

The Roles of Library and Librarian in Information Resource Sharing in the Emerging Information Society

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to look at the roles which library and librarian stand to play in the emerging information society where information resource sharing is requires to ensure there is wider access to information resources on the platform of ICT. The study was conducted in three selected academic libraries in Kogi State to ascertain their readiness to engage in effective information resources sharing. The study observed selected three libraries have state of the art ICT facilities required for information resource. The study made some recommendations that can improve upon the success achieved in the deployment of ICT for information resources sharing.

Key words: ICT, ICT Information Resources, Information Resource Sharing

Introduction/Background

Resource sharing and information resource sharing denote a working arrangement where two or more libraries make their stock available to their respective users, and as well may include collective sharing of their respective functions. According to Kent (1978), denotes "a mode of operation whereby library functions are shared in common by a number of libraries. The goals are to provide a positive net effect: (a) on the library user in terms of access to more materials or services, and/or (b) on the library budget in terms of cost, or much more services at less cost than if undertaken individually". In other words, resources sharing are activities that occur when two or more libraries work together to provide more developed services to their respective users. The emphasis is to provide more developed services to their respective users within their limited financial resources.

The role of Resource Sharing in alleviating the inadequacy of information and human resources associated with library services was long realized when library professionals and associations started the agitation for Resources Sharing activity among Libraries. To paraphrase Asamoah-Hassan (2002), opinion, Resources sharing among libraries was first principally organized by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) through a programme called the Farmington plan in the year 1948 in United State. The sharing was among 60 libraries in U.S.A. which was formulated with the aim of collecting material from some areas or countries to increase the nation's total resources for research.

Statement of Problem

The acceptance and application of ICTs by Libraries has brought about the possibility of networking among libraries using Information and Communication Technologies model or platform. The huge amount of information resources available in the internet environment has brought about the question of 'what are the roles of librarians and libraries in this ICTs era with regards to information resource sharing'. In as much as it is imperative to improve the situation or level of application of Information and Communication Technologies and ICT based resources to information resource sharing, it also important to examine the roles librarians and libraries are expected to play to effectively harness this opportunity of ICTs application in information resource sharing in the 21st century. As a result, the researcher, investigate the roles of librarians and libraries in the 21st century information society where the order of the day is application and use of ICTs and ICTs based information resources.

Methodology

This study employed survey research design with questionnaire as the main instrument for data collection for the study, because it is suitable for observation, description and analyzing the present status of knowledge sharing activities based on Information and Communication Technology by libraries. Questionnaire is the data collection instruments used in this research to solicit responses from two categories of respondents i.e. librarian and library users.

Population of Study

The population of the study was made up of thirty professional librarians and sixty library users in three selected

academic libraries from the three senatorial districts of Kogi State-Nigeria. Ten professional Librarians and twenty library users were randomly selected from each of the academic libraries. The selected libraries and their institutional affiliation are:

Table 1

List of Library, Their Institution and Location

Library	Institution	Location
Dr.Aliyu Obaje Library	Kogi State University	Anyigba
The Polytechnic Library	Kogi State Polytechnic	Lokoja
College Library	Federal College of Education	Okene

Research Question

These constitute the question which this study attempt to answer:

- (1) What is the roles of library and librarian in information resource sharing
- (2) What types of ICTs are available in library which librarian can use in information resource sharing functions?
- (3) Can the application of ICT into library services leads to effective information resource sharing?
- (4) What are the militating factors against ICT application in library for information resource sharing?

Research Objective:

The followings are the objectives which this study set achieve:

- (1) To determine the roles of library and librarian in information resource sharing
- (2) To determine the types of ICTs available in library which librarian can use in information resource sharing functions
- (3) To determine if the application of ICTs to library services will lead effective information resource sharing.
- (4) To ascertain the factors militating against the application of ICTs in library for information resource sharing.

Literature review:

Information Resources Sharing In Libraries

Information resources sharing is phrase used to describe an arrangement where two or more libraries come together to pull their information resources together and make it available to their respective users meanly to supplement their collections. Chatterjee (2010) is of the opinion that Information Resource Sharing does not merely mean mutual sharing of information sources among libraries It will mean utilizing information resources of one library for generating services of another library Information Resources and Library Resources are not synonymous Library Resources may include other resources, besides information resources, like staff and equipment. Ibrahim (2006) reports that most Librarians and Information workers would define resources sharing as the information resources typically collected by the libraries and made available under certain conditions to the users in order to disseminate information properly.

Walden (1999) defines resources sharing as “a term used to describe organized attempts by libraries to share materials and services cooperatively so as to provide one another with the resources that might otherwise not be available to an individual institution”. It is an attempt geared towards expanding the availability of specialized, expensive and rare information resources beyond the bounds of a single library. Resources sharing basically encompass all efforts and activities geared toward having a cooperative ways of running or conducting library functions and services. That is why Aina (2002) advocates that “resource sharing generally involves a group of libraries forming a consortium in order to cooperate among themselves. It is assumed that libraries within a radius of 200 km in a geographical location can come together and cooperate in journal acquisition”.

Resource sharing is definitely one important area in library service that cannot be over emphasized, its serves as a panacea to a lot of library problems. Speirs (2006) opines that ‘resource sharing means opening the library doors to patrons who walk in the doors and are given the privilege of reading the items inside. In some cases these users also have the privilege of borrowing items for a period of time. Extending this sharing responsibility farther than the library building involves sharing library resources with the patrons of other libraries”.

ICTs /ICT Based Resources and Information Resource Sharing.

In the recent times library and information profession has face serious transformation particularly with the proliferation of Information Communications Technology (ICT) which has transformed the way and manners business transactions, education and learning, use of library and her numerous functions including that of sharing of information for education and general social interaction. Library just like all other business organization evolved into online base outfit, meanly due to the growth and development recorded in Information Communications Technologies such as the internet,

(wireless or LAN).

However, Asamoah-Hassan (2002) articulates that Information and Communication Technologies now enable individual libraries to search bibliographic and full text databases, and to develop search profiles and storage of back issues of foreign digital journals. While Rajasheker (2000) observes that with the availability of the internet, librarian quickly realized that they need not spend their efforts and resources to develop proprietary networking solutions. Internet and web technologies have been effectively used in resources sharing efforts with several additional benefits. Key advantage is that the internet can be used as the carrier network by all member libraries of a resources sharing network. They just need to have good internet connectivity. The common interface provided by the web browsers enable integration of access to shared resources.

Resource sharing in the present digital age is in the view of Amigos library services (1995) as cited by Blakes 2006 “ is comprised of transactions which a library makes its material or copies of its material available to the clientele of another library upon request” Faboyinde (2006) observed that library users can use ICTs to find more information at minimal costs and in less time. For instance, librarians in any library in Nigeria can easily find out any information concerning any book in the Library of Congress in United States of America within a couple of minutes without leaving the confines of their library buildings. The fact is that ICT has become indispensable to libraries in the provision of timely information to users and, in fact, to the progress of librarianship as a profession.

In the view of Felix (2006), With the Internet, libraries and librarians have become even more valuable in the knowledge management process, and they have become crucial partners in learning, nation building and development. Information and Communication Technologies have seriously strengthened communication and collaboration between and among the research, business, government, and educational communities. That was why, Lawal *and* Ani (2007) said that the benefits of library computerization, range from increased productivity, improved quality of tasks/services and resource sharing among others.

Felicia (2006) observes that “the dawn of the twenty-first century came with digital revolution and economic globalization. The rapid pace of development in the field of information technology coupled with the advent of networked information services has called for a total review of African universities’ resources sharing approach, in this age of digital divide. Tonta (2001), articulates librarian are faced with the challenge of providing better services with shrinking budgets. Fortunately, the developments in information technology (IT) created new opportunities for librarians. For instance, librarians can now provide access to networked information sources that their libraries do not even own.

Song and Ge (2001), says that now the worldwide resources develop rapidly with the growth o development of modern information technology and the extensive application of networks. In china, university libraries, the number of which has come to 1,100 at present, are working together to establish nationwide networks for resources sharing. Up to date, more than half of universities and colleges have established their own networks at campus, some of them have already linked with internet, the world largest network today. This provides better conditions for cooperative establishing network for resources sharing among them both regionally and nationally.

Kaul (2001) articulates that over the last two decades the libraries have witnessed impact of information technology that has been affecting the structure of the services to a great extent. Moreover, the problems of space, standardization, professional development of the staff, challenges posed by new technologies, drastic cuts in the library budgets have aggravated problem of the present day librarianship. However, the solution to the problems of information explosion, ever changing needs of users, increasing amount required for subscription to same number of periodicals, shrinking library budget, and devaluation of rupee and its impact on the library acquisitions can best overcome upon certain level by the following means: a) Use of computer and communication networks for resource sharing; b) Use of national and international databases through communications networks; and c) Introduction to full text CD based systems.

Findings

The findings were obtained from the questionnaire administered on the ninety (90) respondents. Out of ninety (90) questionnaires only 76 (83.6 %) were filled and returned while the remaining 14(16.4) were not returned. The findings as display below constitute the majority opinion of the respondents.

The study found that the following ICTs and ICTs based information resources are applicable to information resource sharing in the 21st century and as such it should be acquire by libraries and librarians should take it as their working tools to serve the information seekers.

Table 2
 ICTs and ICTs based information resources available and applicable for information resource sharing.

ICT Facilities Available and Applicable for Information Resource Sharing	Dr.Aliyu Obaje Library	The Polytechnic Library	College Library
Computer Laptop/Desktop systems	21	40	80
Database	5	4	6
Scanner	2	1	2
Telephone	Nil	Nil	Nil
Photocopier	1	1	3
Magnetic Tape	Nil	Nil	Yes
Audiovisual	Nil	Many	Many
E-books/ E-journals	Many	Many	Many
Internet Connectivity	Yes	Yes	Yes
Floppy	Nil	Nil	Many
CD/DVD ROM	Many	Many	Many
Library's Web Site	Nil	Nil	Nil
Email	Yes	Yes	Yes
Printer	3	2	2
Smart Card	Nil	Nil	Nil

Source: field work 2011

The data from table 2 above indicate that all the three selected libraries in the study area have the basic ICT and ICT based information resources required to effectively carry out information resource sharing.

The study found out that if all the above ICTs were deployed into library and information services it will lead to the followings in the 21st century:

- (a) Wider access to knowledge for education, learning and research
- (b) Access to open access and open repositories for scholarly communication
- (c) Enhanced libraries and librarians cooperation
- (d) Enhanced quality of service offers

The study found out that the major problems militating against the application of Information and Communication Technologies to knowledge sharing are:-operational orientation, problems of financial base, lack of library web page, computer system failure, low budgetary allocation, low human capacity building, Low bandwidth of connectivity, lack of basic infrastructure, and lack of political will.

Roles of Library and Librarian in information resource sharing via ICT facilities

The library is expected to provide the following and librarians are equally expected to harness the following to offer services:

- Provide access to information resources:
 - through online catalogue, indexes and databases including full text e-resources;
 - through connections to local, regional and global networks; and
 - by securing materials for students, academics and staff through interlibrary loan and other resource sharing arrangements powered by ICT and internet connectivity .
- Provide state of the art ICT infrastructure: in hardware and software, sufficient bandwidth and responsive network management system. Expert and professional support to facilitate thorough and accurate use of all library resources;
- Easy access to library information resources and services through web.

Conclusion

Information and Communication Technologies infrastructure refers to in this study constitutes the provision of

necessary hardware - software - communication channels and the Internet platform to connect telecommunication lines. The availability of sound ICT infrastructure and effective ICT policy framework is essential to provide system security, reliability and durability which will enhance the performance of knowledge sharing in digital environment.

Recommendations

Having examined some of the obstacles militating against effective application of ICTs to knowledge sharing in the 21st century, the following recommendations are hereby put forward:

- 1) The study recommend that library management should strive for total application of ICT into their services
- 2) The study recommended that libraries should create their own web site. As it will aid the display and exchange of information resources in a wide variety of formats, which will make it easy for librarians and library user to read, copy, download and print information resources of interest to them.
- 3) Libraries should utilize web (www) technology to host and manage electronic information resources for knowledge sharing.
- 4) The study recommends comprehensive training for the library staff and library users.

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Questionnaire

The Roles of Library and Librarian in Information Resource Sharing in the Emerging Information Society

Aliyu Muhammed Rabiu
Kogi State University,
Anyigba., Kogi State., 6th May, 2010.

Sir/Madam,

I am an academic Librarian with above address; I am conducting a research on the above mentioned topic. I therefore solicit your help by providing answers to the following set of questions. I promise that the information obtained through this excise will be strictly used for academic purpose.

Thanks for your anticipated co-operation.

Yours Sincerely,

Aliyu Muhammed Rabiu

Questionnaire

Bio date:

1, Sex Male { }

Female { }

2, Age 20 -30 { }

31-40 { }

41-50 { }

51-above { }

3, Are you familiar with ICTs? Yes { } No { }

4, If, yes, do agree that it can lead:

5, to quality library service in 21st century: Yes { } No { }

6, to wider access to knowledge for education, learning and research: Yes { } No { }

7, cooperation among librarians and libraries: Yes { } No { }

8, a model for knowledge sharing among libraries and information centers: Yes { } No { }

9, If no, do agree that it not leads

10, to quality library service in 21st century: Yes { } No { }

11, to wider access to knowledge for education, learning and research: Yes { } No { }

12, cooperation among librarians and libraries: Yes { } No { }
13, a model for knowledge sharing among libraries and information centers: Yes { } No { }
14, do agree that libraries should process the ICTs as tools for knowledge sharing in the 21st century. Please tick appropriately

- (a) Computer / Laptop systems { }
- (b) Database { }
- (c) Scanner { }
- (d) Telephone { }
- (e) Photocopier { }
- (f) Magnetic Tape { }
- (g) Audiovisual { }
- (h) CD/DVD/ C/D ROM { }
- (i) Library's Web Site { }
- (j) Email { }
- (k) Printer { }
- (l) Smart Card { }
- (m) Floppy { }
- (n) Internet Connectivity { }
- (o) E-books/ E-journals { }

15, do you know any problem that may hinder smooth application of the above ICTs to knowledge sharing in the 21st century. Please tick appropriately

- (a) operational orientation
- (b) weak financial base
- (c) computer system failure
- (d) low budgetary allocation
- (e) low human capacity building
- (f) Low bandwidth of connectivity
- (g) lack of basic infrastructure
- (h) lack of political will