

# Knowledge Sharing Among Librarians in University Libraries in Nigeria

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## Abstract

The study examined knowledge sharing among librarians in university libraries in the South-South zone of Nigeria. The aim of the study was to determine the extent of how knowledge is shared and in which areas/subjects librarians would like to share knowledge in university libraries. The study adopted a descriptive survey design as research design. Questionnaire was used to collect data from 127 librarians in the university libraries. The major findings of the study revealed that librarians shared knowledge in the university libraries. The study also revealed that librarians are not satisfied at the extent of knowledge sharing in the university. Findings also indicate that librarians preferred to share knowledge in the areas/subjects of networking. It was recommended that seminars for both old and fresh librarians should be vigorously carried out to create further awareness of knowledge sharing among librarians.

**Keywords:** Knowledge Sharing, Awareness, Users satisfaction, Subjects of knowledge sharing

## Introduction

Information is very vital in our daily activities. Information has become the driving force behind the development of nations. For information to be at the disposal of everybody, there must be library and information services for good service delivery and development. The dissemination of information has provided raw materials for social development. In addition to playing a vital role in every process of interaction among people and nations, it enhances the quality of decisions made, facilitates social changes and serves as an instrument for conflict resolution (Edem & Ani, 2010), which comes through knowledge sharing.

Knowledge sharing is the process of coordinating learning activities. It is the processes where individuals, mutually exchange their knowledge and jointly create new knowledge. Knowledge sharing is a process which consists of both, bringing knowledge and getting knowledge. Those with limited knowledge benefit from the advantage of knowledge sharing, (Den Hooff and De Ridder, 2004; Yang, 2004). Each worker can learn from the experiences and practices of the other.

Knowledge sharing among workers worldwide is perceived as one of the most convenient and effective way to obtain knowledge. Knowledge sharing among workers enhances the ability to seek studies-related help from one another. Knowledge sharing among workers essentially facilitates achieving outcomes of collective learning. Learning and knowledge sharing are intimately connected. The knowing process is a component of sharing, thinking and learning.

For any university library to perform its functions effectively, its work areas must include the following: information and communication technologies, automation, networking, internet, administration, cataloguing, acquisition, abstracting, indexing, publishing, marketing of products and services, seminars, workshops, policies, interlibrary loan, staffing, knowledge management and database management among others (Fayose & Nwalo, 2000; Alegbeleye, 2010 & Etim, 2010).

Knowledge management and the information profession have a close relationship with information and communication technologies particularly computer-based information systems and communication networks. If information is the raw materials for both knowledge management and the information profession, then technology promotes them by facilitating the creation, storage and distribution of information. Knowledge management, the use of ICTs can bring positive change in the library organizations. (Alegbeleye, 2010).

Eden and Ani (2010) stated that knowledge management is an activity that aids at spreading information. It is an activity that aims at spreading and/or circulating the knowledge of a phenomenon, an individual, a community, a society and an institution in order to bring about direct positive change in the state-of-the-art of a system, institution or an organization, especially as it relates to productivity, efficiency and effectiveness. Mohammed (2003) also posited that, knowledge management aids the transformation of relationship between experts and amateurs, poor and rich, educated and uneducated, literate and illiterate, enlightened and ignorant, government and citizenry, etc towards advancement and progress of the nation, society and individuals. Knowledge Management in libraries refers to effectively identifying, acquiring, developing,

resolving, using, storing and sharing knowledge to create an approach to transforming and sharing of tacit and explicit knowledge, and to raise emergency and innovative capabilities by utilizing the wisdom of the team.

University libraries are quite interested in using technology to network operations such as administration, cataloguing, interlibrary loan and international bibliographic project. If properly utilized it helps the growth and development of libraries in different directions. It allows easy integration of various activities, facilitates cooperation, helps to avoid duplication of efforts within the library and among libraries in a network, eliminates some uninteresting and repetitive work and provides marketing opportunity for its services (Fayose & Nwalo, 2000). The option available for now is to include networks, electronic mail and the internet if we must satisfy the information needs of the users in the twenty-first century.

Some African universities have seen the need to make use of information technology in order to promote research and enhance excellence.

The Cameroon interuniversity network is an example of the determination of the Cameroonian authorities of higher education to provide universities with modern infrastructure. In Kenya, the Kenya education network (KENET) is an initiative to establish a high speed, reliable and sustainable IP network for interconnectivities among educational institutions. The Malawi Academic and Research Network (MAREN) has been established to provide bandwidth to major academic sites. Senegal has the UCAD information technology network which connects schools and faculties of the university. Nigeria has been involved in many projects to create national research and education network. NuNet, PolyNet, TeachNet among others are all efforts to develop and use ICT to foster institutional collaboration among and between administrative and academic communities. Internet connectivity has become a requirement for higher education (Etim, 2010):

In spite of the relevance of these work areas to promote research and make the libraries the centre of academic scholarship, Africa university libraries have been portrayed negatively. Etim (2010) supported this assertion when she stated that the need to share and transfer information in Africa is not new. The issue is that in most of Africa, adequate internet access presents a great challenge for university administration Ogunshola (2004) noted that the proliferation of Nigeria universities, despite the economic recession in the country since the 1980 have aggravated the problem for universities and their libraries. On the whole, university libraries in many African countries are faced with dearth of funding for books and journals, staffing difficulties and perhaps a loss of the perception of the library as the centre of academic life and scholarship. Lack of internet access has deprived African universities the latest search for information, web based learning, opportunities to be part of international research teams, and the ability to connect campuses with video conferencing (Etim, 2010). Longshak (2010) stated that inspite of all these impediments in the implementation of technology in Nigerian libraries, there are reasons to believe that prospects are brighter. Therefore, there is the need for knowledge sharing among librarians in university libraries if we must come out of these challenges.

Managing knowledge has become an important subject facing libraries today, and that it should be focused on the following: effective research and development of knowledge, creation of knowledge bases, exchange and sharing of knowledge between library staff/users, training of librarians, speeding up of processing of the implicit knowledge and realization of its sharing. (Shanhong, 2000 & Alegbeleye, 2010).

Knowledge sharing helps workers solve problems, learn new things and increase understanding. Workers can learn from each other and benefit from new knowledge and development by one another. Workers that are able to share knowledge are more productive and more likely to survive on their jobs than workers that do not (Yang, 2004). Librarians by way of sharing their knowledge, experience, thoughts and beliefs mutually establish their common understanding.

The most effective result of using knowledge sharing practices is to improve workers' skills and knowledge which in turn increased workers efficiency and productivity (Peariasamy, 2009). Those with limited knowledge benefit from the advantage of knowledge sharing in organizations. Knowledge sharing has helped each librarian learn from the experiences and practices of others and also increased workers efficiency in the library organization.

Knowledge sharing during collaborative learning makes all participants benefit in terms of positive learning outcome and achieve more in cooperative interaction as compared to individualistic interaction. In order to achieve knowledge effectiveness, individual knowledge needs to be shared. Unless individual knowledge is shared with others, the knowledge is likely to have limited impact on effectiveness. To ensure a good flow of information, librarians must share their knowledge. In the absence of this there will be no free flow of knowledge and this will lead to information hoarding (Yang, 2004). Therefore, a lot of emphasis on educating librarians who are well prepared to play an effective role in the knowledge society is required because librarians are the main driving force for educational development and the advancement of information. Effective sharing of

this resource is consequently one of the most important challenges facing librarians in university libraries (Eze, 1999; Aranda & Fernandez, 2002)

### Purpose of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are as following:

1. To examine the awareness of knowledge sharing among librarians in university libraries
2. To find out the extent of satisfaction with knowledge sharing practices among librarians.
3. To determine which areas/subjects librarians would like to share knowledge.

### Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. How aware are the librarians of the knowledge sharing practices in university libraries?
2. To what extent are librarians satisfied with the sharing of knowledge practices in university libraries?
3. What are the subjects in which the librarians in the university libraries share their knowledge?

### Research Method

The research adopted a descriptive survey design using non-probability sampling technique and sampled 127 librarians drawn from 180 librarians in 11 university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. Questionnaire was developed by the researcher for the purpose of generating data for the study. The data obtained were analyzed using percentages.

**Table one:** Responses on awareness of knowledge sharing practices.

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentages
Knowledge sharing in cataloguing	26	20
Knowledge sharing in conferences/workshops	26	20
Knowledge sharing face-to-face interaction	17	14
Knowledge sharing on-line	30	24
Knowledge sharing in use of technologies	8	6
Knowledge sharing network	20	16
	127	100%

The above analysis in table 1 shows that librarians shared in cataloguing 20%, knowledge sharing in conferences/workshops 20%, knowledge sharing face-to-face 14%, knowledge sharing on-line 24%, use of technologies 6%, and knowledge network 16%.

**Table two:** Rating of knowledge sharing satisfaction among librarians in university libraries.

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentages
High	52	41%
Low	75	59%
	127	100%

Most of the respondents from table two agreed that the extent of Knowledge sharing practices in university libraries is low 59% while 41% agreed that the extent of knowledge sharing practices among librarians in the university libraries is high.

**Table three:** Subjects of knowledge sharing among librarians.

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentages
Cataloguing	15	12
Indexing	8	6
Library & information Science policies	10	8
Database management	22	17
ICTs/networking	24	19
Knowledge management	21	17
Publishing	5	4
Marketing	5	4
Circulation	8	6
Acquisition	9	7
	127	100%

Table 3 shows that knowledge sharing cataloguing (12%), indexing 6%, library and information science policies (8%), Database management (17%), ICTs (19%); knowledge management (17%), publishing (4%), marketing (4%), circulation (6%), and acquisition 7%.

### Discussion

In order to achieve knowledge effectiveness, individual knowledge needs to be shared. Unless individual knowledge is shared with others, the knowledge is likely to have limited impact on effectiveness. To ensure a good flow of information, Librarians must share their knowledge. In the absence of this there will be no free flow of knowledge and this will lead to information hoarding (Yang, 2004).

The finding of the study revealed that librarians shared knowledge in university libraries. The awareness of knowledge sharing among librarians agreed with Etim (2010) who stated that the need to share and transfer information in Africa is not new. Librarians saw the need to work together to enhance their performances. Christensen (2007) also supported and stated that knowledge sharing is perceived as best practices and it is the process of bridging best performance. The enrichment of knowledge would be of benefit for sharing because if we do not share knowledge, there would be loss of potential human capitals.

The finding of the study also showed that, although librarians shared knowledge in university libraries, the rate of knowledge sharing satisfaction is quite low. The issue is that in most of Africa, adequate internet access presents a great challenge for university administration. On the whole, university libraries in many African countries are faced with dearth of funding for books and journals, staffing difficulties and perhaps a loss of the perception of the library as the centre of academic excellent and scholarship. Lack of internet access has deprived African universities the latest search for information, web based learning, opportunities to be part of international research teams, and the ability to connect campuses with video conferencing (Ogunshola, 2004; Etim, 2010). Librarians need to be involved in activities that can bring positive change in the library organizations.

The finding of the study has also revealed that librarians preferred to share knowledge in the area of ICTs/Networking as the subject of knowledge sharing. This is followed by database management, cataloguing among others. For any university library to perform its functions effectively, it works areas must include cataloguing, indexing, ICTs, knowledge management, marketing, circulation. Managing knowledge has become an important subject facing libraries today, and that it should be focused on effective research and development of knowledge, creation of knowledge bases, exchange and sharing of knowledge between library staff/users, training of librarians, speeding up of processing of the implicit knowledge and realization of its sharing. (Shanhong, 2000 & Alegbeleye, 2010).

### Conclusion

Organizations and universities alike depended on the collection of data pertaining to the purpose of the domain in which they operate. Internally, each functional part of the organization works with data collected from the different types of the systems used (Laudon & Laudon, 2000). Universities collect data and process them. Most organizations use knowledge, for example, regarding their target audience, to gain a competitive advantage which comes through knowledge sharing. Knowledge sharing is an activities through which knowledge is

exchanged among people or organizations. The most effective result of using knowledge sharing practices is to improve workers' skills and knowledge, Librarians are quite interested at knowledge sharing based on the importance associated with knowledge sharing. Although, the practices of knowledge sharing among librarians in university libraries is quite low, knowledge sharing practices can be improved through focusing on knowledge sharing in ICTs/networking, conferencing/workshops, cataloguing among others.

### Recommendation

In the light of the findings of this study, the researcher is proffering the following recommendations.

1. Knowledge sharing should be encouraged among librarians
2. Seminars for both old and fresh librarians should be vigorously carried out to create further awareness of knowledge sharing among librarians.
3. The areas of networking as subject of knowledge sharing should be highlighted since librarians preferred to share knowledge in this area.

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