNS) provide an innovative and effective way of connecting users. Despite these results, Cuddy et al. (2010) believed that Twitter is a potential tool for libraries to engage with users and receive informal questions and feedback. This is also supported by Blakeman and Brown (2020) highlighted that the libraries use Twitter to connect themselves with important information sources. Regardless of social media potential in enhancing users' relationship and connection with the library however, users' attitudes towards using SNS to encourage interaction for educational purposes are not very supportive as reported by several previous studies. On this note, Graham (2020) claimed that students still believe that SNSs are used mainly for communicating with friends, and not suitable for educational purposes. Pempek, Yermolayeva and Calvert (2009) also stated that students do not use Facebook to contact 10 university personnel. Similarly, according to Chu and Johnson (2019) students were found to be uninterested to interact with faculty through SNSs.

It is important to note that, the rate of community/ users' engagement with library social media sites still low. This is evident from the work of Jacobson (2021) which discovered there were only few users' responses on a number of libraries' fan pages, and libraries' Twitter accounts only have a few followers Chu (2019) further added that a low participation rate was found on use of Wiki in six of 21 academic libraries. It is important to note that, the libraries having difficulty in determining the patrons using the library's SNSs tool are among new library users or existing patrons (Sekyere, 2019). In view of this, the libraries should decide on their definition of social media success. Is the goal aims to attract new users into the library? or does it to keep users informed about library matters and engaged with libraries? Though the libraries can define and determine their measures of social media success, the usage rates are need to be

monitored to determine whether the library meet its goals or vice versa. Therefore, the present study attempts to investigate the factors that contribute to the users' engagement with library sites and further investigates the relationship of users' engagement with social media on the library usage.

CHALLENGES OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media as one of the current trend in information explosion, is not still far from some challenges which affects its usage and effectiveness considering the level of development in this part of the world. ICT trends has its own peculiar problems here in Africa and Nigeria as a case study. The following are most listed challenges faced in the use of social media in building a strong community engagement;

- *Social media is open to so many content from various users, thereby making it so easy for proper engagement with the community to get lost.*
- *Social media has less restriction in information sharing, thereby giving room for misinformation and negative feedback from untargeted audience.*
- *Social media as a section of ICT required constant power supply for constant access and proficiency. Inadequate power supply remains a major challenge for good community engagement via social media.*
- *It is cost effectiveness- for an effective community engagement, there is need for steady subscription of data which is cost effective.*
- *Social media lacks information security, thereby limiting the quality of engagement.*
- *Time usage- engagement requires so much time for proper follow up.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper recommended that;

- *Librarians and libraries should as a matter of urgency, embrace the use of social media and other online technologies to enhance effective information services delivery to the community it serves.*
- *There is need for librarians to reskill to obtain digital competences to meet the demands of the digital era.*
- *The parent bodies of all types of libraries should adequately fund the library for optimum service delivery.*
- *Finally, the library managers should embrace motivational strategies that will help to reposition librarians for best standards and practices.*

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STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIP WITH LIBRARIES, LOCAL ORGANISATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS THROUGH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATIONS IN RIVERS STATE

BY

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Abstract

This study discussed Community Engagement through Library Collaboration: Strengthening Relationship with Local Organizations and Institutions in Rivers State. The population of this study comprises 40 lecturers from the two state universities in Rivers State. A purposive sampling technique was adopted for this study so the entire population was used. The questionnaire was developed by the researcher called Community Engagement through Library Collaboration: Strengthening Relationship with Local Organization and Institutions Questionnaire (CETLCSRWLOIQ). The instrument's reliability coefficient of 0.711 was found using the Cronbach Alpha. Using the SPSS version 25 computer programme, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis was performed on the study questions and hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The result showed that there was a positive and high relationship between faculty deliberative dialogues through library collaboration and institutions in Rivers State. It was also found that community engagement through library collaboration promotes the relationship between local organizations and institutions in Rivers State. The study recommended that Faculties should always liaise with the library in all their deliberations.

Key Words: Community Engagement, Library, Collaboration, Local Organization, Institutions

Introduction

The cornerstone of any academic institution is its library, serving as the primary hub for meeting the information needs of the academic community, including researchers, students, instructors, administrators, and other personnel. Traditionally, academic libraries have been pivotal in facilitating the dissemination of research findings and supporting curriculum needs (Lawal, 2004). Library collaboration, as described by Lisedunetwork (2023), involves libraries and related institutions working together to achieve common goals, share resources, and enhance services. This collaborative approach, which can occur at various levels and involve partnerships with diverse stakeholders, is essential for providing comprehensive and accessible information resources to meet the needs of faculty members and diverse users.

Local organizations, such as faculties, departments, researchers, and students, engage with one another through library collaboration to fulfill their academic needs via community engagement (Yousef, 2010). Community engagement through library collaboration is vital for improving teaching, learning, and research processes and supporting the development of information competencies (Nwegbu, Echezona, & Obijiofo, 2011). Fadehan and Ojo emphasized the positive impact of community engagement through library collaboration on various aspects of the academic community's learning process, including lifelong learning, information literacy, and critical thinking skills.

Despite the significance of library collaboration in promoting information sharing and community development, there is limited understanding of its impact on strengthening relationships between local organizations and institutions. Challenges such as overseeing partnerships, traversing multiple faculties,

and addressing accountability issues hinder the accomplishment of partnership goals (Logue, 2007). However, augmenting organizational competencies through cooperation presents opportunities to enhance outcomes and effectiveness (Logue, 2007).

In light of these considerations, this study aims to investigate Community Engagement through Library Collaboration: Strengthening the Relationship between Local Organizations and Institutions in Rivers State. By examining the impact of library collaboration on relationship-building within local organizations and institutions, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics and potential benefits of collaborative initiatives in the academic setting. Through empirical investigation and analysis, the study aims to shed light on the efficacy of community engagement through library collaboration and its implications for fostering stronger relationships between local organizations and institutions.

Statement of the problem

Notwithstanding, the relevancy of library collaboration in promoting information resources sharing, politics, research, planning, economic activities, education activities and enlightenment are inevitable and indispensable in community development. Little is known about the impact of community engagement through library collaboration to strengthen relationships between local organizations and institutions. Several engagements and reports have identified potential features of effective library collaboration, such as deliberative dialogue, research, workshops, conferences between faculty lecturers, students, scholars and many more. However, there is evidence that it is challenging for these partnerships to accomplish their declared goals. Many partnerships prove to be difficult to oversee and traverse the many faculties, departments, organizations, communities and accountability issues they face. Once the matter is closer to achieving its purpose, even the most established partnerships can appear less robust and ready to create the relationship between the local organization and the institution than their individualized faculties' speciality policies might suggest. Scholars posit that augmenting an organization's competencies and abilities may yield superior outcomes; cooperation presents businesses with chances to acquire novel proficiencies, handle interdependencies, distribute hazards, and enhance efficacy by diminishing transaction expenses. Hence this study Community Engagement through Library Collaboration: Strengthening Relationship between Local Organization and Institutions in Rivers State.

Aims and objectives of the study:

This study aims to determine community engagement through library collaboration: strengthening relationships with local organizations and institutions in Rivers State. Specifically, the objective of the study is to:

1. Verify how faculty deliberative dialogues through library collaboration relate to strengthening institutions in Rivers State.
2. Investigate how research engagements through library collaboration relate to strengthening institutions in Rivers State.
3. Examine how workshops through library collaboration relate to strengthening institutions in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do faculty deliberative dialogues through library collaboration relate to strengthening institutions in Rivers State?
2. How do research engagements through library collaboration relate to strengthening institutions in Rivers State?
3. How do workshops through library collaboration relate to strengthening institutions in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The investigation was guided by the following hypotheses, which were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

1. Faculty deliberative dialogues through library collaboration do not significantly relate to strengthening institutions in Rivers State.
2. Research engagements through library collaboration do not significantly relate to strengthening institutions in Rivers State.
3. Workshops through library collaboration do not significantly relate to strengthening institutions in Rivers State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Community Engagement through Library Collaboration

Sally (2023) opined that community engagement operates on the democratic principle that individuals affected by a matter influencing their community should participate in the decision-making process regarding it, which involves collective participation among members for effective service delivery. Leech, Jing and Meagan (2023) stated that Community engagement is the process by which organizations build connections with their customers or users. This involves active participation from parties, and businesses offering valuable content or services while patrons share and use. The goal here is to foster a sense of belonging among members that propels them towards becoming loyal users of the library. Well-engaged users base can significantly contribute to library expansion. They not only bring repeat library visitation but also serve as ambassadors who promote the library usage organically through word-of-mouth referrals.

American Library Association (2023) said that Community engagement involves collaborating with various community members, including library patrons, residents, faculty, scholars, students, and partner organizations. The goal is to address issues that enhance the library experience for its patrons. Libraries, as advocates for lifelong learning, serve as spaces to foster curiosity, provide access to technology, and facilitate the exploration of new ideas, hobbies, and career paths. They further stated that library collaboration has become a powerful force in enhancing community engagement and outreach programmes. By working with diverse partners, libraries can transcend traditional boundaries, amplify their impact, and better serve the multifaceted needs of their communities. This [collaborative](#) spirit not only improves the library profession but also strengthens relationships with communities, institutions, and local organizations, reaffirming the vital role of libraries as agents of positive change in the lives of the people they serve.

Yousef (2010) stated that when it comes to helping their parent institutions achieve their goals, university libraries are essential. Faculty members and librarians work together to teach students how to use the information resources available in the library. Nayana (2008) highlighted the importance of teacher and librarian cooperation in enhancing students' educational experiences, conducting workshops, seminars, research activities, and assisting them in cultivating their information competencies. Effective library-faculties collaboration is to make information resources available for academic exercise. Library-faculties collaboration enhances the provision of the right materials for each department in all faculties, this in turn straightens the relationship between local organizations and institutions.

Hollander, Sharon, Barbara, Herbert and Karen (2004) concluded that teachers and librarians in the faculty share common objectives and interests. They both aim for students to gain a deeper comprehension and utilization of library resources such as books, journals, and intellectual materials. Their shared goals include improving student literacy, especially in information literacy, and fostering students' abilities as writers, critical thinkers, problem solvers, and self-directed learners throughout their lives. Lastly, they both aspire to foster a vibrant social and learning community on campus.

According to Yousef (2010) Library collaboration refers to libraries and related institutions working together to achieve common goals, share resources, and enhance services to benefit their communities. This collaborative approach involves pooling expertise, knowledge, and resources to create synergies to improve efficiency, expanded access to information, and innovative initiatives. Library collaboration can occur at various levels, including within a single library system, a library with faculties, among libraries within a region or country, and even across international borders. It may involve partnerships with educational institutions, government agencies, non-profit organizations, industry entities, and other stakeholders, all aimed at leveraging collective strengths to advance the mission of providing comprehensive and accessible information services to diverse audiences. As libraries adapt to technological advancements and changing user needs, collaboration becomes increasingly crucial in traversing the evolving landscape of information management and service delivery.

Lisedunetwork (2023) opined that library collaboration refers to libraries and related institutions working together to achieve common goals, share resources, and enhance services to benefit their communities. This collaborative approach involves pooling expertise, knowledge, and resources to create synergies to improve efficiency, expanded access to information, and innovative initiatives. Library collaboration can occur at various levels, including within a single library system, among libraries within a region or country, and even across international borders. It may involve partnerships with educational institutions, government agencies, non-profit organizations, industry entities, and other stakeholders, all aimed at leveraging collective strengths to advance the mission of providing comprehensive and accessible information services to diverse audiences. As libraries adapt to technological advancements and changing user needs, collaboration becomes increasingly crucial in navigating the evolving landscape of information management and delivery.

Lisedunetwork (2023) further stated that Library collaboration have many opportunities to enhance community engagement and programmes, they stated the following strategies that libraries can employ to achieve this goal:

- **Community Needs Assessment:** Effective collaboration begins with understanding the unique needs and aspirations of the community (faculties, scholars, students and other users). Libraries can collaborate with local groups to conduct comprehensive needs assessments, ensuring that the programmes are tailored towards the specific requirements of the people they serve.
- **Fostering Cross-Institutional Partnerships:** Libraries can collaborate with a wide array of partners, such as local organizations, schools, universities, museums, local companies, governmental bodies, nonprofits, and so on. These partnerships create opportunities for joint initiatives, including literacy programmes, cultural events, and resource sharing, thereby extending their reach and impacting library services.
- **Amplifying Resources and Expertise:** Collaborative efforts allow libraries to pool resources and expertise. Libraries can share their collections and tap into the specialized knowledge of partner organizations. This enriches the quality and diversity of offerings, benefiting the community.
- **Cultural Celebrations and Events:** Collaborative partnerships with cultural organizations or ethnic associations enable libraries to celebrate diversity through cultural events, art exhibitions, and heritage festivals. These events promote inclusivity and foster cross-cultural understanding within the community.
- **Tailored Educational Programmes:** Collaborative efforts with parent schools or institutions can lead to specialized educational programmes. Libraries can offer workshops, seminars and align their services with the academic needs of students.
- **Digital Collaborations and Virtual Engagement:** The digital age allows libraries to collaborate beyond geographical boundaries. Virtual events, webinars, and online resources created through collaborative efforts extend outreach to a global audience.
- **Advisory Boards and Community Input:** Establishing advisory boards comprising community representatives ensures that programmes align with local needs. Collaborative decision-making fosters a sense of ownership and inclusion among community members.
- **Cross-Training and Skill Sharing:** Encouraging staff from different faculties to engage in cross-training and skill-sharing enhances the collective expertise and knowledge within the library community. This benefits outreach programmes by ensuring staff are well-equipped to meet community needs.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the correlational research design. The population of the study consisted of 40 Lecturers in the two state Universities in Rivers State. The population comprised 20 librarians from the two state universities libraries (Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education) and 20 lecturers from the faculties. Purposive sampling techniques were used, this was determined through the recommendation of Gall and Borg (2007) which advised that when a population concerns tens, all the population should be used, and when the population is 2000, 5000, a minimum of ten per cent (10%) may be used. A set of instruments was used for data collection titled Community Engagement Through Library Collaboration: Strengthening Relationship With Local Organization And Institutions Questionnaire (CETLCSRWLOIQ). "The instrument was scored on a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA): 4 points, Agree (A): 3 points, Disagree (D): 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD): 1 point." The CETLCSRWLOIQ is a 20-item instrument.

The instrument was made up of two Sections, A and B. Section A was used to elicit information about Community Engagement Through Library Collaboration from the variables that form the research question while Section B seek for Strengthening Relationship With Local Organization And Institutions in Rivers State. The reliability coefficients of the instruments of 0.711 for CETLCSRWLOIQ were ascertained by giving the instrument to ten State University teachers who weren't in the target audience. Cronbach Alpha was used to assess the instrument scores. The Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis was used to analyze the research questions and the hypotheses.

Findings and Results

Research Question 1: How do faculty deliberative dialogues through library collaboration relate to strengthen institutions in Rivers State?

Table 1: Correlation Analysis of faculty deliberative dialogues through library collaboration relate to strengthen institutions in in Rivers State

Variables	\bar{x}	SD	N	R	Remarks
faculty deliberative dialogues through library collaboration	3.19	0.62			Relationship
			40	0.674	is High
strengthen institutions	2.99	0.48			

Table 1 presents the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis of relationship between faculty deliberative dialogues through library collaboration and institutions in Rivers State. The computed correlation coefficient (r) = 0.674, indicating a positive and high relationship between faculty deliberative dialogues through library collaboration and institutions in Rivers State. This implies faculty deliberative dialogues through library collaboration can be used to predict relationships between local organizations and institutions in Rivers State to an extent.

Research Questions 2: How do research engagements through library collaboration relate to strengthen institutions in Rivers State?

Table 2: Correlation Analysis of research engagements through library collaboration relate to strengthen institutions in in Rivers State

Variables	\bar{x}	SD	N	R	Remarks
Research engagements through library collaboration	3.08	0.72	40		Relationship
				0.721	is High
strengthen institutions	2.99	0.48			

Table 2 presents the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis of relationship between research engagements through library collaboration and institutions in Rivers State. The computed correlation coefficient (r) = 0.721, indicating a positive and high relationship between research engagements through library collaboration and institutions in Rivers State. This implies research engagements through library collaboration can be used to predict relationships between local organizations and institutions in Rivers State to a high extent.

Research Question 3: How do workshops through library collaboration relate to strengthen institutions in Rivers State?

Table 3: Correlation Analysis of Workshops through library collaboration relate to strengthen institutions in in Rivers State

Variables	\bar{x}	SD	N	R	Remarks
Research engagements through library collaboration	2.89	0.53			Relationship
			40	0.591	is Moderate
strengthen institutions	2.99	0.48			

Table 1 presents Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between Workshops through library collaboration and institutions in Rivers State. The computed correlation coefficient (r) = 0.591, indicating positive moderate relationship between workshops through library collaboration and institutions in Rivers State. This implies that workshops through library collaboration can be used to predict relationships between local organizations and institutions in Rivers State to a moderate extent.

Hypothesis 1: Faculties' deliberative dialogues through library collaboration do not significantly relate to strengthening institutions in Rivers State.

Table 4: Correlation Analysis of faculty deliberative dialogues through library collaboration related to strengthening institutions in in Rivers State

Variables	\bar{X}	SD	N	R	df	Sig	Decision
faculty deliberative dialogues through library collaboration	3.19	0.62					
			40	0.674	38	.000	Reject Ho
strengthen institutions	2.99	0.48					

The result in Table 4 reveals that the correlation coefficient between faculties' deliberative dialogues through library collaboration and institutions is 0.674. The probability level (p-value) or significance level of the two-tailed test is .000, which is less than the 0.05 alpha level that was used for this investigation. Therefore, the hypothesis that says faculties' deliberative dialogues through library collaboration do not significantly relate to strengthening institutions in Rivers State is rejected. That is, there is indeed the significant relationship between faculties' deliberative dialogues through library collaboration and institutions in Rivers State represented by $r = 0.674$, $df = 38$, $p = 0.000 < p = 0.05$ chosen in this study.

Hypothesis 2: Research engagements through library collaboration do not significantly relate to strengthening institutions in Rivers State.

Table 5: Correlation Analysis of research engagements through library collaboration related to strengthening Institutions in Rivers State

Variables	\bar{X}	SD	N	R	df	Sig.	Decision
Research engagements through library collaboration	3.08	0.72					
			40	0.721	38	.000	Reject Ho
strengthen institutions	2.99	0.48					

engagements through library collaboration and institutions is 0.721. The likelihood level (p-value) or significance level of the two-tailed test is .000, which is less than the 0.05 alpha level that was used for this investigation. Therefore, the hypothesis that says research engagements through library collaboration do not significantly relate to strengthening institutions in Rivers State is rejected. That is, there is indeed a significant relationship between research engagements through library collaboration and institutions in Rivers State represented by $r = 0.712$, $df = 38$, $p = 0.000 < p = 0.05$ chosen in this study.

Hypothesis 3: Workshops through library collaboration do not significantly relate to strengthening institutions in Rivers State.

Table 6: Correlation Analysis of Workshops through library collaboration relate to strengthen institutions in in Rivers State

Variables	\bar{X}	SD	N	R	df	Sig.	Decision
Research engagements through library collaboration	2.89	0.53					
			40	0.591		.000	Reject Ho
strengthen institutions	2.99	0.48					

The result in Table 5 presents that the correlation coefficient between workshops through library collaboration and institutions is 0.591. The probability level (p-value) or significance level of the two-tailed test is .000, which is less than the 0.05 alpha level that was used for this investigation. Therefore, the hypothesis that says workshops through library collaboration do not significantly relate to strengthening institutions in Rivers State is rejected. That is, there is indeed a significant relationship between research engagements through library collaboration and institutions in Rivers State represented by $r = 0.591$, $df = 38$, $p = 0.000 < p = 0.05$ chosen in this study.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

This study investigated Community Engagement Through Library Collaboration: Strengthening Relationship with local Organizations and Institutions in Rivers State and found that faculties' deliberative

dialogues, research engagement as well and workshops through Library Collaboration are significantly related to Strengthening institutions in Rivers State. It was also found out that faculties' deliberative dialogues through Library Collaboration significantly related to Strengthening institutions in Rivers State. The findings of this present study are similar to that of Nayana (2008) developing a conceptual model for collaboration between faculty and the library, this is based on an in-depth review of the literature and incorporates strategies employed by librarians at the University of Colombo in their collaboration with academics. He found out rapid development of institutions working in collaboration and making synergies. Also, this study reveals that research engagement through Library Collaboration significantly related to strengthening institutions in Rivers State.

The findings of this present study are similar to that of Fadehan and Ojo who looked at a study on faculty-library interactions at Southwest Universities in Nigeria. They found out that research engagement through collaboration with library strengthening institutions. More so, this study reveals that workshops through Library Collaboration significantly related to strengthening institutions in Rivers State. The findings of this present study are similar to that of Bharat and William (2019) on An Examination of a Collection Development and Management Course as a Case Study of the Community Engagement Model in Library and Information Science Education. They found out that workshops is part of what they engage in community engagement through library to strengthening institutions

Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to determine Community Engagement through library collaboration: Strengthening Relationship with Local Organization and Institutions in Rivers State. This study found that the relationship is strengthened between Local Organizations and Institutions in Rivers State. Results in all the hypotheses showed a positive relationship. Therefore, faculties' deliberative dialogues, research engagement and workshops through Library collaboration independently has become a powerful force in enhancing community engagement through library collaboration to promote relationships between local organizations and institutions in Rivers State

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following suggestions are given in light of the conclusions and results:

1. Faculties should always liaise with the Library in all their deliberations.
2. Research engagement should be done through Library collaboration.
3. Workshops should be through Library collaboration.

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SURVEY OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN TWO STAFF SECONDARY SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN SOUTH WEST, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The school library is a school's physical, and digital learning space where reading, inquiry, research, thinking, imagination, and creativity are central to students' information-to-knowledge journey and their personal, social, and cultural growth. The paper surveys the diversity and inclusion in two staff secondary school libraries in South West, Nigeria. Qualitative research design was adopted for the study. Staff school of the Federal University of Technology Akure and International School of Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH), Ogbomosho were used for the study. Observation and interview were used to collect data in the two school libraries. The Library staff in the two school libraries were interviewed to elicit information. Thematic analysis was used to analyse data collected. Findings revealed that staff in one of the selected libraries were without any relevant certificate in library and information science. Resources provided for students and staff in the two schools were arranged in open and closed shelves without using any form of international standard cataloguing and classification tools and without considering their students' socio-cultural background. One of the libraries has a space for computers, cabling but connection to the internet is yet to be completed. Lack of guiding rules and regulations or policies stipulating acquisition of information resources was identified as a major challenge confronting inclusive acquisition of information resources. The study concludes that there should be provision of adequate resources and equipment for equitable service delivery to the clientele of diverse cultures, religions, ethnic groups, etc.

Key words: Diversity, inclusion, school libraries, South West, Nigeria

Introduction

School library is the type of library established and found in nursery, primary, secondary, nursing schools, and technical colleges. A school library (School Library Media Centre) is a library within a school where pupils/students, staff (teaching and non-teaching), and parents have access to and make use of information resources provided in the school (public and private). According to the International Federation of Libraries and Associations-IFLA (2015), a school library is a school's physical, and digital learning space where reading, inquiry, research, thinking, imagination, and creativity are central to students' information-to-knowledge journey and their personal, social, and cultural growth. The school library is the bedrock of the inculcation of reading culture and lifelong reading to children at tender ages. The modern school library and resource centre is not just a collection of books and related resources nor is a place where books are housed but it is a system designed to select, acquire, organize, preserve, and make information resources available to needed users. According to Fayose (2003), a good school library resource centre with its staff in cooperation with classroom teachers can, and should develop good reading and information seeking habits of both teachers and pupils/students by providing opportunities for listening to stories, reading a wide variety of books, viewing audio visual resources and teaching reading and information search techniques. She further stated that the library also provides for group discussions, additional materials for project work, and the like. The wide variety of resources also leads to the exploration and discovery of answers and information that are not available in class textbooks.

The school library is expected to be equipped with both physical and digital information resources and equipment for the use of pupils/students, staff, and parents. Adequate and up-to-date provision of these resources is a must for a school library. The school library is expected to provide enough space for information resources, furniture (reading tables and chairs, staff tables and chairs, shelves etc), staff offices, and reading areas. Physical and information resources provided in the library are to be managed by a professional called a librarian with the assistance and support of media technologists, library officers, library assistants, porters, securities, and cleaners. The school library must be manned by a professional. All

schools and children's libraries should be manned by academically and professionally qualified personnel. One reason, why school libraries have remained ineffective appendages of the schools is because they are manned by incompetent and ill-equipped staff.

The school librarian has the responsibility of instructing, managing, leading, collaborating, and community engagement. The school librarian performs the role of a teacher, instructional partner, information specialty, and programme administration. The school librarian implements curricula relating to information literacy and inquiry for the children. Researchers have demonstrated that school libraries have a positive impact on student academic achievement through more than 60 studies that have been conducted in 19 United States (US) states, and one Canadian province. The study found that students with access to a well-supported school library media programme with a qualified school media specialist scored higher on reading assessments regardless of their socio-economic status. In another survey conducted in Ohio, it was revealed that 99.4% of students surveyed believed that their school librarians and school library media programmes helped them succeed in school (Wikipedia, 2023).

The surrounding (environment) where the school library is located must be centrally located, free from noise, and aesthetically attractive to encourage users most especially pupils/students to always dream of making use of the library. The resources and services in the school library are expected to be equitably distributed to various sections, and classes, and all the subjects being taught in the school should be represented in the school library to cater to the needs of every child in the school.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

- i. *Find out the qualification of staff in the selected staff secondary school libraries in South West Nigeria;*
- ii. *Investigate how information resources are organized in the selected staff secondary school libraries in South West Nigeria;*
- iii. *Find out the number and categories of students in the selected staff secondary school libraries in South West Nigeria;*
- iv. *Find out the capacity of reading spaces provided for students in the selected staff secondary school libraries in South West Nigeria;*
- v. *Examine the types of information resources available in the selected staff secondary school libraries in South West Nigeria; and*
- vi. *Examine the challenges confronting inclusive acquisition of information resources in the selected staff secondary school libraries in South West Nigeria;*

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. *What is the qualification of staff in the selected staff secondary school libraries in South West Nigeria?*
2. *How are information resources organized in the selected staff secondary school libraries in South West Nigeria?*
3. *What is the total number and categories of students in the selected staff secondary school libraries in South West Nigeria?*
4. *What is the capacity of reading spaces provided for students in the selected staff secondary school libraries in South West Nigeria?*
5. *What are the types of information resources available in the selected staff secondary school libraries in South West Nigeria?*
6. *What are the challenges confronting inclusive acquisition of information resources in the selected staff secondary school libraries in South West Nigeria?*

Literature Review

The fact of many different types of things or people being included in something (library resources and services), a range of different things or people. According to Band (2021), a diverse and inclusive school library supports the needs of all students and creates a supportive and inclusive environment in which diversity is valued and respected, and where no one feels excluded.

Diversity and Library Services

According to Burns (2023), libraries are charged with being inclusive spaces for all patrons. The library must prepare the next generation to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population. Diversity means a range of different things or people while inclusion is the act of recognition. Cambridge Dictionary (2023) defined diversity as the practice or quality of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders, social orientations, etc. It is the fact of many different types of things or people being included in something; a range of different things or people. Diversity represents a legal population based on race, ethnicity, gender, disability, population with access challenges related to literacy, poverty, language, sexual orientation, age, unrepresented, underserved being involved or taken care of in the scheme of things or processes. In the school library, it is the practice of involving every user (majority and minority group) in the provision of information resources and services.

Children encounter diversity regularly in their interactions with others at home, in school, or around their neighborhood. According to Naidoo (2014), as our nation continues to diversify, children must learn to understand the importance of the role of their culture and the cultures of other people in creating an overall global culture respectful of differences. One way that children learn about the world around them and other cultures is through the social messages found in stories. It is important to note that stories help children understand how society perceives their culture as well as the cultures of their classmates, perceives their culture as well as the cultures of their classmates, teachers, caregivers, and others, thereby influencing their social and identity development (Naidoo, 2014).

The Importance of diversity in school libraries cannot be overemphasized. Students need to see themselves reflected in their school community including the library. If they cannot see themselves represented in books or displays, if they are excluded from conversations or from participating in activities, they will feel invisible. The message they receive is that they are worthless and not important enough to be included. This impacts their self-worth and perceived value which, in turn, impacts their mental health and well-being. Also, making diversity visible within the school library raises the profile of these students and sends a message to the whole school community. Reading about diverse character increases empathy and understanding, and can be a starting point for further conversations. Having access to a range of resources that reflect different ways of life can provide positivity and inspiration.

Consideration for Diverse School Library

There are three aspects to take into account within the school library; the physical environment, the resources, and the services provided. The following should be considered in promoting diversity in the school library:

- *The layout of the library should be such that it is suitable for disabled students to use – are aisles wide enough for everyone to use them? Are the tables for wheelchair users? Is the shelving low enough for all students to reach resources?*
 - *Is the signage and guidance suitable for those with visual disabilities or learning needs? Consider font, size, and color.*
 - *Do you have a range of books by diverse authors and illustrators including those from ethnic minorities, who are LGBTQ+, or who are disabled?*
 - *Do your books contain diverse characters? Are characters always depicted in stereotypical roles, or example, are female characters always in support roles, or ethnic minority characters depicted as being involved in crime?*
 - *Do images and illustrations reflect diversity? Are a range of family situations shown? Do they depict a variety of cultures? Do they show positive role models?*
 - *Do you have books featuring a wide range of cultures including festivals, traditions, poetry, myths, etc.*
 - *Do you provide all students with details of possible support networks out of the school?*
 - *Do you use relevant keywords when cataloguing books to ensure students can easily access resources?*
 - *Do you consider diversity when creating displays, book lists, and other promotional materials?*
 - *Are library activities and events always aimed at a small group of students with similar needs or are they varied, encompassing a wide range of interests and skills?*
- (Band, 2021).

Diversity: Audit of Users

A good starting point in assessing the needs of the student body is to undertake an audit to determine its diversity. Factors to consider include race ethnicity, culture, sexual identity, gender, religion or belief, and stabilities (both visible and invisible) it is also important to include neurodiversity, special educational needs, and social class, following this, carry out a stock audit and evaluation of the library environment measured against the needs of the students (Band, 2021).

Diversity and Collection Development

The assessment guide is aligned with the principles in the library bill of rights that guide the development of a diverse print and non-print school library collection. According to Robinson (2019), key collection development principles in the assessment include assuring all viewpoints on issues are represented in the collection and that learners see themselves represented in the collection. The collection should “represent the diversity of people and ideas in our society” ALA

Diversity and Advocacy in School Library

A visual representation of diversity in the school library can be supported via displays, posters, and visual media. The basis for visual advocacy relies on the principle that media “should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation” (ALA 2006); learner work samples from school library-related instruction and other instructional areas of the school can be displayed in the library (Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2005 cited by Robinson, 2019).

A school library staff that has a positive temperament and nature can help promote active participation of learners and faculty in the school library “regardless of race physical challenges, gender, sexual orientation, or ethnicity”.

Collaboration and Librarians: School librarians can partner with other educators to use data collected via the guide to brainstorm and share ideas of diverse practices within the school and school library.

Inclusive School Library Services in a Changing Environment

Inclusion is the act of allowing many different types of people to do something and treating them fairly. It is the action or state of including or of being included within a group or structure. The practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities or resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those who have physical or intellectual disabilities or members of the minority. It could also, refer to the idea that everyone should be able to use the same facilities and take part in the experiences, including people who have disability or disadvantages. The school library is expected to value and promote diversity and inclusion in every aspect of library resources and services. The services being rendered in inclusive libraries are inclusive circulation service, inclusive reference service, inclusive current awareness service, inclusive internet service, inclusive personnel service, and inclusive inter-library lending.

Inclusive Collections in School Library

The school library is expected to select and acquire information resources and equipment relevant to users' culture, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, and special needs. These collections should reflect the diversity of the school in ways that support teaching and learning (National Library of New Zealand, 2024) Murray (2010) showed that as the number of students with disabilities enrolled in mainstream schools increased, school librarians had to be aware of the needs of these students, to provide them with adequate library services. Acquiring and providing access to a variety of information resources enable users to understand their world.

Benefits of Inclusive School Library Service

Ezebasili and Umeji (2021) cited Grassi (2013) listed the benefits of inclusive library services as:

- *Inclusion provides belonging, acceptance, and developmentally appropriate practices.*
- *Inclusion teaches people with special needs typically developing skills.*
- *Inclusion provides an opportunity for people with special needs to develop friendships.*
- *Inclusion provides children with special needs an opportunity to develop positive attitudes towards themselves and others who are different from themselves.*

Inclusive school library service will support teaching and teaching processes to all categories of users in the community. There will be unity amongst the diverse users since resources and services are geared towards the satisfaction of everyone in the community where the school library is located.

Challenges of Inclusive School Library Service

Despite the accrued benefits derived from the provision of inclusive school library service to diverse users in primary and secondary schools, the following are some of the challenges hindering the project:

Adeleke and Osunkentan (2021) gave the challenges of school libraries to provide inclusive services to people with special needs as:

1. *Lack of skilled manpower to produce the material needed by the handicapped may result in poor production of the materials.*
2. *Lack of properly trained library personnel.*
3. *Importation often poses the problem of obtaining materials that do not bear any relation to the culture and background of the students.*
4. *Architectural design: Most of the older school libraries were built before the era of inclusive education. Therefore, such barriers as staircases, high bookshelves, narrow doorways, and lack of elevators are still prevalent in some libraries.*
5. *Inadequate funds.*

In addition, Ekwueme and Ajie (2022) enumerated and discussed the following challenges hindering librarians' roles in inclusive education for Nigerian children:

1. *Lack of flexible curriculum in use in Nigerian schools which does not reflect inclusiveness, and librarians are not well guided on the information needs of children.*
2. *Lack of functional school libraries in public and private schools in Nigeria.*
3. *Availability of obsolete information resources where libraries exist.*
4. *Lack of awareness: Children are not aware of the services and resources they could access from the libraries.*
5. *Management of school libraries by unqualified librarians.*
6. *Poor funding of the school libraries.*
7. *Absence of information communication technologies.*
8. *Lack of library period in the school timetable.*

Challenges faced by library professionals in inclusive library provision as identified by Alemna (1995) cited by Ezeabasili and Umeji (2021) are lack of skilled manpower to produce the material needed by physically challenged users, lack of trained library personnel, importation of resources not related to user's culture and background and old architectural design not having handicapped students in mind.

Resources Needed for Inclusive School Library in a Changing Environment

In a changing environment like ours, school libraries like other libraries in the world will need the following resources to render effective and adequate inclusive library service:

1. *Physical resources*
2. *Information Resources*
3. *Human Resource*
4. *Financial Resource.*

In a national project titled "We can read all together" in Portuguese schools, Bastos (2014) discovered that school libraries that participated in the project received extra funds so that they can acquire special resources and technological equipment like eBooks, Digital Accessible Information System (Daisy), Braille, audiobooks, Portuguese Sign Language (LGP), Pictographic Symbols for Communication, Electronic publication format (EPUB) and 3D Draws. This equipment, school libraries inclusive spaces, and can render effective service to users with special needs.

As needed resources are being provided and enjoyed by physically fit diverse users, it is imperative that the following resources are provided for diverse physically challenged users in the school library. For visually impaired users, braille books, talking books, talking newspapers, large printed with technological devices such as screen magnifiers, screen readers, voice recognition software, braille translation software, braille writing equipment, scan and read software, and jaws screen readers are expected to be acquired in the school library. Furthermore, more hearing impaired user, the school library is to provide them with low teaching materials that relate to literature-based reading; book reviewing; storytelling programmes; and teaching them library skills through signs.

To cater for the information needs of the physically disabled users, the school library building should be modernized with the needs of the users with disability in mind. Emerging buildings should include ramps and lifts for easy movement. There is a need for special adaptation of the environment at the libraries for all the physically challenged to access library resources. While for speech impaired users, the school library should provide them with communication devices used by people with difficulty in reading or talking, for example, a word board. A word board can be as simple as words written on a piece of paper that the users point to, to communicate. Some of these resources and equipment need expertise and skills in handling them therefore, the school libraries are expected to engage the services of experts to handle this equipment.

State of School Library in Nigeria

Despite the paperwork on the provision of library service in the National Policy on Education in promoting library service in Nigeria, it is sad to note that lip service is paid to library provision and services without the full implementation of the policy. The school library along with the public library is the most neglected type of library in Nigeria. According to Adebayo, Zubair and Ogunsola (2018) reported that not much importance is attached to establishing school libraries both in private and public school schools and this is so because the Ministry in charge here in Nigeria has neglected to establish a school library in the planning process of establishing schools. It is important to note that it is only tertiary education libraries that are being taken care of in Nigeria, and this is made possible because the supervising agencies like the National Universities Commission (NUC) National Commission for Colleges of Education, and the National Board for Technical Education made it compulsory as part of the criteria before they could pass resource inspection and accreditation in the commencement of academic programmes or continuing with them to have a well-funded and equipped library in the universities, colleges of education and polytechnics respectively. It is important to note that a large percentage of public and private primary and secondary schools do not have a space talk less of having school libraries. Where there is a space allocated for a library, it is inadequate and not equipped with needed resources (human, information resources, funds, physical resources). Where there are information resources, they are inadequate, obsolete, and not systematically organized through cataloguing and classification limiting access and utilization of this information.

Methodology

Qualitative research design was adopted for the study. Staff School of the Federal University of Technology Akure and International School of Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH), Ogbomoso were used for the study. Observation and interview schedule used to collect data in the two school libraries. The two Library heads in the two school libraries were interviewed based on the schedule. Thematic analysis was used to analyse collected data as observed noted in the interview.

Discussion of Findings

Category of Staff in the School Libraries

The staff school library at the Federal University Akure (FUTA) have a Diploma holder in Library Management as the head of the library, and a Library Assistant helping in the work of the library, while the International School library at the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology has a Master of Education (M.Ed) in English as the staff in-charge of the library. FUTA employing a Diploma holder in Library Management is commendable. LAUTECH having a master's holder in English education is a common trend in Nigerian school libraries having school certificate, Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), degree holders without any relevant certificate in library and information science.

Organisation of Resources in the School Library

It was observed that despite the fact a Diploma holder in Library Management was employed at the FUTA school library, the resources were arranged in open shelves without cataloguing and classifying them. Since LAUTECH school library did not have a qualified library staff, textbooks was arranged in open and closed shelves without using any form of international standard cataloguing and classification tools.

Number and Categories of Students in the Sampled Schools

According to the head of the library in FUTA staff school, the total number of students in the school is about eight hundred (800) from South West, South East, and South South Nigeria. LAUTECH school has over five hundred (500) students coming from South West, South East Nigeria. The head of the library was not able to state whether there were students from the Northern part of Nigeria because their names could not differentiate them from the Muslims in Ogbomoso. It was discovered that there are different categories of students from various cultural backgrounds and their information needs are expected to be taken care of in the two selected libraries.

Capacity of Reading Spaces Provided for Students

Eighty (80) and twenty (24) reading spaces with tables and chairs were provided for students in FUTA and LAUTECH school libraries respectively.

Types of Resources in the School Libraries

It was observed that the two school libraries provided textbooks for the use of students and staff on the different subjects offered in the schools without considering their students' socio-cultural background. It was discovered that textbooks in the Yoruba language were not being utilised by the students from South West Nigeria. LAUTECH staff school library have a space for computers, cabling but connection to the Internet is yet to be completed.

Challenges Confronting Inclusive Acquisition of Information Resources

Judging from the interview conducted with the two staff heading the selected school libraries, the major challenge being encountered in the school libraries was that there is no guiding rules and regulations or policies stipulating acquisition of information resources apart from those ones been taught in the schools.

Conclusion

Bearing in mind that the school library is a school's physical, and digital learning space where reading, inquiry, research, thinking, imagination, and creativity are central to students' information-to-knowledge journey and their personal, social, and cultural growth; there is a need to recognize diverse people of different cultures, religions, ethnic groups, etc in the school library which demands the provision of equitable inclusive service delivery to the clientele, for adequate resources and equipment to meet the users' needs.

Recommendations

Given the highlighted resources and services to be rendered to diverse users in school libraries and to ensure inclusive library service in Nigeria, the following recommendations are made:

1. *Each school library should include as part of their policy statement that diverse users will be recognized in the school, and inclusive service will be rendered to them.*
2. *School libraries should be well funded by their founders (government and private owners) to be able to acquire needed information resources (physical and digital) and equipment to render inclusive service delivery to diverse users.*
3. *Federal and state governments should make the provision of inclusive library service to diverse users in the school compulsory for new primary and secondary schools a must, and older schools should adjust their service to be in line with the new trend of library service delivery.*
4. *The Nigerian School Library Association (NSLA) and Nigerian Library Association should come together to fashion out the means of liaising with the leadership of the National Assembly leadership in sponsoring a bill that will see the light of the day to have a law that will spell out the requirements for establishing primary and secondary schools listing out the type of staff, building, information resources (physical and digital), equipment, funds etc needed with attendant punishment for erring schools.*
5. *Federal and state government in Nigeria through the Ministry of Education should include Library hours in primary and secondary school (public and private) timetables; this will enable pupils and students to develop the culture of library use and promotion of reading culture from the beginning of their education to adulthood.*
6. *Library and information science/studies schools should include diversity equity and inclusion in library service delivery in their curriculum; this will prepare students to handle a diverse population in library and information centres.*
7. *Training of library staff on diverse and inclusive library services should be organized by the Nigerian School Library Association in conjunction with State Chapters of the Nigerian Library Association for all public and private primary and secondary schools in Nigeria.*
8. *Adequate and up-to-date information resources and equipment should be provided to public and private school libraries.*
9. *Qualified categories of staff (Librarians, Media Technologists, Library Officers, Library Assistants, Security Officers, Cleaners etc) should be employed in both public and private school libraries in Nigeria.*

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IMPACT OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ON STAFF PRODUCTIVITY AMONG LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE TEACHING STAFF IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

The field of library and information science is rooted in various principles; and diverse and inclusive teaching staff not only models these principles but also advocate for them in their teaching, research, and service. The paper investigated the impact of diversity and inclusion on staff productivity among Library and Information Science (LIS) teaching staff in Rivers State. Through a comprehensive review of existing literature, this research explored the concepts of diversity and inclusion, shedding light on staff productivity. Additionally, this study delved into the benefits and challenges of diversity and inclusion among LIS teaching staff. Four objectives were used to guide this study with one hypothesis. Questionnaires were sent online via Google form to LIS departmental WhatsApp platforms of the various institutions. The process brought in a total of 42 responses from four institutions that has Library Schools in Rivers State which was used to analyse the data. Simple percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while Pearson Product Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significant. Ultimately, the findings revealed that there is high extent of diversity and inclusion in the department. The major factor affecting diversity and inclusion in the department is discrimination and clique factor. The study also revealed that there are no strategies put in place to enhance diversity and inclusion in the department. Finally, it was revealed that there is significant relationship between the impact of diversity and inclusion and LIS teaching staff productivity. The researchers recommended among others that there should be effective policies regarding diversity and inclusion within the workforce. Department/institution heads must avoid discrimination, bias, and cliques; they should acknowledge that individuals from diverse backgrounds can bring fresh perspectives and ideas, enhancing efficiency, creativity, and innovation in the workplace.

Keywords: Diversity, Inclusion, Staff Productivity, Library and Information Science

INTRODUCTION

Diversity and inclusion are fundamental aspects in the management of any organization in a global phenomenon. To achieve success, businesses must adopt a broad perspective and demonstrate a steadfast dedication to integrating workforce diversity into their daily operations. It is very important to understand the impact of diversity and inclusion on organisational results, such as organisation performance, employee satisfaction or turnover (Akpoviro, Bolarinwa & Abu, 2020).

Diversity has been proven to enhance creativity and innovation, resulting in improved decision-making and contributing to economic growth by stimulating more profound information processing and intricate thinking. This complex thinking enables diverse groups to react more effectively to changing environments and unforeseen challenges. However, interacting with individuals from different backgrounds may also lead to feelings of discomfort, distrust, resentment, and conflict. (Galinsky, Todd, Homan, Philips, Apfelbaum, Sasaki, Richeson, Olayon & Maddux, 2015).

Diversity encompasses a range of differences, including but not limited to race, gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical abilities, and socio-economic background. Inclusion, on the other hand, refers to creating an environment where every individual feels valued, respected, and has equal opportunities to contribute and succeed.

Library and Information Science (LIS) is a field that inherently embraces diversity, with professionals coming from various backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. In recent times, there has been a growing awareness of the importance of Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) within academic institutions, including among teaching staff. However, the specific impact of D&I initiatives on staff productivity within LIS departments in Rivers State remains largely unexplored.

Library and Information Science (LIS) education holds immense significance in preparing individuals with the necessary skills to handle the constantly changing world of information. In Rivers State, Nigeria, having a strong and diverse group of LIS educators is vital for nurturing a generation of citizens who are adept in information literacy. It is imperative to optimize the influence of diversity and inclusion within the LIS staff, as it not only represents the communities they cater to but also amplifies productivity, innovation, and overall success within the organization. This paper therefore explores the potential impact of diversity and inclusion (D&I) on staff productivity among LIS teaching staff in Rivers State.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEMS

Diversity and inclusion in the workplace can improve innovation, creativity, decision-making, and overall organizational performance. Productivity among teaching staff can be measured through various indicators, such as research output, teaching effectiveness, student engagement, and service contributions which most of the staff are fully engaged in. Effective diversity and inclusion initiatives in academic institutions often include recruitment and retention efforts, training and development programs, mentoring and networking opportunities, and inclusive policies and practices. Despite efforts to promote diversity and inclusion, academic institutions still face challenges in fully realizing the potential benefits of a diverse workforce. Understanding the impact of diversity and inclusion on staff productivity among LIS teaching staff in Rivers State is crucial for identifying effective strategies to enhance workplace dynamics and overall performance. Hence, this necessitated the study.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study is meant to look at the impact of diversity and inclusion on staff productivity among LIS teaching staff in Rivers State. However, the study specifically sought to:

1. *To find out the extent of diversity and inclusion initiatives among LIS teaching staff.*
2. *To examine the impact of diversity and inclusion on staff productivity within LIS departments.*
3. *To identify factors affecting diversity and inclusion among LIS teaching staff.*
4. *To know the strategies employed in enhancing diversity and inclusion among LIS teaching staff in Rivers State.*

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The following research questions were used to guide the study.

1. *To what extent does your department embrace diversity and inclusion?*
2. *What are the impacts of diversity and inclusion on staff productivity within LIS departments?*
3. *What are the factors affecting diversity and inclusion among LIS teaching staff?*
4. *What strategies employed to enhance diversity and inclusion among LIS teaching staff in Rivers State?*

HYPOTHESIS

The Null hypothesis is formulated to guide the study and was tested at 0.05 of significant level.

H₀: There is no significant relationship between the impact of diversity and inclusion and LIS teaching staff productivity

CONCEPT OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

In the ever-changing field of Library and Information Science (LIS) education, promoting diversity and inclusivity within the teaching staff is not only a commendable goal but also a crucial necessity. As custodians of knowledge sharing and advocates for equal access to information, LIS programs bear a profound responsibility to reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. The teaching staff in LIS programs encompasses a wide range of diversity, spanning across various dimensions such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, and academic expertise. This diversity

brings a wealth of perspectives, lived experiences, and cultural insights into the educational landscape, enhancing the overall learning experience. By embracing this diversity and expanding representation, LIS programs foster inclusive environments that cater to the unique needs and aspirations of students from diverse backgrounds (Napp & Sabharwal, 2019)

The presence of a diverse teaching staff in LIS programs plays a crucial role in facilitating transformative learning experiences. With their varied backgrounds and expertise, these faculty members provide students with a wide range of perspectives, methodologies, and approaches to address intricate information challenges. From indigenous knowledge systems to critical insights on information ethics, the diverse faculty enrich the curriculum, empowering students to navigate the ever-changing information landscape with skill and compassion.

Diversity encompasses a range of individuals with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and interests. It includes unique distinctions in ethnicity, gender, location, sexual orientation, religion, and more. When individuals with these unique differences unite in a workplace, it is referred to as workplace diversity (Tongo, Awomailo, Ajose & Aderemi, 2023). According to Combs, Milosevic and Bilimoria (2019), the term 'diversity' is often ambiguous and open to interpretation, leading to different dimensions being attributed by different authors. It is the distinct qualities that set individuals apart from each other (Blanck, Hyseni & Wise, 2020). This concept involves fostering mutual understanding and respect within a group (Triguero-Sanchez, Guillen & Peria-Vinces, 2018). Mazur (2010) defined diversity as a subjective concept created by group members who possess unique differences and similarities.

According to Napp and Sabharwal (2019), the American Library Association and the Association of College and Research Libraries emphasized that Diversity is not just a moral imperative, but a global necessity. Embracing diversity is crucial for the growth and development of individuals and communities. Libraries must welcome all perspectives and experiences to truly achieve diversity in substance and form.

Akpoviroro, Bolarinwa, and Abu (2020) provide a comprehensive definition of diversity, encompassing the acknowledgement, understanding, acceptance, valuation, and celebration of differences among individuals in terms of age, class, ethnicity, gender, physical ability, and mental ability. Inclusion, on the other hand, is closely associated with diversity and focuses on maximizing the advantages of diversity by ensuring equal rights and opportunities for employees to access all the benefits available to them in the workplace (Combs, Milosevic & Bilimoria 2019).

In an academic setting, inclusion refers to the creation of an environment that values, respects, and supports all individuals, regardless of their backgrounds, identities, abilities, or perspectives. It involves actively embracing diversity and ensuring that everyone has equal access to opportunities, resources, and experiences within the academic community. The field of LIS is rooted in principles of social justice and equity, and inclusive teaching staff not only models these principles but also advocate for them in their teaching, research, and service. By prioritizing marginalized voices, challenging dominant narratives, and examining power structures, diverse teaching staff inspires students to become champions of equity and agents of change in their communities. Inclusion goes beyond simply representing diverse individuals; it involves fostering a culture of belonging where every member feels empowered to fully participate, contribute, and thrive (Inazu, Itsekor, Omonori, Olalere & Sulaiman, 2021).

Bolivar, Bryant, Bui, King-Mills, Knapp and Tyner (2019) in their article highlighted various fundamental principles and practices that encompasses inclusion:

1. Equal Opportunity: Academic institutions that prioritize inclusion aim to remove obstacles to access and success for all students, faculty, and staff. This includes ensuring that facilities, programs, and services are accessible to individuals with disabilities and offering necessary accommodations. It also involves addressing systemic disparities in educational opportunities and achievements.

2. Empowerment: Inclusive environments within LIS teaching staff encourage all members to feel empowered to contribute their unique skills and ideas to the academic community. This entails eliminating barriers that may impede their participation, such as implicit biases or limited access to resources.

3. Representation: Inclusive academic settings actively seek to represent and celebrate the diversity of their communities. This involves promoting diversity among students, faculty, and staff in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religion, and nationality. Representation is crucial as it fosters a sense of belonging and validates the experiences and identities of all members of the academic community.

4. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning: Inclusive pedagogy involves adopting teaching methods that acknowledge and respect students' cultural backgrounds, learning styles, and lived experiences. This may include integrating diverse perspectives into the curriculum, using inclusive language and imagery, and providing opportunities for students to engage in discussions and reflections on issues related to diversity and social justice.

5. Creating a Supportive Environment: Inclusive academic institutions prioritize the establishment of a nurturing and accepting atmosphere where individuals can feel secure in expressing themselves, sharing their thoughts, and seeking assistance when necessary. This may involve offering mentorship and support services, fostering connections and support networks among peers, and implementing policies and procedures that address discrimination, harassment, and bias.

6. Embracing Collaborative and Participatory Decision-Making: Inclusion extends to the governance and decision-making processes within academic institutions. Inclusive institutions value diverse perspectives and actively engage stakeholders in decision-making at all levels, including students, faculty, staff, and community members. This collaborative approach ensures that the voices and interests of all members of the academic community are acknowledged and respected.

In an academic setting, inclusion entails establishing a warm, encouraging, and fair atmosphere where every person has the chance to acquire knowledge, develop, and thrive, irrespective of their background or identity. It necessitates a dedication to diversity, equity, and inclusion at every level of the institution, along with a constant drive for progress.

STAFF PRODUCTIVITY IN AN ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

Productivity has been described as a concept that is difficult to define or measure in very complex organisation or institution (Amofa, Okronipa, & Boateng, 2016). However, productivity can be understood as the ability of a person, factory, or machine to convert inputs into outputs within a specific time frame (Green, 2016). It is commonly calculated by dividing the average output by the resources or cost expended during that time (Amofa, Okronipa, & Boateng, 2016). A productive organization surpasses its input with significant output, indicating improved performance with available resources (Alman, 2013). Such organizations hold a competitive advantage in their industry. Enhancing productivity in an organization does not necessarily mean working harder, but rather requires smart strategies (Amofa, Okronipa, & Boateng, 2016). This is particularly relevant when an organization has a diverse workforce.

Staff productivity in an academic setting refers to how efficiently and effectively faculty and staff members carry out their responsibilities and tasks within the institution. This encompasses various aspects of their work, such as teaching, research, administrative duties, and service to the academic community. According to Inegbedion, Sunday, Asaleye, Lawal, and Adebanji (2020), there are several key components and factors that contribute to staff productivity in academia.

1. Teaching Excellence: Productive faculty members deliver high-quality instruction that actively engages students, promotes critical thinking, and facilitates learning outcomes. Effective teaching involves careful planning, innovative teaching methods, timely feedback, and continuous improvement based on student feedback and assessment data.

2. Research Output: Faculty productivity is often evaluated based on their research output, which includes publications in reputable journals, books, conference presentations, and securing external grants or funding. Productive researchers demonstrate a sustained commitment to scholarly inquiry, contribute to the advancement of knowledge in their field, and engage in collaborations with colleagues both within and outside the institution.

3. Administrative Efficiency: Academic staff productivity relies on efficiently completing administrative tasks such as course planning, student advising, committee work, and institutional governance responsibilities. Streamlining operations through efficient administrative practices supports the overall functioning of the academic institution.

4. Service Contributions: Faculty and staff members contribute to the academic community through service activities like serving on committees, participating in professional organizations, and engaging in outreach initiatives. Demonstrating a commitment to service enhances the institutional mission and promotes collaboration among colleagues.

5. Professional Development: Productive academic staff actively seeks opportunities for professional development to enhance their skills and expertise. This includes attending conferences, workshops, seminars, and engaging in interdisciplinary collaborations or research projects.

6. Work-Life Balance: Maintaining a healthy work-life balance is crucial for sustaining staff productivity in academia. Institutions that prioritize employee well-being and promote work-life balance tend to have more satisfied and productive faculty and staff members.

It is important to note that measuring staff productivity in academia can be complex. Quantitative measures like number of publications or grants awarded are valuable, but they should not be the sole

indicator. Qualitative factors like the impact of research, the quality of teaching, curriculum development, student mentorship and contributions to the overall academic environment should also be considered. By addressing these factors and promoting a culture of productivity and excellence, academic institutions can support the success and fulfilment of their faculty and staff members (Inegbedion, Sunday, Asaleye, Lawal, & Adebajji, 2020).

BENEFITS OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AMONG LIS TEACHING STAFF

Diversity and inclusion within Library and Information Science (LIS) programs bring numerous advantages to both the academic institution and the students. Here are some key advantages according to Green, Lopez, Wysocki, Kepner, Farnsworth and Clark (2015).:

1. Broad Representation: A diverse teaching staff ensures that a wide range of perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds are represented within the academic environment. This representation fosters a sense of belonging among students from various demographic groups.

2. Exposure to Varied Perspectives: Diversity among teaching staff exposes students to different viewpoints and approaches to LIS topics. This exposure promotes critical thinking and helps students develop a more comprehensive understanding of the field.

3. Cultural Competence: Interacting with faculty members from diverse backgrounds enhances students' cultural competence and sensitivity. Exposure to faculty with different cultural backgrounds helps students navigate and appreciate cultural differences, which is crucial in library and information settings that serve diverse communities.

4. Creative Teaching Approaches: With a diverse teaching staff, classrooms can benefit from a wide range of teaching styles and approaches. This diversity fosters innovation in teaching methods, resulting in increased student engagement and improved learning outcomes.

5. Expanded Connections: A diverse teaching staff opens doors to a vast network of professionals and mentors for students. This expanded network becomes invaluable when students are seeking internships, job opportunities, and guidance for their future careers.

6. Enriched Research and Scholarship: The diversity among teaching staff brings forth a broader range of research interests and expertise within the department. This diversity encourages interdisciplinary collaborations, creating a more vibrant academic environment for both faculty and students.

Diversity and inclusivity within the teaching staff of LIS enhance the educational experience for students, equip them with the necessary skills to navigate the complexities of the professional world, and cultivate an academic environment that is both inclusive and equitable.

CHALLENGES OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AMONG LIS TEACHING STAFF

While there are numerous benefits to having diversity and inclusion among Library and Information Science (LIS) teaching staff, institutions may encounter challenges in achieving and maintaining a diverse and inclusive academic environment. Heskett (2018) highlighted some of these challenges to include:

1. Recruitment and Retention: A primary challenge is recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty and staff. Historically, certain demographic groups have been underrepresented in academia, making it challenging to find qualified candidates from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, retention can be an issue if faculty and staff members feel isolated or unsupported due to lack of representation or inclusion.

2. Implicit Bias and Discrimination: Implicit bias and discrimination can impact hiring, promotion, and tenure decisions, perpetuating inequities and hindering the advancement of diverse faculty and staff members. Addressing implicit bias requires continuous training and awareness-building among hiring committees and administrators.

3. Unequal Workloads and Opportunities: Diverse faculty and staff members may experience uneven workloads or be disproportionately assigned to service roles or administrative tasks, limiting their chances for research, professional development, and career growth. Addressing workload imbalances and ensuring fair opportunities for all faculty and staff members is crucial for creating an inclusive environment.

4. Cultural Competence and Communication: Cultural competence and effective communication are essential in preventing breakdowns and misunderstandings between individuals from different cultural

backgrounds. By promoting these skills among faculty, staff, and students, institutions can create a more inclusive environment.

5. Resistance to Change: Various stakeholders within institutions, such as faculty, staff, students, and administrators, may resist diversity and inclusion initiatives. Overcoming this resistance requires strong leadership, clear communication, and ongoing education about the benefits of diversity and inclusion.

6. Resource Constraints: Limited resources, including funding and support staff, can present challenges to implementing comprehensive diversity and inclusion initiatives. Institutions must invest in these efforts to ensure their success and sustainability.

To tackle these obstacles, Larsen (2017) stressed that a comprehensive strategy is needed. This strategy should involve the dedication of institutional leaders, collaboration among stakeholders, continuous evaluation and accountability measures, and a strong focus on promoting inclusivity and a sense of belonging within the LIS academic community. By proactively addressing these challenges, institutions can strive towards establishing a more diverse, fair, and inclusive environment that benefits all members, including faculty, staff, and students.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive survey research design while using a well-structured questionnaire as data collection instrument. The targeted population of the study are LIS teaching staff in Rivers State. Questionnaires were sent online via Google form to LIS departmental WhatsApp platforms of the various institutions in order to get responses from the staff. The use of online forums for the collection of research data has been supported by many scholars, online forums can play an important role in assisting individuals to share important ideas, such as research ideas, or management of various challenges (Smedley & Coulson, 2018). The link to the questionnaire was shared multiple times within a period of 2 weeks. The process brought in a total of 42 responses from four institutions that has Library Schools in Rivers State which was used to analyse the data. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while Pearson Product Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significant.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 1: Institutions and their responses

Institution (Library School)	No. of Staff	No. of Response	Percentage %
University of Port Harcourt	15	13	31.0
Rivers State University	11	10	23.8
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education	14	11	26.2
Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic	9	8	19.0
Total	49	42	100

Research Question 1: To what extent does your department embrace diversity and inclusion?

Table 2: Extent of diversity and inclusion in LIS departments

Extent of D&I	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very High	5	11.9
High	31	73.8
Low	5	11.9
Very Low	1	2.4
Total	42	100

Table 2 shows that out of the 42 respondents, 31(73.83%) shows high extent of diversity and inclusion in LIS department while 5(11.9%) indicated very high extent and low extent respectively. Only 1(2.4%) respondent shows very low extent of diversity and inclusion in the department. Based on the result, it could be concluded that LIS department in Rivers state embraces diversity and inclusion with high extent.

Research Question 2: What are the impacts of diversity and inclusion on staff productivity within LIS departments?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of impacts of diversity and inclusion on staff productivity within LIS departments.

Descriptive Statistics				
S/N Items	N=42	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
1. <i>It fosters collaboration and innovation</i>		3.38	.49	Agreed
2. <i>It can positively influence productivity and job satisfaction</i>		2.94	1.28	Agreed
3. <i>It makes staff to be more supportive and enriching in their work</i>		2.61	1.03	Agreed
4. <i>It promotes open communication and constructive dialogue among colleagues</i>		2.99	1.03	Agreed
5. <i>It makes the department to be reputable</i>		3.26	.44	Agreed
Grand Mean		3.06	.854	Agreed

Table 3 above showed in item 1 mean score of 3.38 and STD .49 which implied that respondents agreed that diversity inclusion fosters collaboration and innovation. Item 2 with mean score of 2.94 and STD 1.28 showed that respondents agreed that diversity inclusion positively influence productivity and job satisfaction. In item 3 mean score of 2.61 and STD 1.03 implied that respondents agreed that diversity inclusion makes staff to be more supportive and enriching in my work. In item 4 mean score of 2.99 and STD 1.03 equally implied that respondents agreed that diversity inclusion promotes open communication and constructive dialogue among colleagues. Similarly, item 5 with mean score of 3.26 and STD .44 implied respondents agreed that diversity inclusion in LIS department should reputable.

Thus grand mean score of 3.06>2.5 implied that respondents agreed on the impacts of diversity and inclusion on staff productivity within LIS departments.

Research Question 2: What are the factors affecting diversity and inclusion among LIS teaching staff in Rivers State?

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation of factors affecting diversity and inclusion among LIS teaching staff in Rivers State

Descriptive Statistics				
S/N Items	N=42	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
6. <i>Bias in recruitment/promotion processes</i>		3.14	.35	Strongly Agreed
7. <i>Course and resource allocations</i>		2.99	1.21	Strongly Agreed
8. <i>Discrimination and clique factors</i>		3.69	1.07	Strongly Agreed

9. <i>Lack of visible leadership/mentorship support</i>	1.95	1.10	Disagreed
10. <i>Awareness on diversity and inclusion is inadequate</i>	3.26	.44	Strongly Agreed
Grand Mean	3.006	.834	Agreed

Table 4 above showed in item 6 mean score of 3.14 and STD .35 which implied that respondents strongly agreed that there is bias in recruitment/promotion processes. In item 7 mean score of 2.99 and STD 1.21 showed that respondents equally strongly agreed that Course and resource allocations impacts on diversity inclusion. In item 8 mean score of 3.69 and STD 1.07 showed respondents strongly agreed that discrimination and clique factors impact on diversity inclusion. In item 9 mean score of 3.69 and STD 1.07 proved that respondents disagreed that Lack of visible leadership/mentorship support diversity inclusion. In item 10 mean score of 3.26 and STD .445 showed that respondents strongly agreed that awareness on diversity and inclusion is inadequate

Thus grand mean score of 3.006 and STD .834 implied that respondents agreed that there are factors affecting diversity and inclusion among LIS teaching staff in Rivers State.

Research Question 3: What strategies employed to enhance diversity and inclusion among LIS teaching staff in Rivers State?

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation on strategies employed to enhance diversity and inclusion among LIS teaching staff in Rivers State

Descriptive Statistics				
S/N ITEMS	N=42	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
11. <i>There is Diversity and inclusion policies for LIS departments in Rivers State</i>		1.66	1.11	Disagreed
12. <i>Partnership with external organizations or communities</i>		1.19	.39	Disagreed
13. <i>Partial involvement in the scheme of things among staff in the department</i>		2.19	1.21	Disagreed
14. <i>Trainings on topic related to diversity and inclusion</i>		1.66	1.09	Disagreed
15. <i>Cordial relationship among LIS staff</i>		2.95	1.103	Agreed
Grand Mean		1.93	.98	Disagreed

Table 5 above showed in item 11 mean score of 1.66 and STD 1.11 which proved that respondents disagreed that there is Diversity and inclusion policies for LIS departments in Rivers State. In item 12 mean score of 1.19 and STD .39 showed that respondents disagreed that partnership with external organizations or communities. In item 13 mean score of 2.19 and STD 1.21 which showed that respondents disagreed that partial involvement in the scheme of things among staff in the department. In item 14 mean score of 1.66 and STD 1.09 which proved that respondents equally disagreed that trainings on topic related to diversity and inclusion. In item 15 mean score of 2.95 and STD 1.10 proved that respondents agreed that there is cordial relationship among LIS staff.

Thus, grand mean score of 1.93<2.5 showed that respondents disagreed that there are strategies employed to enhance diversity and inclusion among LIS teaching staff in Rivers State

Test of Null Hypotheses

H₀: There is no significant relationship between the impact of diversity and inclusion and LIS teaching staff productivity

Table 6: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) Test of relationship between the impact of diversity and inclusion and LIS teaching staff productivity

Variables		Diversity/Inclusion			
LIS Teaching Staff Productivity	Pearson Correlation	1	.083**	-.151**	.544**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002	.000	.000
N		42	42	42	42
	Pearson Correlation	.083**	1	.600**	.475**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002		.000	.000
N		42	42	42	42
	Pearson Correlation	-.151**	.600**	1	.039
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.150
N		42	42	42	42
	Pearson Correlation	.544**	.475**	.039	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
N		42	42	42	42

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 above showed N-value of 42, correlation coefficient (Spearman rho) value of .039, p-value of .002<.05 which showed that there is significant relationship between the impact of diversity and inclusion and LIS teaching staff productivity. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study are hereunder listed:

1. *There is high extent of diversity and inclusion in LIS department in Rivers State.*
2. *There are impacts of diversity and inclusion on staff productivity within LIS departments*
3. *There are factors affecting diversity and inclusion among LIS teaching staff.*
4. *There are no strategies employed to enhance diversity and inclusion among LIS teaching staff in Rivers State.*
5. *There is significant relationship between the impact of diversity and inclusion and LIS teaching staff productivity*

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study revealed that there is relationship between the impact of diversity and inclusion and LIS teaching staff. Fagbe, Fagbe and Folorunso-Ako, (2019) aligned with the findings of the present study stating that diversity can have a positive impact on employee morale and the development of a working environment that feels inclusive to everyone. Its impact makes a workplace strives to eliminate discrimination and harassment. Supporting the view, Larsen (2017) and Inegbedion, Sunday, Asaleye, Lawal and Adebajji, (2020) in their works stressed that diversity in the workplace can help reduce lawsuits and increase marketing opportunities, recruitment, creativity, and business image.

The findings of this study also revealed some factors affecting diversity and inclusion such as discrimination, clique factors, bias in recruitment and promotion as well as course allocation. This finding is in agreement with an earlier finding of Martins (2015) which established that discrimination is an issue that has plagued managers, with underlying factors linked to gender, disability and culture, which could emanate from managers, individuals and teams. Another work that did support this finding is that of

Bolivar et al (2019) and Nwokpoku, Chibuzor and Oliver (2017). These researchers in their studies found out that manager's personal bias and perception of people can colour their decision-making process especially in recruitment, and promotion of staff. The finding and the supporting literature point to the fact that these challenges can affect a diverse and inclusive work environment. By proactively addressing these challenges, institutions can strive towards establishing a more diverse, fair, and inclusive environment that benefits all members, including faculty, staff, and students.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In the realm of LIS education, diversity and inclusion serve as the foundation of strength, resilience, and relevance. By embracing diversity, enhancing learning experiences, nurturing cultural competence, fostering innovation, and advocating for social justice, LIS programs pave the way for a more inclusive and equitable future in the field. The study surveyed the impact of diversity and inclusion (D&I) on staff productivity among LIS teaching staff in Rivers State. The results showed that there is high extent of diversity and inclusion in LIS department in Rivers State. The result also revealed that there are impacts of diversity and inclusion on staff productivity within LIS departments. The result showed that there are factors affecting diversity and inclusion among LIS teaching staff. It was also revealed that there are no strategies employed to enhance diversity and inclusion among LIS teaching staff in Rivers State. Finally, the hypothesis showed that there is significant relationship between the impact of diversity and inclusion and LIS teaching staff productivity. From the foregoing, the researchers therefore recommend as follows:

1. *The LIS department needs to establish effective policies regarding diversity and inclusion within the workforce.*
2. *The LIS department should promote teamwork over individualism.*
3. *Department/institution heads must avoid discrimination, bias, and cliques; they should acknowledge that individuals from diverse backgrounds can bring fresh perspectives and ideas, enhancing efficiency, creativity, and innovation in the workplace.*
4. *Library schools should design programs and training sessions that cater to the ever-changing dynamics of staff interactions. Additionally, it might be beneficial to regularly share motivational quotes and messages promoting diversity on departmental notice boards and platforms.*
5. *The Nigerian Library Association should prioritize addressing diversity issues during conferences to boost institutional initiatives.*

Finally, as guardians of knowledge and catalysts for change, let us respond to the call for action and harness the transformative potential of diversity and inclusion in shaping the values and intellects of the upcoming generation of information professionals.

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PERCEPTION OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY STAFF ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract

The concept of community engagement through social media ; is a vital tool for education and dissemination of information; because it can be used for educational purposes, providing access to educational resources and spreading awareness about important issues. The study examined the perception of private university library staff community engagement through social media. The purpose of the study was to find out the extent of the use of different types of social media employed in private university community engagement; to ascertain the perception of private university library staff on the extent of effect of the community engagement through social media and the benefits of community engagement through social media. The methodology used for the study was survey research design, questionnaire was designed to collect data from a population of 43 library staff from two selected private universities in Anambra state, and all the copies were collated and used for the study. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean), and percentages. The finding of the study amongst others shows a very high extent of use of the different types of social media. The findings also reveal a strong agreement to all the stated benefits as the staff perception amongst which are communication enhancement, increase learning participation, improvement of resource sharing with the university community and partnership. The study recommends the improved use of the different types of social media by library staff in community engagement and also for library management to explore the benefits of social and advocate the engagement of the university community through social media.

Keywords: Social Media, Community Engagement and University Library Staff.

INTRODUCTION

The advent of social media has transformed universities communities in such a great way that allows their library staff to engage the university community through social media. Social media has been vital tools in the university communities and has been defined in a variety of ways. Social media is seen as a “platform to create profiles, make explicit and traverse relationships” (Boyd & Ellison, 2008) Social media is as identified set of functionalities or involvement among community members. The paper starts with the adventures of social transformation on communities.

There is a rapid growth of community users that develop and use technology in the form of social media for work, hence researchers like (Larkey & Randall, 2021) observed that social media has revolutionized the way we communicate, connect and share information in the university communities. The platform like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn have become integral parts of daily lives of universities communities influencing how they interact with each other and with the university library that serves them. Social media has not only changed lecturers and students, effected the connectivity and visibility of the community but also stated how university community management engage with their students and staff. Social media has opened up new avenues for marketing, patron service and community engagement. Understanding how to effectively navigate and leverage social media is crucial in library community engagement. Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for transforming universities communities' engagement by providing new avenues for information dissemination and participation. This paper examined the engagement as an individual (student/staff) sense of purpose, evident to the community in the display of personnel initiative; adaptability effort and persistence towards the educational goals of the university.

(Moran & Adi, 2016) viewed engagement as a two -way relationship between an organization like the university and the worker (library staff) in which the organization uses the library staff to provide the university with their information needs.

Community engagement

Community engagement through social media involves using social media platforms to interact with the universities communities to be involved in providing their information needs. The following are some key concepts of community engagement through social media. (Tate, Lartey & Randall, 2019)

- **Two- Way Communication:** Engaging a community through social media allows for interactive communication enabling individuals to listen to community members respond to their feedback, and engage in conversation.
- **Promotion and Awareness:** Social media can be used to promote community events, initiatives and campaigns, Increasing participation and awareness.
- **Inclusivity and Diversity:** Community engagement can help organizations reach a diverse audience, ensuring that a wide range of voices and perspectives are included in the conversation.
- **Measuring Impact:** Engagement of communities through social metrics such as **likes**, shares, comments and reach can be used to measure the impact of community engagement efforts and inform future strategies.
- **Transparency:** Community engagement through social media can openly share information providing insights into their activities, decision- making processes and impact.
- **Real time-updates:** Community engagement with the help of real time updates enables a community to provide real-time information to the community, keeping them informed and engaged.

Community engagement will enable library staff to collaborate with the community for more innovations and inclusive services, for the accomplished educational tasks and to keep in touch with all faculties within the universities. (Tata; Lartey & Randath, 2019).

In fact, this explains why this paper is on two selected private universities in Anambra State; in order to find out the staff perception on library community engagement through social media.

Paul university, Awka is the brain-child of the Bishops of five Ecclesiastical Provinces (currently 55 Dioceses) of the Anglican Communion east of the Niger, whose vision to establish a novel University became a reality on November 3, 2009. It was on that date that the university received from the federal Government, the provisional License to operate as a full- fledged private University. This was followed by an inaugural ceremony on November 30, 2009.

The take-off site of Paul University is the former St. Paul's College Awka, founded by the Church Missionary Society (CMS), an evangelical arm of the Church of England (Anglican), in 1904 as a college for the training of the Church workers and teachers of various categories. The campus provides ideal academic environment where students and staff, under Christian discipline and administrative guidance, are maximally focused in their academic pursuits with little distracted; hence the need for a good university library that will engage the community effectively with needed information resources including online resources through the social media. On the other hand as well Madonna University is a private Roman Catholic institution located at Okija and Elele. It was established in 1999 by Fr. Emmanuel Edeh with the goal of providing holistic education to both undergraduates and postgraduate students.

Therefore, it is this vital need for accessibility of information by the university community that prompted the writing of this paper on the perception of private university library staff on community engagement through social media.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Social media is a platform that creates profiles, allows explicit connection and traverses relationship. It is a building block of involvement among communities. Social media is a platform that helps to communicate individuals, groups and people by getting them engaged in other to get to its climax.

Community engagement through social media can be incredibly beneficial, but it seems it comes in various forms that are under used; may be because the library staff and librarians do not perceive them as vital to their educational service delivery within the environment. If this situation is not clearly addressed a better understanding of the benefits of the engagement of the university community through social media will be a challenge hence, the need to delve into this study on the library staff perception on the engagement of the university community through social media.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to examine the perception of private university library staff on community engagement through social media. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Find out the extent of the use of the different types of social media in private universities community engagement.
2. Ascertain the perception of private university library staff on the extent of the effect of social media on community engagement.

3. Find out the library staff perception on the benefits of community engagement through social media.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the extent of use of the different types of social media in private university community engagement?
2. What is the perception of private university library staff on the extent of the effect of social media on community engagement?
3. What are the library staff perception on the benefits of community engagement through social media?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The majority of the library staff in private university communities according to Diga & Kellcher (2009) use social media platforms, like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instant Messages, Ning, Delicious, Twitter, Google, Email, Facebook messenger, Instagram to facilitate their information delivery service. WhatsApp provided the greatest impact as a promotional tool, for dissemination of information, answering users' inquires and providing feedback on the promotional initiatives. (Oladokun, Salihu & Seidu 2021).

The benefits of the use of social media in library service is highlighted by Khir; Husain; & Salim (2023) that it helps library staff to share information, register new library users and provide up-to-date information throughout the university community. In the view of Yunis; Tarhim & El-Kassar (2017) social medias are considered a new form of information technologies with a highly interactive nature, which could keep individuals, groups and businesses constantly interacting and communicating and will help users to create, achieve and discover ideas. One of the approaches to identify "social media" is to describe how efficient the given platform and application was used. (Patel & Bhatt 2017) highlighted some digital information. Other researchers like Kietzman; Hermkens; McCarthy; & Silvestre (2011) identified types of social media, engagement and functions of social media; which includes:

1. FACEBOOK is a site that allows users to connect users, work colleagues, friends and people online. It allows users to share pictures, articles, thoughts and their opinion with as many people as they want. This engages the community in form of posts, stories, comments, reactions and messages in order to stay connected with their desired audience or patrons.

2. WHATSAPP is a site that allows sharing in different formats like text, Audio, still moving images and others. The function is for a free cross platform messaging service. It allows users of iPhone, Android phones, Mac and Window PC to call and exchange text, photo, audio and video messages with others across the globe, regardless of the recipient's device.

3. DELICIOUS is a site that allows for Social bookmarking web service for storing, sharing and discovering web bookmarks.

4. NING has a core function which is to help users to create public or private password-protected networks and determine who can view and join. It engages its communities by organizing events to strengthen the community through sharing music, podcasts and other audio content. Staff and patrons can benefit from it by using it to Upload videos; integrate memorable photos and other images with your community

SOCIAL MEDIA CHALLENGES

Maintaining authenticity: Some constraints have been identified to maintain authentic voice and presence on social media, especially when trying to engage with a diverse community with varying interests and needs; as seen in the university community.

Issue of managing negativity: has become another point of view. Social media platforms can sometimes be breeding grounds for negativity and criticism. Managing negative comments and feedback while still encouraging constructive dialogue can be of great challenge. A study of sustained engagement over time shows that the high level of engagement over time can be a challenge especially, as the novelty of social media engagement wears off or as other priorities compete for people's attention.

Balancing promotion and engagement: Finding the right balance between promoting community engagement which can be tasking. Too much promotion can turn people off, while too little can result in missing opportunities to connect. The measuring impact can be seen as very difficult to measure the impact of community engagement efforts on social media, making it a challenge to assess what is working well

and what could be improved. Addressing these challenges requires a thoughtful and strategic approach to community engagement that takes into account the unique characteristics of social media platforms and the communities they serve.

The way forward

Community engagement through social media involves several key steps to be taken by the staff like setting clear goals. Setting clear goals brings clear definition and measurable goals for the library in making efforts to engage the community on social media.

Other steps could include increasing brand awareness and driving websites traffic or fostering community interaction. Understanding your audience is another great deal for the way forward, if you give out time to understand your target audience's preferences, interests and behaviors on social media. This will help your tailor your content and engagement strategies to better resonate with them. Creation of another compelling content develops high- quality, relevant, and engaging content that adds value to your community. This could include informative articles, video, polls or users- generated content.

Another view point is been responsive, monitor your social media channels regularly and respond promptly to comments, message and mentions. This shows that you are listening and value your community's inputs. By adopting this following step, you can effectively engaged your community through social media and build a loyal and engaged followers. Stay consistent, maintain a consistent presence on social media and continue to engage with your communities over time. Consistency helps to build trust and keeps your brand top of mind.

METHODOLOGY

The survey research method was adopted for this study which sought information from respondents on their perception on community engagement through social media in two selected private Universities. The population comprised forty-three (43) library staff and librarians within the university libraries and the library departments from two selected private universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. The selected private universities were Paul University, Awka and Madonna University Okija. A self-developed online survey using Google questionnaire form was created for data collection from the respondents. Data were analyzed using mean scores, simple percentages and frequency count.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result of the analysis was presented in tables and graph charts according to the research questions that guided the study.

Results Table 1: Respondents by Institutions

INSTITUTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
PAUL UNIVERSITY	20	46.50%
MADONNA UNIVERSITY	23	53.50%
TOTAL	43	100

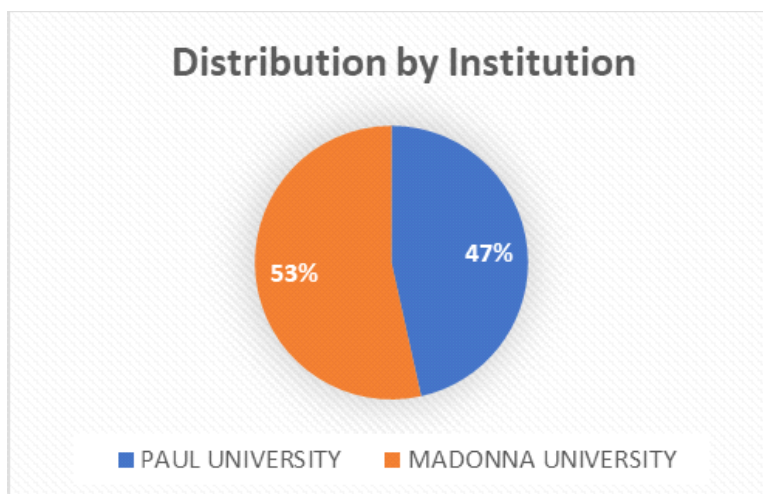


Figure 1: A pie chart showing the distribution of respondents by Institutions

Table 1: Revealed that out of the 43(100%) respondents, 20(46.5%) were respondents from Paul University and 23(53.5%) from Madonna University. The result revealed that Madonna University responded more than Paul University.

Table 2: Respondents' Percentages and Mean scores on the extent of use of the different types of Social media employed in selected private university communities.

S/N	ITEMS	VHE(4)	HE(3)	VLE(2)	LE(1)	MEAN
1	WHATSAPP	30(70%)	7(16%)	6(14%)	0(0%)	3.56
2	FACEBOOK	16(37%)	18(42%)	9(21%)	0(0%)	3.16
3	NING	3(7%)	6(14%)	20(47%)	14(32%)	1.96
4	BLOG	8(18%)	8(18%)	21(50%)	6(14%)	2.42
5	LINKEDIN	8(18%)	16(37%)	13(30%)	6(15%)	2.61
6	INSTAGRAM	6(14%)	23(53%)	8(18%)	6(15%)	2.67
7	TWITTER	10(23%)	17(39%)	10(23%)	6(15%)	2.72
8	TIKTOK	10(23%)	17(40%)	13(30%)	3(7%)	2.79
9	TELEGRAM	13(30%)	8(19%)	22(51%)	0(0%)	2.79
10	EMAIL	19(45%)	13(30%)	1(2%)	10(23%)	2.95
11	YOUTUBE	16(37%)	6(14%)	16(37%)	5(12%)	2.77
12	WIKIPEDIA	16(37%)	14(33%)	8(18%)	5(12%)	2.95
	GRAND MEAN					2.79

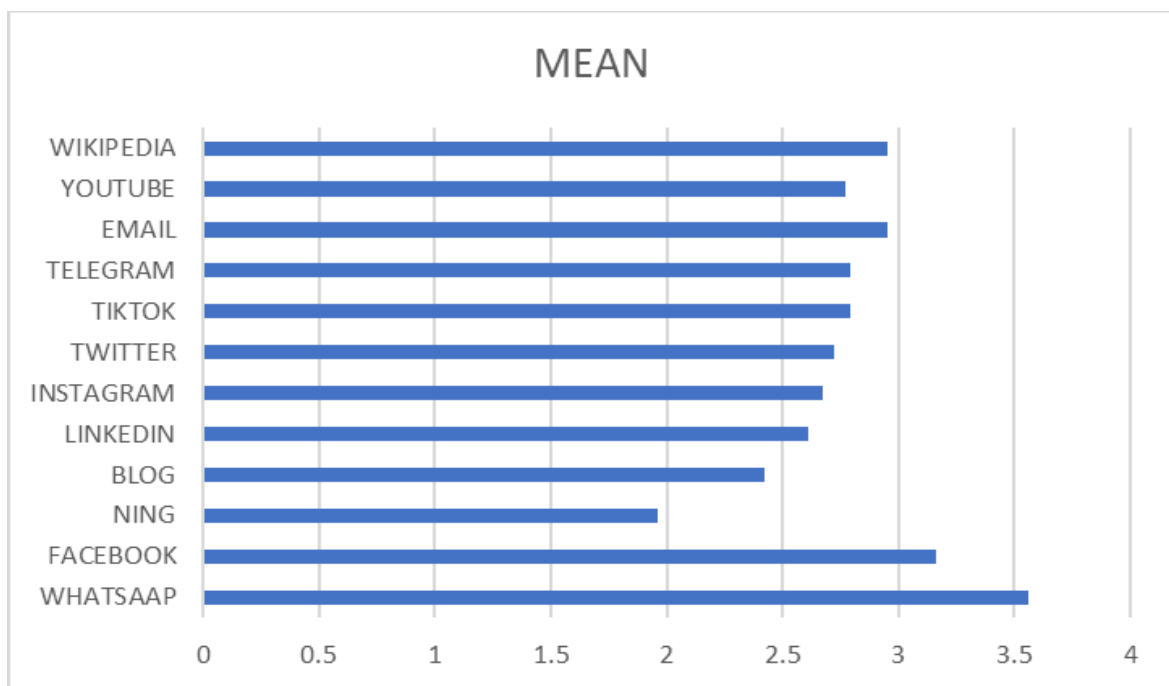


Figure 2: A Bar chart showing the mean score of the types of social media engaged by respondents in the private universities

Table 2: reveals that many respondents had above midpoint (> 2.5) of the mean scores suggesting that most respondents engaged more with these different social media in their university communities except for item 3 (Ning) with the mean of 1.96 and item 4 (Blog) with the mean of 2.42. In other words, the respondents' perception of these two social media types is of low extent. From Figure 2, the chart illustrates clearly the most used and the less used social media types engaged in the University Community. The findings clearly shows that WhatsApp, Facebook, Wikipedia, Email; YouTube amongst others is of very high extent usage. This study is in consonance with the view of Patel & Bhatt (2017) who highlighted some types of social media that are useful to the community; which could be employed by Institutions in community engagement.

Table 3: Library staff perception on the effect of community engagement through social media.

These items were structured on a 4-point scale that ranges from Very High Extent-VHE (4 points), High Extent-HE (3 points), Very Low Extent-VLE (2 points) and Low Extent-LE (1 point). From the results in Table 3, item 1 (22(51%)), item 2 (23(54%)) and item 5 (23(52%))

S/N	ITEMS	VHE(4)	HE(3)	VLE(2)	LE(1)	MEAN
1	A sense of connection among members	22(51%)	16(37%)	3(7%)	2(5%)	3.28
2	Increase in Visibility, understanding of Educational content and Empowerment	16(37%)	23(54%)	4(9%)	0(0%)	3.23
3	Accessibility and reach of University Community	11(25%)	21(49%)	9(21%)	2(5%)	2.95
4	Innovative and inclusive community engagement	13(30%)	19(44%)	11(26%)	0(0%)	3.05
5	Building knowledge Base	23(52%)	11(25%)	7(18%)	2(5%)	3.19
	OVERALL MEAN					3.14

revealed above the mid-point. This implied that a sense of connection among members of the University community, increase in visibility, understanding of educational content, empowerment and knowledge base were perceived to a very high extent. On the other hand, item 3 (21(49%)) and item 4 (19(44%)) were just slightly close to the mid-point which also shows that Accessibility and reach, innovative and inclusive engagement were perceived of very high extent and high extent. The findings shows positive effect as it increases visibility and empowers community; which is in agreement with the view of Boyd & Ellison (2008) that the advent of social media has transformed universities communities in such a great way that allows their library staff to engage the university community through social media which allows for accessibility and innovative engagement

Table 4: Library staff perception on the benefits of community engagement through social media

S/N	ITEMS	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	MEAN
1	Communication Enhancement	16(37%)	23(53%)	2(5%)	2(5%)	3.23
2	Increase learning participation	25(58%)	14(33%)	4(9%)	0(0%)	3.49
3	Improve resource sharing within the university community	23(54%)	16(37%)	4(9%)	0(0%)	3.44
4	Encourages University Community Empowerment	16(37%)	18(42%)	6(14%)	3(7%)	3.09
5	Improves partnership within the university community	20(47%)	18(42%)	4(9%)	1(2%)	3.33
	OVERALL MEAN					3.32

These items were structured on a 4-point scale that ranges from Very High Extent-VHE (4 points), High Extent-HE (3 points), Very Low Extent-VLE (2points) and Low Extent -LE (1 point). From the results in Table 4, item 1 (23(53%)), item 2 (25(58%)) and item 3 (23(54%)) revealed above the mid-point (> 50%). This implied that the community enhancement, increase learning participation and Resource sharing within the university community were perceived to a very high extent. Likewise, item 4 (18(42%)) and item 5 (20(47%)) were just slightly close to the mid-point which also shows that University were perceived to a high extent too. In summary, these items in table 4 were perceived of very high extent and high extent. This explains views of Diga & Kellcher (2009) that the use of social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instant Messages, Ning, Delicious, Twitter, Google, Email, Facebook Messenger and Instagram facilitate

resource sharing which helps in information delivery service. WhatsApp provided the greatest impact as a promotional tool, for dissemination of information, answering users' inquiries and providing feedback. These findings agree with the research of Khir; Husain; & Salim (2023) that it helps library staff to share information, register new library users and provide –up-to-date information throughout the university community.

CONCLUSION

This writing has examined the perception of the university library staff on community engagement through social media by showing the ratio at which social media application has been used. WhatsApp and Facebook were highly used, for Communication Enhancement, Increase learning participation, Improved resource sharing within the university community amongst others. These findings agreed with the research of Khir; Husain; & Salim (2023) that it helps library staff to share information, register new library users and provide –up-to-date information throughout the university community.

Based on the findings, it was concluded that the selected private universities engaged the community through social media applications such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Google, Youtube and lots more. The paper is in consonance with the works of Lartey & Randall (2021) that agreed strongly on the benefits of engaging the community through social media by advocating for community engagement with information resources and the provision of users education in private university environment. Engaging community through social media has to a very high extent brought about accessibility to information resources within the university community. This study has contributed to the body of knowledge because it covered private Universities which most reviewed work did not cover and has provided new literature in the area of social media engagement in libraries.

RECOMMENDATION

The study recommends that librarians and information professionals should motivate and expose the university community to the use of Ning and blog that are perceived to be used to a low extent; so they can be motivated to use them to a very high extent like: WhatsApp, Facebook and Wikipedia perceived. Moreover; librarians should create awareness to the community on the need to maintain the use of social media that are relevant in library service delivery to a very high extent. Furthermore, the library management of private universities should advocate the engagement of the university community through social media by presenting its benefits to the university community for consideration and implementation.

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THE ROLE OF 5TH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION ON INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY IN LIBRARIES

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the roles of the 5th Industrial Revolution on inclusion and diversity in libraries. This study adopted a qualitative research approach, utilising a literature review and analysis of case studies. The research examined various strategies and initiatives libraries can implement to foster inclusivity and embrace diversity in the era of Artificial Intelligence. The findings revealed that libraries played a crucial role in promoting inclusivity and embracing diversity in the 5th Industrial Revolution. Through the implementation of diverse collections, inclusive programming and sensitisation, and accessible services, libraries can create an environment that caters for the needs of diverse communities. Furthermore, integrating emerging technologies and digital resources allows libraries to reach a wider audience and provide equitable access to information and resources. This study contributes to the existing literature by highlighting the significance of inclusivity and diversity in libraries during the 5th Industrial Revolution and the role played by the 5th IR in promoting inclusivity and diversity in libraries in Nigeria. It emphasises the need for libraries to adapt and evolve to meet the changing needs of their user communities, ensuring equal access and representation for all. The review provides valuable insights for library professionals, policymakers, and researchers seeking to leverage the 5th Industrial Revolution to achieve inclusive and diverse library environments for effective service delivery and development.

Introduction

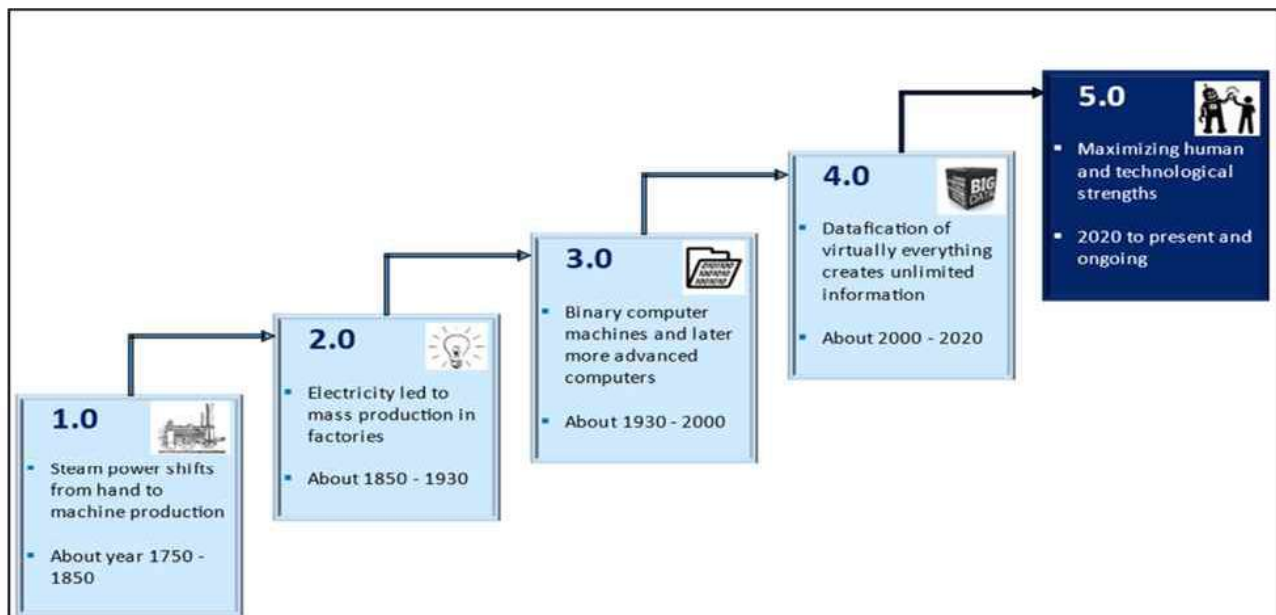
Libraries have always been supportive of knowledge, serving as community centres where people from diverse backgrounds come together to learn, explore, and grow. As society moves into the 21st century, the concepts of inclusion and diversity in all areas of life, including libraries, become increasingly important. In the era of the Fifth Industrial Revolution, marked by a convergence of technologies that blurs the boundaries between the physical, digital, and biological realms, libraries play a transformative role in promoting inclusivity and diversity.

The Fifth Industrial Revolution presents libraries with both fresh opportunities and challenges as they work to advance diversity and inclusivity. On the one hand, marginalised people, especially those who suffer physical or geographic hurdles, may find it easier to access and reach resources as information and services become more digitally distributed. Libraries can interact with patrons through social media platforms, conduct virtual programming, and grant remote access to digital technologies. These developments hold promise for democratising information access and empowering those who have hitherto been marginalised.

Review of Related Literature

Promoting inclusivity and embracing diversity have grown to be crucial objectives for libraries throughout the world in recent years. Libraries must change with the times to meet the ever-changing requirements of their communities and guarantee that all people, from all backgrounds and identities, may use their services and resources. The importance of the Fifth Industrial Revolution in fostering inclusivity and valuing diversity in libraries is examined in this review of the literature.

The fusion of human talents with cutting-edge technologies like artificial intelligence, robotics, and the Internet of Things characterises the Fifth Industrial Revolution, or Industry 5.0. Libraries could be among the many industries that could transform as a result of this movement's newfound opportunities to promote diversity and inclusivity (Schwab, 2015).



Source: Schwab, Klaus (2016)

The 5IR advancement started in 2020 and is still relevant up till now. This revolution is distinct from the 4IR in that it prioritises cooperative synergy over rivalry and potential substitution. That is to say, the objective of the 4IR was to expand the range and quantity of innovative technologies in industries, services, and business environments so that robots and people would fight for jobs and technology would be used to its fullest potential (Schwab, 2016).

Instead of emphasising human replacement with technology, shifting emphases in the 5IR prioritise efforts to identify where each actor thrives and how humans and technology may interact. It is known as the age of augmentation; the fundamental idea of the 5thIR is that technology and people should work together closely to maximise each other's advantages and mitigate one another's disadvantages. Gauri & Eerden (2019) practically described this kind of synergy as "dancing" between humans and robots. Think of this kind of cooperation as people and machines "dancing together." Humans and robots can collaborate and build on each other's strengths instead of competing to produce solutions that are harmonic and synergistic for all parties involved. A second significant difference between the 4IR and 5IR is that the 5IR integrates human and technical strengths to achieve the well-being of a wide range of society stakeholders.

In recent years, the promotion of inclusivity and embracement of diversity have become essential goals for libraries worldwide. As society continues to evolve, libraries must adapt to the changing needs of their communities and ensure that their services and resources are accessible to all individuals, regardless of their backgrounds or identities. This review explores the significance of the 5th Industrial Revolution on the promotion of inclusivity and diversity in libraries (RBS, 2024).

The 5th Industrial Revolution, also known as Industry 5.0, is characterised by the integration of advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence, robotics, and the Internet of Things, with human capabilities. This revolution has the potential to revolutionize various sectors, including libraries, by offering new opportunities to enhance inclusivity and diversity.

One aspect of the 5th Industrial Revolution that can greatly benefit libraries is the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning. AI-powered technologies can help libraries in several ways, such as improving accessibility for individuals with disabilities. For example, AI can assist in converting text to speech or providing real-time translations, making library resources more accessible to those with visual or language barriers (Xu, Lu, Vogel-Heuser, & Wang (2021). Additionally, AI can help libraries personalize their services, recommending relevant resources based on user's preferences and interests thereby, promoting inclusivity by catering to diverse needs and interests.

Moreover, the 5th Industrial Revolution enables libraries to promote diversity by establishing virtual communities and facilitating global connections. Using virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies, libraries can offer immersive experiences that transport users to diverse cultural and historical settings. This not only enhances learning opportunities but also fosters cultural understanding and appreciation. Libraries can also utilise social media platforms and online forums to engage with users from various backgrounds, encouraging dialogue and collaboration among individuals who may not have had the opportunity to interact otherwise.

In addition to technological advancements, the 5th Industrial Revolution (5IR) emphasizes the importance of human-centred design. Libraries can utilize this approach to create inclusive spaces that cater to the diverse needs of their users. For instance, libraries can incorporate universal design principles when renovating or building new facilities, ensuring that physical spaces are accessible to individuals with disabilities. Moreover, libraries can adopt inclusive programming that reflects the interests and experiences of different communities, fostering a sense of belonging and representation.

It is important to note that while the 5th Industrial Revolution presents numerous opportunities for libraries to promote inclusivity and embrace diversity, there are also challenges that need to be addressed. One major concern is the digital divide, which refers to the gap between those who have access to digital technologies and those who do not. Libraries must strive to bridge this divide by providing equitable access to technology and digital resources, particularly in underserved communities. Additionally, libraries must be mindful of potential biases and ethical considerations when implementing AI-powered technologies to ensure that they do not perpetuate existing inequalities or discriminate against certain groups.

Some examples of technologies associated with the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR) as described include:

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** AI and machine learning algorithms that can analyse data, learn from it, and make decisions or predictions.
- **Robotics:** Advanced robots working alongside humans in various sectors, enhancing productivity and safety.
- **Internet of Things (IoT):** A network of interconnected devices that communicate and exchange data, improving efficiency and enabling new services.
- **Biotechnology:** Innovations in genetic engineering, personalized medicine, and synthetic biology.
- **Renewable Energy:** Sustainable energy solutions like solar and wind power that reduce dependency on fossil fuels and lower carbon emissions.

The Changing Role of Libraries

Traditional libraries were once known for housing a huge number of monographs beautifully arranged on metal shelves and quiet study spaces where users gathered to access millions of such library materials without thinking of the innovative technologies. However, modern libraries have transformed library services and spaces into more dynamic spaces where a wide range of resources and services are provided to meet the needs of a diverse population. Therefore, the concepts of inclusion and diversity have become fundamental ones because they reflect changing demographics and societal values (Francis, Salman, Foskett, & Estabrook, 2024).

Part of the significant changes in libraries today is the integration of technology into our daily operations. Electronic databases, digital resources, e-books, e-journals, e-magazines and open-access sources have expanded access to information and reduced the challenges faced by the users of traditional libraries. In addition, some libraries have adopted digital literacy initiatives, organising training and support to bridge the digital divide and empower the have-not communities.

Promoting Inclusion through Outreach and Programmes

Libraries serve as places for socio-cultural inclusion. This is because libraries welcome people of all backgrounds, irrespective of their ages, ethnic gender, or socio-economic status (Vincent, 2018). Through targeted outreach and culturally relevant programmes, libraries can connect with diverse communities, study their information needs, and provide relevant information resources and services that will cater for their unique information needs and interests. This may include bilingual Storytime sessions, cultural heritage celebrations, and workshops on topics such as immigrant rights. Creating and implementing new services to address community needs.

Promoting Inclusion through Diverse and Equitable Access to Collections

Libraries can promote inclusion through their collections. By curating a diverse range of materials that reflect the experiences and perspectives of diverse groups, the library enables all people to express themselves in the literature and resources available to them. This not only promotes a sense of belonging but also empathy, understanding, and respect for different cultures and identities. Similarly, the libraries can plan and implement new book collections that sincerely present new cultural experiences across marginalised communities; support community events that highlight diverse cultures with library services; and hire a diverse staff to increase the number of people who feel represented in the physical space (ALA, 2024).

Promoting Diversity in Library Staff and Leadership

Another important aspect of promoting inclusion in libraries is ensuring diversity in staff and leadership positions. Libraries must strive to create a workforce that reflects the communities they serve and has diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives (RBS, 2024). This diversity enriches the library environment and fosters innovation, creativity, and cultural competency thus, diverse library staff serve as role models and mentors for users, especially those from underrepresented groups who face barriers to accessing educational and employment opportunities. By promoting diversity in hiring practices and professional development efforts, libraries can create a more inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and respected.

The confluence of the 5IR, Inclusion and Diversity

The convergence of 5IR, inclusion and diversity in libraries produces a multiplicative impact that advances society. It creates a setting where equity and representation are promoted by utilising technological breakthroughs (Langella, 2019). AI can be used, for example, to translate content into several languages, increasing the audience for whom knowledge is available. Comparably, virtual reality (VR) can make the narratives of many civilizations come to life, encouraging empathy and understanding in its users.

The Role of the Fifth Industrial Revolution on Inclusion and Diversity in Libraries

The Fifth Industrial Revolution, marked by advances in artificial intelligence, robotics, nanotechnology, and biotechnology, presents both opportunities and challenges for libraries in promoting inclusion and embracing diversity. The role of the 5th IR in library service delivery can never be over-emphasised, this is connected with the advantages brought by the advance in technological research. Some of these roles include but are not limited to the following.

i. Collaboration and Partnerships:

The 5IR promotes human-machine collaboration in service delivery and sometimes interdisciplinary collaboration. For example, librarians can partner with Artificial intelligence experts to develop and teach library models to solve some pressing problems in the library and at times, librarians can partner with technology companies, professional bodies, government agencies, research institutes, universities, community organisations or non-governmental organisations for inclusion and diversity in the library. Librarians can advocate for inclusive policies, participate in AI modelling and training, participate in AI ethics discussions, and co-create library solutions. This will help libraries become catalysts for diversity, fostering innovation and understanding.

ii. Data Analytics: *Librarians can use data-driven insights to improve service delivery to users, collection, and orientation or programmes to diverse user groups. For instance, teaching users how to read and understand the importance of good reading habits across different communities can lead to more inclusive book selections and acquisition by doing this, libraries will become more responsive due to the provision of equitable access to resources for all library users.*

iii. Improved Access and Learning Experiences: *The emerging technologies provide innovative tools and platforms that improve access to information and enable personalised recommendations and learning experiences. Virtual reality simulations, augmented reality storytelling, and AI-driven recommendation systems are just a few examples of how libraries can use technology to engage diverse audiences and cater for their unique information needs.*

iv. Language Translation Services: *The technologies are capable of translating Nigeria's diverse languages through AI-powered language translation services. These services can help libraries provide resources in multiple languages, increasing accessibility for a wider audience.*

To leverage the opportunities of using these emerging technologies for service delivery, libraries and librarians require experts with the following skills otherwise they may need to undergo some special training or workshops to keep abreast of the current trends in the technological space:

- **Technology Integration Specialist:** *To ensure accessibility and inclusivity for all users, libraries require experts who can strategically integrate cutting-edge technologies linked to the Fifth Industrial Revolution into library services.*
- **Data Curator and Analyst:** *Libraries need specialists who can curate, analyse, and present data in a way that supports diversity and inclusion, addresses information biases, and ensures equitable access to information in light of the flood of digital data and AI technology.*
- **Coordinator of Community Engagement:** Libraries are essential for promoting community involvement. Professionals in this position would use technology to close gaps and establish connections with underrepresented groups while ensuring that library services and programmes are inclusive and sensitive to the varied needs and interests of the community.
- **Digital Literacy Educator:** To participate in society in the fifth industrial revolution, one must be digitally literate. When it comes to digital literacy instruction, librarians must put inclusion first. They should offer specialised services and materials that enable people from a range of backgrounds to successfully navigate and prosper in the digital world.
- **Cultural Heritage Preservation Specialist:** Libraries have long been tasked with protecting cultural heritage, but in the context of the Fifth Industrial Revolution, this responsibility has grown to include digital cultural artefact preservation. It is the responsibility of experts in this subject to guarantee that preservation initiatives are inclusive and reflect a range of cultures and viewpoints.

- **Accessible Design Advocate:** *It's critical to make sure that digital technologies used by libraries are accessible to all users, including those with impairments, as they become more and more prevalent.*
- **Cultural Heritage Preservation Specialist:** *Libraries have long been tasked with protecting cultural heritage, but in the context of the Fifth Industrial Revolution, this responsibility has grown to include digital cultural artefact preservation. It is the responsibility of experts in this subject to guarantee that preservation initiatives are inclusive and reflect a range of cultures and viewpoints.*
- **Accessible Design Advocate:** *It's critical to make sure that digital technologies used by libraries are accessible to all users, including those with impairments, as they become more and more prevalent. To foster inclusivity, professionals who support accessible design in libraries should make sure that all users utilise digital resources and services.*

Conclusion

This paper considered the importance of promoting inclusivity and diversity in libraries in the context of the Fifth Industrial Revolution. Libraries play an important role in promoting inclusivity and diversity, serving as important community spaces that provide access to information, resources, and services for people from diverse backgrounds. The Fifth Industrial Revolution, characterised by the integration of digital technologies and artificial intelligence, presents both challenges and opportunities for libraries seeking inclusivity and diversity.

One of the key findings of this paper is that libraries need to actively engage with the diverse needs and interests of their communities. To achieve this, the library maintains inclusive policies that provide equal access to information and services for all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or socio-economic status. and practices should be adopted. This includes providing accessible physical space, resources, and technology, and providing programs and services tailored to the unique needs and interests of diverse communities.

Recommendations

1. *Libraries should actively promote diversity in their collections, programmes, and staff. By offering a wide range of materials that reflect the experiences and perspectives of a variety of people in order for libraries to contribute to a more inclusive society and foster empathy and understanding among their users.*
2. *The government at all levels should invest more in libraries for the proper implementation of all programmes that will foster inclusion and diversity using the 5th IR*
3. *Libraries should strive to recruit and maintain a diverse workforce that reflects the communities they serve. This helps create a welcoming and inclusive environment where people from different backgrounds feel represented and valued.*

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THE STANCE OF LIBRARY STAFF ON USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR LIBRARY SERVICES DELIVERY: A CASE STUDY OF HUSSAINI ADAMU FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC KAZAURE, JIGAWA STATE.

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ABSTRACT

The study focused on the stance of library staff on the use of social media for library services delivery at Hussaini Adamu Federal Polytechnic Kazaure, Jigawa State, as a case study. The objectives of the study were; to identify the types of social media used for services delivery by library staff; to determine the extent of use of social media by library staff in the library understudy; to investigate services delivered using social media in the library understudy; and to ascertain the constraints to effective use of social media for service delivery by library staff in the library understudy. Survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study is 50 library staff comprising 15 academic librarians and 35 library officers working in the academic library understudy. Total enumeration sampling technique was used to cover all 50 library staff as sample for the study. An instrument titled 'Stance of Library Staff on the Use of Social Media for Library Services Delivery Scale (SLSUMLSDS)' was used for data collection and was rated using the four-point scale. Out of the 50 copies of instrument distributed, 45 copies were returned showing 90% return rate. Data generated from the study were analyzed using mean (x) scores. The findings of the study revealed among others that the types of social media used by academic librarians for service delivery are Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram and Blog and library staff use social media for service delivery to a low extent. Based on the findings, the study recommended among others that library staff's management should incorporate more social media platforms for service delivery to enable the provision of round the clock library services to users.

KEYWORDS: Stance, Library staff, Social Media, Library Services Delivery, Jigawa State, Nigeria.

Introduction

Academic libraries are found in tertiary institutions to support teaching, research and learning needs of students, teaching and non-teaching staff of their parent institutions. Uwandu (2020) asserts that academic libraries are libraries attached to institutions of higher learning such as universities, colleges of education, polytechnics and colleges of education that deal with the provision of information resources for research, learning and teaching. Academic libraries are well-stocked with collections to support the objectives of its establishment which is learning, teaching and research. They have been making significant contributions to knowledge generation and provision geared towards meeting the needs of students, staff and immediate community of their parent institutions. The extent to which academic libraries can render effective services to meet the needs of students, staff and immediate community of their parent institutions depending on the type and adequacy of the library staff. Library staff plays vital role in the achievement of the objectives of the library. No library can provide effective services without efficient and dynamic personnel. This implies that the effectiveness of every library depends on the performance of the library personnel. For smooth running of the library, library staff renders services such as circulation services, reprographic services, inter-loan library services, user education / orientation services, reference services, selective dissemination of information, current awareness services, referral services, abstracting and indexing services, among others. The quality of the library personnel play a major role in the quality of services rendered.

This is why Okorie and Okere (2017) reiterate that the academic library must be staffed with a mix of relevant professional, para-professional and supportive staff to ensure qualitative service delivery. Service delivery is the most important function of any academic library. It is an act of rendering services to users of the library. These services should be rendered without reservations in order to achieve the academic library objectives of information dissemination. Unfortunately, services delivered in some academic libraries are done manually due to traditional means of storing and retrieving information. The cumbersome nature of the manual means of delivering services and changing needs of users of the academic libraries together with the introduction of Information and Communication Technologies in library operations prompted the need for libraries to apply new technologies to improve their service delivery.

Effective service delivery in academic library is said to have occurred when the delivered library services match and exceed the expectation of the user, influenced by his information needs (Alex-Nmecha, 2018). In order to remain relevant and meet up with the changing needs and expectations of users in this technological era, academic libraries are integrating new technologies such as social media for effective service delivery. Social media is becoming an indispensable tool used in libraries for improving services. Awurdi (2019)

submits that social media has gradually crept into the library profession and has become a growing tool that is being used to communicate with more potential library users; extending and offering better services to users. In this technological era, it is imperative to note that most academic libraries use social media to maintain their relevance as it enables them share new ideas, knowledge, information, interact with their users and create awareness of new services to meet up with the information needs of their users. Within seconds, library staff can retrieve information, disseminate information to users of the library and also connect with coworkers without much delay. With the use of social media in academic libraries, it can be said that library staff have found an easy way to deliver their services to users of the library. It is a fact that most library staff uses social media for service delivery in academic libraries. However, the extent of social media use by the library staff of the institution studied had not been ascertained. The rationale for conducting the research and the problem worthy of investigating the stance of library personnel on use of social media for service delivery at Hussaini Adamu Federal Polytechnic, Kazaure, Jigawa State is hereby justified.

Objectives of the Study

The following specific objectives guided the study:

- i. *To identify the types of social media used by library staff for service delivery in the library under study.*
- ii. *To determine the extent of use of social media by library staff for service delivery in the library under study.*
- iii. *To investigate services library staff delivers using social media in the library under study.*
- iv. *To ascertain the constraints to effective use of social media for service delivery by library staff in the library under study.*

Literature Review

Tertiary Institutions are known for producing manpower for the economy of the nation. For the successful completion of university academic and professional programmes, the university libraries support both the students and staff to achieve their purposes by providing information resources and quality services. This is achieved through the core functions being performed by the staff of the libraries which are: collection development, cataloguing, circulation, dissemination and preservation of information resources as well as setting up a sustainable platform for ICT adoption and implementation towards the university education system. According to Aina, (2014) opined that library services were been rendered by librarians and such services include: library notices, Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), loans, reservation, registration, dissemination of information, current awareness and reference service. Other library services are library orientation, information literacy programme and electronic resources.

According to Husain and Nazim (2015)'s study, librarians rendered services such as public access catalogue, electronic resources, physical and web based reference service and online general services to their users. Eze and Uzoigwe (2013)'s study on library service provision revealed that services such as user education, user orientation, reference, Internet, bibliographic, electronic databases, reprographic, interlibrary loan and exhibition and displays services were rendered to library users.

Social media space use has been embraced by people in all sphere of life in which information professionals are not left out. Social media space are being used to communicate, share information among two or more people simultaneously on a real-time basis. Monagle and Finnegan (2018) studied the use of social media by new library professionals in the United Kingdom and Ireland. The descriptive research design was adopted for this study using an online survey. Data was collected from 100 librarians who participated in the study. Findings of their study indicated that new library professionals used social media for continuous professional development. Their findings also reported that 85% of the respondents agreed that they used social media for other purposes which included the promotion of library services. The respondents used Twitter, followed by Facebook while the use of Google+ and LinkedIn by the respondents was on the average. Weerasinghe and Hindagolla (2018) examined the use of social networks by academic librarians among 15 state universities in Sri Lanka. Total enumeration was adopted for the study. The findings revealed that majority of the respondents (78.4%) indicated use of personal account social media in the work place. Majority of the respondents used social media space few times in a week while a few used social media every day. The librarians used Facebook (90%), LinkedIn (55%), Twitter (17%) and ResearchGate (eight percent) in their workplace while five percent do not use any social media.

In our society today, social media has become a household name and it seems to be what people cannot do without because it facilitates effectiveness in information sharing. It has provided different avenue to interact with people who may not be in the same location. Likewise in libraries, social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Telegram, YouTube and Blog are used to re-establish connections and interact with

users of the library who have embraced the internet irrespective of their geographical location. This implies that with social media, library services can be offered to the users of the library even when they are not physically present in the library. This is why Oyeniran and Olajide (2019) observed that social media's presence is almost everywhere and the vision of the library within the last few years has been that library services should go to users not necessarily that users should come physically to the library. Libraries desiring to connect constantly with their clients, increase users' satisfaction and this is done through the promotion and presence of social media platforms like YouTube, Blog, etc. for service delivery (Omini & Osuolake, 2019). In a study carried out by Bakare, Yacob and Umar (2018), one of the findings revealed that librarians deliver library services using social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Blog and WhatsApp. Adewojo and Mayowa-Adebara (2016) revealed that library staff mostly uses WhatsApp and Facebook daily in rendering services to users. Omini and Osuolale (2019) found out that academic libraries mostly use Facebook and blog to promote library resources and services.

Agoh and Omekwu (2021) described library and information service delivery as library processes and activities that are deployed by libraries to deliver information services and resources to library users, with the aim of enhancing the activities and productivity of library users. It is not surprising that library staff in academic libraries deliver library and information services using social media to help meet the information needs of library users. Oyeniran and Olajide (2019) discovered that reference services, marketing of information produce and services, strategic dissemination of information, exhibition and display of new arrivals, display of reading lists, online registration of users, among others are various services rendered via social media in the library.

The library is a growing organism as such library staff should be innovative and creative to make use of social media tools available to them for effective service delivery. Social media usage by library staff is very important to keep the library staff abreast with latest news and trends in their profession. Findings of Adewoyin, Onuoha and Ikonne (2017) pointed out that the most used social media tool in libraries was Facebook and library staff used it on a daily basis. Okoroma (2018) revealed that although library staff mostly uses Facebook on a daily basis for reference services but the usage was low. In a study carried out in Australia and New Zealand, Linh as cited in Bakare (2018) analyzed the content of 47 university library websites and found that although two-thirds of libraries used social media technologies, the general indexes of their use were low. Similarly, a study by Danbaki, Mohammed, Gado and Ikegwuro (2020) revealed that to a very small extent social media is being utilized by librarians in Nigeria tertiary institution libraries with Facebook being the most used. Service delivery is fundamental to libraries. Bakare (2018) citing Mahmood and Richardson concluded that academic libraries use Social Networking Sites (SNS) for sharing news, pictures, video clips and marketing their services. Obi, Okore and Kanu (2019) pointed out that answering reference questions, user education, current awareness services, alert users due, display and exhibition, document delivery services and circulation services are library services rendered with social media.

There are some challenges impeding proper application of social media by library staff for service delivery in academic libraries. Emmanuel and Osuolale (2019) identified high cost of internet connectivity, lack of interest in utilizing internet services, low patronage of internet service, and paucity of well-trained library staff on utilization of social media platforms as constraints to effective use of social media in tertiary institutions. They also added that poor attitude towards social media platforms low bandwidth and constant epileptic power supply in accessing internet connectivity is among the constraints. Ezeani and Igwesi as cited in John, Egbeyemi and Oniyide (2020) noted that issues bordering on apathy, lack of awareness, insufficient bandwidth, phobia and desire to embrace this new technology inhibit use of social networking in most libraries especially in developing countries. Furthermore, Danbaki, Mohammed, Gado and Ikegwuro (2020) maintained that lack of finance, limited bandwidth, lack of proper training of library staff in the area of using social media, low level of technology penetration, unreliable power supply and poor network connectivity are challenges facing social media use by Nigerian tertiary institution libraries. Lack of awareness, bandwidth problem, technophobia, lack of maintenance culture, unreliable power supply, lack of staff training and copyright issue are challenges librarians face in using social media (Oyeniran & Olajide, 2019). These challenges hinder proper utilization of social media in service delivery in libraries.

Research Methodology

The survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study is 50 library staff comprising 15 librarians and 30 library officers working in the academic library studied. Total enumeration sampling technique was used to cover all 50 library staff as sample for the study. An instrument titled 'Use of Social Media for Service Delivery by Library Staff Scale (USMSDLSS)' was used for data collection and was rated using the four-point scale. Out of the 50 copies of instrument distributed, 45 copies were returned showing 90% return rate. Data generated from the study were analyzed using mean (\bar{x}) scores. Items with values of 2.50 and above respectively were positively interpreted, while items with values below 2.50 were negatively interpreted. The benchmark for rating is Strongly Agree (SA)/Very High Extent (VHE) = 3.50 – 4.0, Agree (A)/High Extent (HE) = 2.50 – 3.49, Disagree (D)/Low Extent (LE) = 1.5 – 2.49, and Strongly Disagree (SD)/Very Low Extent (VLE) = 0 – 1.49

Data Analysis, Presentation and Discussion

Table 1: Types of Social Media used by Library Staff for Service Delivery in the Library Understudy.

S/N	Social Media Type	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remarks
1.	Facebook	30	15	-	-	3.62	SA
2.	What Sapp	20	24	4	2	3.42	A
3.	Twitter	13	12	25	5	2.05	D
4.	Blog	15	30	3	2	3.11	A
5.	YouTube	5	7	25	13	2.32	D
6.	Telegram	10	10	20	10	2.13	D
7.	LinkedIn	7	13	25	8	2.27	D
8.	Wikis	5	5	33	7	2.22	D
Grand Mean						2.61	A

In Table 1, the respondents strongly agree that Facebook (3.62) is among the types of social media used by library staff for service delivery. They also agree that WhatsApp (3.42) and Blog (3.11) are among the types of social media used by library staff for service delivery. However, they disagree that Twitter (2.05), YouTube (2.32), Telegram (2.13), LinkedIn (2.27), Wikis (2.22) and Library Thing (2.34) are not among the types of social media used by library staff for service delivery in the library studied. The grand mean shows that the respondents agree that social media is used by library staff for service delivery in the library studied. Most of the items the respondents agreed with as the types of social media used by library staff for service delivery are in tandem with the ideas of Adewojo and Mayowa-Adebara (2016), Bakare, Yacob and Umar (2018) and Omini and Osuolale (2019).

Table 2: Extent Library Staff use Social Media for Service Delivery in the Library Understudy.

S/N	Social Media Type	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remarks
1.	Facebook	30	15	-	-	2.18	LE
2.	WhatsApp	20	24	4	2	2.25	LE
3.	Twitter	13	12	25	5	1.48	VLE
4.	Blog	15	30	3	2	2.21	LE
5.	Youtube	5	7	25	13	1.44	VLE
6.	Telegram	10	10	20	10	2.19	LE
7.	LinkedIn	7	13	25	8	1.43	VLE
8.	Wikis	5	5	33	7	1.75	LE
Grand Mean						1.84	LE

The result of the analysis in Table 2 shows that the social media used to a low extent are Facebook, WhatsApp, Blog, Telegram, Wikis and Library Thing with mean scores of 2.18, 2.25, 2.21, 2.19, 1.75 and 1.60 respectively. Others such as Twitter (1.48), YouTube (1.44) and LinkedIn (1.43) are used to a very low extent. Generally, library staff uses social media for service delivery to a low extent in the library studied as shown in the grand mean which is 1.84.

This finding is in consonance with that of Okoroma's (2018) result which revealed that although library staff mostly uses Facebook on a daily basis for reference services but the usage was low. Similarly, the finding is in agreement with that of Linh as cited in Bakare (2018) who analyzed the content of 47 university library websites and found out that although two-thirds of libraries used social media technologies, the general indexes of their use were low. On the contrary, the finding is not in agreement with Danbaki, Mohammed, Gado and Ikegwuro's (2020) findings which revealed that to a very small extent social media is been utilized by librarians in Nigeria tertiary institution libraries with Facebook been the most used.

Table3: Service Delivered by Library Staff using Social Media in the Library Understudy.

S/N Service	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remarks		
1. Reference	6	35	5	4	3.36	A		
2. Marketing of information Product and Services.	5	30	10	5	3.35	A		
3. Selective Dissemination of Inf.	7	28	5	10	3.26	A		
4. User Education	8	30	7	5	3.14	A		
5. Online Registration of Users			10	20	10	2.08	A	
6. Document Delivery Services			8	25	10	7	2.82	A
7. Current Awareness Services			5	35	5	5	3.11	A
8. Circulation Services		4	36	7	3	3.12	A	
9. Exhibition and Display		10	20	12	8	2.90	A	
10. Sharing of News, Picture and Videos			7	30	8	5	3.07	A
11. Inter-Loan Library Services			10	20	10	10	2.62	A
Grand Mean					2.97	A		

In Table 3, it is discovered that all the respondents agree to all the items as the services delivered by library staff using social media in the library studied with grand mean of 2.97. Reference services ranked first with 3.36 mean score, followed by marketing of information products and services (3.35), selective dissemination of information (3.26), user education (3.14), circulation services (3.12), current awareness services (3.11), sharing of news, pictures and videos (3.07), exhibition and display (2.90), document delivery services (2.82) inter-loan library services (2.62) and online registration of users (2.08) mean scores.

The finding of this study corroborates that of Bakare (2018) citing Mahmood and Richardson, Oyeniran and Olajide (2019) and Obi, Okore and Kanu (2019) who identified the services delivered by library staff using social media as reference services, marketing of information produce and services, strategic dissemination of information, exhibition and display of new arrivals, display of reading lists, online registration of users, sharing news, pictures and video clips, user education, current awareness services, alert users due, display and exhibition, document delivery services and circulation services.

Table 4: Constraints to Effective Use of Social Media for Service Delivery by Library staff Understudy.

S/N Social Media Type	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remarks		
1. Inadequate Finance		9	29	8	6	3.19	A	
2. Unreliable Power Supply		7	35	7	6	3.61	SA	
3. Limited Bandwidth		15	25	5	5	3.31	A	
4. Poor Network Connectivity			10	20	10	10	3.22	A
5. Technophobia		7	28	7	8	2.55	A	
6. Lack of Staff Training		8	25	7	10	2.65	A	
7. Lack of Maintenance Culture			10	30	5	5	2.77	A
Grand Mean					2.77	A		

The result of the analysis in Table 4 shows that the respondents strongly agree to unreliable power supply as one of the constraints to effective use of social media for service delivery by library staff in the library understudy with mean score of 3.61. They also agree to the other constraints such as inadequate finance (3.19), limited bandwidth (3.31), poor network connectivity (3.22), technophobia (2.55), lack of staff training in the area of social media (2.65) and lack of maintenance culture (2.77). The grand mean of 3.04 indicates that there are constraints to effective use of social media for service delivery by library staff in the library studied. This finding affirms with the findings of Emmanuel and Osuolale (2019), Oyeniran and Olajide (2019), Ezeani and Igwesi as cited in John, Egbeyemi and Oniyide (2020) and Danbaki, Mohammed, Gado and Ikegwuro (2020).

Conclusion

Social media is very important in academic libraries as it will enable library staff to be more engaged with library users online. Based on the findings of the study, Facebook, WhatsApp and Blog are the types of social media used by library staff for service delivery. There is need for academic library management to integrate other social media tools in the library for effective service delivery. Social media can be used for rendering services such as: reference services, marketing of information products and services, selective dissemination of information, user education, online registration of users, document delivery services among others. However, irrespective of the benefits of social media, there are constraints to effective use of social media by library staff in the library. These constraints hinder academic libraries from rendering round the clock library services to the ever growing library users.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommend that:

- *Academic library management should incorporate more social media platforms for service delivery by library staff to enable round the clock library services to library users.*
- *Efforts should be made by academic library management to formulate viable social media policies in the library to enable library staff to fully utilize social media for effective service delivery.*
- *Seminars and workshops should be organized for library staff by academic library management on issues bordering on social media skills so as to ensure more services delivered by library staff using social media.*
- *Government and academic institution management should allocate reasonable fund in their annual budget to improve the use of social media for service delivery in the library.*
- *Academic library management should make efforts to provide regular and uninterrupted power supply in the library to ensure full integration of social media for service delivery.*

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USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ENHANCING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN LIBRARIES

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Abstract

The paper focused on the use of social media for enhancing community engagement in libraries. All types of libraries have communities they serve and one of the most effective ways to do that in the digital era is the use of technologies such as social media networks. This is because social media platforms have the capacity and potentials to connect people wherever they are. Social media networks enable the libraries to engage with their diverse community members and vice-versa. This facilitates community inclusion in library activities and services. Thus, the paper explores the multifaceted role of social media in enhancing community engagement and advancing the mission of libraries shedding light on its benefits and challenges.

Keywords: Social media, Community, Engagement, Libraries.

Introduction

Social media refers to online platforms and applications that enable users to create, share, and exchange content, information, and ideas within virtual communities and networks. Folorunsho (2019) states that social media is a communication forum that allows user to electronically share information and knowledge with each other. These platforms facilitate user-generated content, interactions, and collaborations through various communication tools, such as text, images, videos, and multimedia content. Sudipta and Chakraborty (2015) affirm that social media depends on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individual can share, co-create and discuss user generated content. Social media platforms range from popular networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn to multimedia sharing platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Snapchat. Users can connect with friends, family, colleagues, and like-minded individuals, engage with content through likes, comments, and shares, and participate in online discussions, groups, and communities based on shared interests, affiliations, or geographic locations. Social media has become an integral part of modern communication, enabling individuals, organizations, businesses, and communities to connect, communicate, and collaborate in real-time across geographical boundaries and cultural divides. Social media platforms also serve as powerful marketing and advertising channels for businesses, brands, and content creators to reach and engage with their target audiences. Through targeted advertising, influencer partnerships, and sponsored content, businesses can promote products, services, and campaigns to a diverse and global audience, driving brand awareness, customer engagement, and sales conversions. Chu and Du (2013) stated that social networking present vital marketing opportunities to libraries, in particular Facebook and twitter have been used for marketing. Social media analytics tools provide valuable insights into user behavior, preferences, and trends, allowing businesses to optimize their marketing strategies, measure campaign performance, and track return on investment (ROI).

The integration of social media into library operations has emerged as a transformative strategy for fostering community engagement and extending library services beyond physical boundaries. As digital technologies continue to permeate society, libraries are leveraging social media platforms to connect with diverse audiences, facilitate information dissemination, and promote literacy initiatives. Scholars emphasize the pivotal role of social media in reshaping library-user interactions and enhancing access to resources (Oseghale & Okocha, 2020). The dynamic nature of social media allows libraries to interact with patrons in real-time, addressing inquiries, and fostering dialogue around library services and programs (Akinpelu & Adegbilero-Iwari, 2019). Moreover, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp have become integral tools for libraries in Nigeria to reach a broader demographic and bridge information gaps (Adigun & Agboola, 2021). Through these platforms, libraries

can disseminate information about upcoming events, share educational content, and provide virtual reference services, thereby enhancing accessibility (Adigun et al., 2022). Additionally, social media facilitates collaborative efforts among libraries and educational institutions, enabling the exchange of resources and the promotion of literacy initiatives (Adewole & Oyelude, 2020). Libraries are increasingly leveraging social media not only to disseminate information but also to cultivate a culture of reading and lifelong learning within their communities. By curating and sharing relevant content, hosting virtual book clubs, and organizing online storytelling sessions, libraries promote literacy and educational attainment (Oyelude & Akinpelu, 2021). Furthermore, social media platforms serve as catalysts for building partnerships between libraries and various community stakeholders, including schools, NGOs, and government agencies. Through strategic collaborations, libraries expand their reach, amplify their impact, and foster community development (Oyelude & Akinpelu, 2021). In essence, the adoption of social media by libraries in Nigeria represents a paradigm shift in library practices, enabling them to adapt to the evolving needs and preferences of their users. By harnessing the power of social media, libraries can engage with their communities more effectively, promote literacy and education, and forge meaningful partnerships with diverse stakeholders. This paper explores the multifaceted role of social media in enhancing community engagement and advancing the mission of libraries in Nigeria, shedding light on its benefits and challenges in the digital age.

Types of social media

Social media encompasses a wide range of platforms that facilitate online communication, interaction, and content sharing among users which librarians use. Echezona, Afegbua & Mommoh (2020) and Onuoha, and Chukwueke (2021) outlined the various types of social media platforms to include the following.

MySpace: MySpace as one of the social media networks was launched in the year 2003. The central component of this media network is music and became the most popular network of its kind; however, after various debacles, it had been overturned by other online competitors such as Facebook.

Facebook: This media network is the most widely used by students and youth with over 1.11 billion active users as of the year 2020. Facebook provides a platform for connection via sharing photos, videos and text updates. In this network, users are permitted to create personal profiles from groups and establish relationships with people and companies. There is the area of timeline and status update, creation of a link, mentioning and tagging of the other users in a conversation.

Ning: Although not popular among the young population, Ning is a social media known for its ability prone to allow users to build an online community network. With this network, users can build their community through interests, hobbies or activities. Users can communicate with members of the site through the facilities available on the site such as email, blogs, discussion forums, chat rooms, rooms, photos, video and file sharing. Some distinguished features of Ning are its application within the field of education such as distance learning, teaching and learning in science and psychology of psychology, English and technology and the subject of sports. This indicates that Ning's site is suitable for a new platform to help improve the relationship and interaction between the librarian, student's library associations etc.

Weblog: A weblog often shortened as a blog is an online journal or informational website displaying information in reverse chronological order, with the latest posts appearing first, at the top. It is a social media network that offers writers or group of writers the ability to share their views on a particular subject. By creating a weblog, one will be able to disseminate information to lots of people at one time. This could be in the area of updating the library users on new collections or just conversing with library staff.

Meebo: Meebo may also not be popular among young people but it exists. It is an open source, web-based instant messaging (IM) social media network that allows one to use multiple IM providers such as Yahoo Messenger, AIM, Hotmail, Google Talk, ICQ and jabber simultaneously. An interesting feature of Meebo remains its support for online chatting or virtual reference service in the library.

LinkedIn: More or less referred to as professional/business media network, LinkedIn is one of the populous social media networks. It is business-oriented network and the world largest professional network, with over 300 million users worldwide. The network allows users to create professional profiles, build a network and access people, information and opportunities through the web. An interesting feature remains its ability to allow the library patrons to connect with the library and other library users in the network, people that can help them find information.

Twitter: Twitter is one of the most powerful social media networks. It an online microblogging network for distributing short messages among group of recipients either via personal computer or mobile telephone.

Twitter offers its users the opportunity to communicate with others under the "follow" list brief messages, or tweets of not more than 140 characters. Using twitter can be important in the area of keeping library community updated on daily activities, like frequently updated collections, new arrival, current content services of the library etc.

Flickr: This is another widely used social media network with over 112 million registered members. It is an image and video-hosting online community network. Flickr allows users to create a profile page containing photos and videos that the user has uploaded and also grants the ability to add Flickr user as a contact. Most interestingly, Flickr, as an image collection. Through this means libraries can share photo collections of workshops; conferences and different programs that are organized in the library.

YouTube: YouTube is an online video sharing and social media network and the most visited website world-wide, with over one billion monthly users. One can create videos and upload them using YouTube by creating Channels. This media network can serve the purpose of allowing the library to circulate videos of library services and programmes, e-learning tutorials and other event of the library to the user community.

WhatsApp: WhatsApp is a social media platform with instant free messaging and voice over telephoning service. Instant text messaging, voice call, video calls documents and media sending service are all available on this platform. Librarians can send instant message to users and get instant response. Urgent information that requires library users and library staff attentions can be communicated to them even

Instagram: Instagram is employed by librarians to showcase library spaces, collections, and events through visually appealing photos and videos. Librarians also use Instagram Stories to provide behind-the-scenes glimpses and engage with followers (Galičić et al., 2019).

Pinterest: Librarians curate themed boards on Pinterest to share book recommendations, educational resources, and creative ideas for library programming. Pinterest serves as a visual discovery tool for patrons seeking inspiration and information (Johnson, 2020).

Library Community

The concept of the library community encompasses a broad and dynamic network of individuals, groups, and organizations connected by their shared engagement with library resources, services, and spaces. Understanding the intricacies of the library community involves examining its composition, dynamics, and the multifaceted relationships that exist within it.

Libraries serve as focal points within their communities, providing access to information, supporting educational endeavors, and fostering cultural enrichment. As stated by Lankes (2011), libraries are not merely buildings or collections but social institutions that actively contribute to the fabric of their communities. The library community comprises various stakeholders, including patrons, librarians, educators, local government entities, and community organizations, each playing a unique role in shaping the library's identity and impact (Gordon, 2018).

Patrons are central to the library community, encompassing individuals of all ages, backgrounds, and interests who utilize library services and resources for a multitude of purposes. According to Dempsey (2017), patrons contribute to the vibrancy of the library community through their active participation in programs, events, and discussions. Librarians, as facilitators and stewards of knowledge, play a crucial role in cultivating a sense of belonging within the library community through their dedication to service, expertise, and advocacy (Hider, 2018). Furthermore, the library community extends beyond the physical boundaries of the library building, encompassing virtual spaces and online platforms where patrons and librarians interact and collaborate. In today's digital age, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram serve as vital channels for fostering community engagement and extending the reach of library services (Galičić et al., 2019).

Within the library community, relationships are characterized by mutual respect, trust, and collaboration. Librarians work closely with educators to support curriculum objectives, provide research assistance, and promote information literacy skills among students (Gordon, 2018). Additionally, libraries forge partnerships with local government agencies, non-profit organizations, and businesses to address community needs, promote civic engagement, and enhance access to resources and services (Lankes, 2011).

How Libraries can use social media to enhance community engagement

Libraries can leverage social media platforms in various ways to enhance community engagement, extend their reach, and foster meaningful interactions with patrons. By strategically utilizing these digital tools, libraries can create vibrant online communities and cultivate stronger relationships with their users.

Sharing Information and Updates: Libraries can use social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to disseminate information about upcoming events, programs, and services (Mbam 2018). Regular updates on library hours, special events, and new resources keep patrons informed and engaged with the library's offerings.

Promoting Library Resources and Services: social media provides libraries with a platform to showcase their collections, databases, and online resources. Adigun & Agboola (2021) stated that librarians can highlight specific resources, recommend reading materials, and provide tutorials on accessing and utilizing library services effectively.

Facilitating Two-Way Communication: Platforms like Twitter and Instagram enable libraries to engage in direct communication with patrons, responding to inquiries, feedback, and suggestions in real-time (Oyelude & Akinpelu, 2021). Librarians can use these channels to address patron queries, offer assistance, and foster dialogue on topics of interest.

Hosting Virtual Events and Programs: Social media platforms offer opportunities for libraries to host virtual events such as author talks, book clubs, and workshops (Adewole & Oyelude, 2020). Live streaming tools on platforms like Facebook and Instagram allow libraries to engage with patrons remotely, expanding access to library programming.

Creating Community-Centric Content: Librarians can create content tailored to the interests and needs of their community, such as book recommendations, local history highlights, and educational resources (Galičić et al., 2019). By curating engaging and relevant content, libraries can attract and retain followers on social media platforms.

Building Partnerships and Collaborations: social media serves as a platform for forging partnerships with local organizations, schools, and community groups (Brower, 2019). Collaborative efforts, such as joint events or promotions, not only expand the library's reach but also strengthen its ties within the community.

Celebrate Community Achievements and Milestones: Celebrate community achievements, milestones, and cultural events through social media platforms. Recognize local authors, artists, educators, and community leaders, and share content related to holidays, festivals, and special occasions relevant to the community.

Use Visual Content and Multimedia: Incorporate visually appealing content, such as photos, videos, infographics, and memes, into social media posts to capture attention and enhance engagement. Experiment with different formats and styles to create shareable and memorable content that resonates with the library community.

Monitor Analytics and Feedback: Monitor social media analytics, insights, and feedback to evaluate the effectiveness of engagement strategies, track audience engagement metrics, and gather insights into community preferences, interests, and behaviors. Use this data to refine and optimize social media content and engagement efforts over time.

By implementing these strategies, libraries can effectively use social media platforms to engage with their communities, build relationships, and enhance the overall library experience for patrons both online and offline.

Benefits of Libraries using social media for Community Engagement

Libraries harnessing social media platforms for community engagement experience a plethora of advantages, enriching their services and expanding their outreach. Below are some key benefits:

Enhanced Visibility and Reach: Social media platforms provide libraries with an avenue to extend their visibility beyond physical locations, reaching a wider audience (Oseghale & Okocha, 2020). By maintaining active profiles on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, libraries can connect with community members who may not frequent the physical library premises.

Improved Communication Channels: Social media facilitates direct and immediate communication between libraries and patrons, fostering engagement and interaction (Adigun & Agboola, 2021). Librarians can respond to inquiries, provide assistance, and share information about library resources and events in real-time, enhancing accessibility and responsiveness.

Effective Promotion of Library Services and Events: Social media platforms serve as powerful tools for promoting library services, events, and programs (Galičić et al., 2019). By leveraging features such as posts, stories, and events, libraries can generate interest and participation within the community, driving attendance and engagement.

Community Building and Engagement: social media enables libraries to build online communities centered around shared interests, values, and activities (Adewole & Oyelude, 2020). Through engaging content, discussions, and user-generated contributions, libraries can foster a sense of belonging and camaraderie among patrons, strengthening community ties.

Increased Accessibility and Convenience: Social media platforms offer patrons convenient access to library resources and services from anywhere with an internet connection (Oyelude & Akinpelu, 2021). Users can stay updated on library news, access digital resources, and communicate with library staff at their convenience, enhancing overall accessibility.

Feedback and Insights: Social media channels provide libraries with valuable feedback and insights into patron preferences, needs, and opinions (Brower, 2019). By monitoring engagement metrics, comments, and messages, libraries can gain actionable insights to tailor their services and programs to better meet community needs.

Challenges of libraries using social media for community engagement.

Libraries have increasingly turned to social media platforms as a means to engage with their communities in the digital age. However, this transition comes with its own set of challenges. Below are some of the key challenges faced by libraries in using social media for community engagement, along with citations to support each point:

Maintaining Relevance: One challenge libraries face is maintaining relevance on constantly evolving social media platforms. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram frequently update their algorithms and features, requiring libraries to adapt their strategies to remain visible and engaging. Vinopal (2013) stated that Keeping up with the rapid pace of change in social media can be daunting for many libraries.

Content Creation: Generating diverse and engaging content consistently can be a significant challenge for libraries. Libraries must strike a balance between promotional content, educational material, and community-focused posts to keep their audience interested. According to Lacy (2018) Content creation can be time-consuming and requires staff with a diverse skill set.

Limited Resources: Many libraries operate with limited resources, including staff time and budget, which can constrain their ability to effectively manage social media platforms. Small and under-resourced libraries may struggle to allocate time and personnel to social media efforts (Washburn & Keller, 2017).

Privacy Concerns: Libraries must navigate privacy concerns when interacting with patrons on social media platforms. They need to ensure that they respect patrons' privacy rights and maintain confidentiality, especially when responding to inquiries or providing assistance publicly. According to Zimmer (2018) Libraries must carefully consider the privacy implications of their social media activities, particularly in terms of user data collection and sharing.

Measurement and Evaluation: Assessing the impact and effectiveness of social media engagement can be challenging for libraries. They need to develop metrics and evaluation methods to gauge the success of their efforts in reaching and engaging their target audience. Tay (2019) states that Measuring the impact of social media engagement on library services requires clear goals and relevant metrics.

Navigating Online Communities: Libraries may encounter negative interactions or trolling behavior within online communities, which can affect their ability to foster constructive engagement. They must develop strategies for managing and responding to such instances while maintaining a positive online presence. As observed by Raju and Urbano (2020) Navigating online communities requires libraries to be proactive in addressing negative feedback and fostering positive interactions.

Digital Divide: Despite the widespread use of social media, there remains a digital divide that can limit access to library services and resources for certain segments of the population. Libraries need to consider how they can use social media in ways that are inclusive and accessible to all community members. Libraries must be mindful of the digital divide and ensure that their social media efforts do not exclude marginalized groups (Mapes, 2016).

Other challenges as enumerated by Onuoha and Chukwueke (2021) include:

Lack of knowledge of how to use social media by some librarians and community members, low interest of librarians in learning and utilizing social media networks, unreliable power supply, inadequate training opportunities for library staff. and slow speed of network.

Conclusion

Despite the challenges associated with the use of social media, the libraries should not lose sight of the fact that social media tools can be used to engage the community more effectively. Social media platforms will enable the libraries and the librarians to set up a web presence in the community. It can be an effective way to encourage community to take action and spread the word about the library, in terms of services and resources. Libraries will need to choose the social media platforms that work for their communities. Whatever platforms they choose must have some kind of plan that outlines their goals and embraces philosophies that supports interactivity with communities (Dowd, 2013). Therefore, libraries will need to identify the platforms most effective to connect their communities. The libraries should promote the use of social media well So that with time they will gain a lot of followers and it will become an effective way to inform their communities about events and services. Since social media has a great potential inherent in promoting the libraries, the librarians as a matter of fact must embrace the use of social media and be willing to continue to learn how to use them to engage their communities, thereby becoming relevant in their communities in this digital era.

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USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES BY THE STUDENTS OF FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC, DAURA, KATSINA STATE: THE EXTENT AND THE RISKS

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Abstract

The most common and fastest way to associate with individual and group of people in the society is through social networking sites. The paper entails about the uses of social networking sites by the students of Federal Polytechnic, Daura, Katsina state. Federal Polytechnic, Daura is a newly established institution found in the year 2019. The also demonstrated and elaborates the extent of uses and some risk they come across while using the sites. The paper deals with different platform in which the people gather to share information and many more ideas. The study also shows the impact and effect of social networking site among the students. The paper gives details on how survey research method from four selected departments as respondents was used to analyses the data for full interpretation. Discussion of the result that shows all the students access SNSs via computes, some via phones and some via both computers and phones. As part of recommendations, the students shall be rejecting any offer of sexual predators if they don't like. Conclusions were also put in place.

Key Words: Social Networking Sites, FEDPODRA, Extent of Use, Risk.

Introduction

There are hundreds of social networking sites, but the fifteen (15) most popular, according to Ahmed (2019), are Facebook, YouTube, Facebook Messenger, Whatsapp, Instagram, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn, Skype, Snap chat, Pinterest, Line, Viber, Wechat and Tumbler. Social networking site, as mentioned by Albert (2012), is an activity of some individuals towards forming a particular group with so many things in common. Social networking sites allow users to develop profiles of their backgrounds and interests, communicate with friends and strangers and share thoughts, photos, internet links, music and more. Ellison et al (2007) opined that SNSs, such as Friendster, CyWorld, and MySpace, allow individuals to present themselves, articulate their social networks and establish or maintain connections with others. The introduction of SNSs has involved millions of users many of whom have incorporated these sites into their daily activities (Bilgin, 2018). Children and youth worldwide have adopted those sites enthusiastically, partly because of the erosion of children's freedoms in the physical world (Gill, 2008).

Review of Related Literature

Social networking as emphasized by Albert (2012), is an activity of some individuals towards forming a particular group with many things in common. However, Social Networking Sites (SNSs) allow users to develop profiles of their background and interest, communicate with friends and strangers and share thoughts, photos, internet link, music and more. Ellison et al (2007) opined that social networking sites such as Friendster, CyWorld, and MySpace, allow individuals to present themselves, articulate their social networks and establish or maintain connections to others. Social networking sites have various technological affordances supporting a wide range of internet and practice. While their key technological features are fairly consistent, the cultures that emerge around them are varied. Most sites support the maintenance of pre-existing social networks, but others help stranger to connect based on shared interests, political views or activities. Some sites cater to diverse audience, while others attract people based on common language or shared racial, sexual, religious, or nationality-based identities. Furthermore, Ellison et al. (2007) mentioned that these sites can be oriented towards work-related contexts (e.g. LinkedIn.com), romantic relationship initiation (the original goal of Friendster.com), connecting those with shared interest, such as music or politics (e.g. MySpace.com) or the extent to which they incorporate new information and communication tools, such as mobile connectivity, blogging and photo/video sharing.

According to history, the first social networking site was launched in 1997. SixDegrees.com, while existing, attracted millions of users. But it failed to become a sustainable business and their services were closed in 2000. The next is Live Journal, which was invented by Fitzpatrick b. in 1999. LinkedIn and MySpace were started in 2003. However, in early 2004, Mark Zuckerberg invented Facebook. Also, in the same year, Flickr and Orkut were launched likewise, in 2005 some Social Networking Sites like YouTube, Ning and Bebo were introduced. Then Twitter and others were introduced in 2006. Facebook was initially designed to support distinct college networks only. It began in early 2004 as a Harvard only social

networking site. To join at that time, a user had to have a Harvard.edu email address. A Facebook began to support other schools; those users were also required to have university email addresses associated with their institutions. Being the biggest SNS, Facebook has over 1.4 billion users (On Blast Blog, 2019) and dominates the industry with 85% of the internet users worldwide except China (Ahmad, 2019).

Nevertheless, most users of social networking site said that the sites are good for our society, but others contended that the dangers of social media outweigh the benefits. The proponents of social networking sites argued that these online communities promote increased communication with people from around the world. Ellison, et al. (2007) mentioned that participants may use the sites to interact with people they already know offline or meet new people. Social Networking Sites allow people with common interest or beliefs to communicate and share their views. It is also enables people to overcome social anxiety. Therefore those who have a difficulty to communicate in person are more comfortable to interact via internet. Moreover, students use Social Networking Sites to discuss educational topics, assignments, and meet new students from around the world. However, social networking sites help in connecting students and their tutors (Oradini and Saunders, 2008). Also carlin (2007), reported that almost 60% of student who use social networking sites talk about education online, and more than 50% talk about specific school work.

On the other hand, the opponents argued that Social Networking Sites expose users to predators, increase vulnerability to computer virus (kumar & Somani, 2018), lower worker productivity and promote short attention spans. Social Networking Sites is also seen as time wasting and social isolation that causes personality disorders, such as inability to have real conversation. Moreover, SNSs users trust their peers' just as much as technical experts and more than CEOs, governments and academics (Hootsuite, 2018). Posting of personal information may expose one to sexual or financial predators and lost job opportunities from employers finding embarrassing photos and comments. So also, the site cannot verify that people are who they claim to be; therefore, online predators are able to mask their true identities. Likewise, Roblyer et al. (2010) described that more than one third of ten us instant messaging (IM) to have social communications and don't want say in face-to-face conversations with their peers, like asking someone out. However, Ybarra, et al. (2007) argued that teenagers who communicate in multiple ways online are most at risk of online victimization, as are those who seek out opportunities to talk about sex with unknown people and who have unknown people on the buddies list. Finally, Social Networking Sites users are considered as vulnerable to security attacks, such as hacking sensitive information and virus (Kumar & Somani, 2018).

Types of Social Networking Sites

Social networking simply refers to using the internet-based social media sites to be connected with friends, family, colleagues, or customers. Social networking can have a social purpose, business purpose, or both through sites like Facebook, X (formerly twitter), Instagram, and YouTube. There are many of social networking sites in the world but in the context of this paper as it want show the frequent social networking site visited by the students of Federal Polytechnic, Daura, four (4) most popular are mention as:

1. Facebook
2. Twitter
3. Instagram
4. Youtube

Facebook

Facebook is a social networking sites that makes it easy for a person to connect and share with family and friends online. It was originally designed for college students, and was created in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg.

Twitter

Twitter can be seen as a free social networking site where users broadcast short posts knows as “tweet”. These tweets can contain text, videos, photos, or links.

Instagaram

Instagram is a free online photo-sharing application and social network platform that was acquired by Facebook in 2012.

YouTube

YouTube is a free video sharing website that makes it easy to watch online videos. Person can even create and upload his own videos to share with others.

Research Questions

1. *What are the types of social networking sites visited by students of Federal Polytechnic Daura?*
2. *Which are the frequent Social Networking Sites uses by students of Federal Polytechnic Daura?*

3. *To what extent does the student of Federal Polytechnic Daura use Social Networking Sites?*
4. *What are the risks do the students of Federal Polytechnic Daura encounter in using Social Networking Sites?*

Research Objectives

1. *To determine the types of Social Networking Sites visited by students of Federal Polytechnic Daura.*
2. *To determine the frequent Social Networking Sites uses by students of Federal Polytechnics Daura.*
3. *To identify the extent to which the students of Federal Polytechnic Daura uses the Social Networking sites.*
4. *To find out the risks the students of Federal polytechnic Daura encounter in using Social Networking Sites.*

Methodology

Survey research design was adopted for this study. The target population comprised of National Diploma students, from some selected departments which includes Health Information Management, Science Laboratory Technology, business administration, and Agricultural Technology Departments of Federal Polytechnic Daura. The instrument used for the collection of data was questionnaire where 150 copies were distributed to the respondents at random out of which 120 were returned. The data generated for the study was analyzed using frequency tables and percentages.

Table 1: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO DEPARTMENTS

S/N	RESPONDENTS	Frequency	Percentage
1	Health Information Management	45	37.5
2	Science Laboratory technology	40	33.3
3	Business Administration	20	16.7
4	Agricultural Technology	15	12.5
	TOTAL	120	100%

The above table shows that 37.5% of the respondents are students from Health Information Management department, 33.3% are from Science Laboratory Technology department, 16.7% are from Business Administration department and 12.5% are Agricultural Technology department.

Table 2: DEVICES USED IN ACCESSING THE SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

S/N	ITEMS	Frequency	Percentage
1	Through computers	55	45.8
2	Through phone	40	33.3
3	Through both computer and phone	25	20.8
	TOTAL	120	99.9

The table above shows that 45.8% of the students accessed the SNSs via computers only. While 33.3% use mobile phones to accessed the SNSs. Also 20.8% of the students accessed the SNSs through both computers and mobile phones.

Table 3: TYPES OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES VISITED

S/N	ITEMS	Frequency	Percentage 100
1	Facebook	120	100
2	Twitter	25	20.8
3	Instagram	30	25
4	YouTube	25	20.8

Above shows that all the 120 students have Facebook account and 20.8% have Twitter account, 25% have Instagram account and 20.8% have YouTube account.

Table 4: TIME SPENT IN ACCESSING THE SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

S/N	ITEMS	Frequency	Percentage
1	Below 2 hours daily	60	50
2	2-4 hours daily	35	29.1
3	Above 4 hours daily	25	20.8
	TOTAL	120	99.9

Table above shows that 50% of the students with SNSs accounts spent less than 2 hours daily and 29.1% spent 2-4 hours in a day. However, 20.8% spent more than \$ hours ina day.

Table 5: THE RISKS ENCOUNTERED IN ACCESSING THE SNSs

S/N	ITEMS	Frequency	Percentage
1	419/Fraudulent	24	27.2
2	Sex predation	20	22.7
3	Wastage of time/resources	44	50
4	Inviting virus and malwares	20	22.7
5	Leakage of sensitive information	24	27.2
6	Theft identity	12	13.6
7	Discourages face to face interaction	32	36.3

Above table shows 27.2% of the students using the sites encountered scam/419 and 22.7% came across sexual predators, while 50% consider it wastage of time and resources. However, 22.7% were attacked by virus and malwares as a result of using the sites. While 27.2% realized the leakage of sensitive information while using the sites, 13.6% know that their identity may be stolen and used by other people. Finally, 36.3% claimed that using the social networking sites discourages them from face to face interaction.

Discussion

This study revealed that all the students of Federal Polytechnic Daura have access to internet either through computers or mobile phones or both the two. Likewise, all of those having accessibility to internet use Social Networking Sites. Facebook, being the site with the highest visitors, is used by all of the students of the polytechnic. However, almost half of them have twitter accounts; also about half of them have Instagram account. Then about half use YouTube. Nevertheless, nearly half spend less than two hours using the sites in a day more than a quarter of them use the sites between 2 to 4 hours daily while more than a quarter use the sites for more than 4 hours in a day.

So also, the students are prone to encounter some risk while hanging out on the sites because more than a quarter of them encounter scam (419) attempts and almost quarter come across sexual predators, while half consider it as a wastage of time and resources. Likewise, less than a quarter of them were attacked by viruses and malwares as a result of using the sites. While more than quarter realized the leakage of sensitive information as a result of using the sites, some stumbled upon identity theft used by other people. Finally, over one-third claimed that using the sites discourages them from face to face interaction.

Conclusion

Social networking sites become very popular among the students of federal polytechnic Daura, but the public nature of site profile brings about privacy risk. As a result, most of the students suffer identity theft leakage of sensitive information. Likewise, the students are also naïve about sex predators on SNSs.

Recommendation

In order to avoid the risks of SNSs, the below measures has to be recommended:

- *Rejecting of any request that may lead to sexual talk or any information if you don't want it.*
- *Provide fake or inaccurate information on SNSs profile to restrict people you don't know from gaining information about you*

- *Sending private message within SNSs instead of posting message to a friend's timeline to restrict others from reading the message.*
- *Read the privacy policy of the site first before you join it.*
- *Make some contact on your SNSs only them to have access to your limited profile.*

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