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2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

IJBSS Volume 11 NO 1
Articles

IJBSS VOLUME 11 NO 2
Articles

4

Strategies for Effective Information Service Delivering in Nigeria Academic Libraries.

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Abstract

The need for Academic libraries to promote professional development of librarians in order to cope with the challenges of modern library and information services delivery is discussed. The paper spells out the importance of Academic libraries to University education. It further discusses the strategies for delivering information services, the tools, internet, www, networks, online research, etc as necessary ingredients for information delivery in Academic libraries in Nigeria. Information and communication technology, and strategic management of library and information services are identified as areas that have transformed the practice and effective delivery of library and information services. It acknowledges that poor funding is a major impediment of academic libraries in the acquisition of this technology, equipment of qualified staff. The paper also examines the problems militating against effective delivery of information services and recommends suggestions for effective information services delivery in academic libraries in Nigeria. It concludes that there is no alternative to the development of information technology.

Introduction

According to Aina, I. O (2004) a library is concerned with the collection, processing, storage, and dissemination of record information for the purpose of reading, study and consultation. In order for a library to attain this goal, many activities are performed by a library which translates to library an information services. Over the years, the external environment has been having a tremendous impact on the practice of the profession. According to Alokun (2003), there are different types of libraries established to cater for the information needs

of different category of users. Our concern is with academic library. Academic library is a library that is established inside an institution of higher learning e.g Universities, polytechnics, and college of Education. The main objective of any academic library is to provide necessary information to lecturers, students, and researchers in aid of teaching, learning and research purposes. Eligial (2000) opines that academic library serves as the creation of new knowledge and transmission to learning and culture of the present and the past. Academic libraries in Nigeria are compelled to join the race in the provision of information resources electronically so that students and faculties can benefit from a wide range of current information globally.

University must perform its unique role of teaching, learning and research effectively and efficiently, there must be sufficient resources in terms of library, finance and staff accommodation. Aguolu, (1993) stated that university libraries assist the universities in the discharge of their functions by acquiring all the relevant information resources necessary for sustaining teaching, learning, research and public service functions of their universities. The extent to which the university libraries are able to perform these function will depend on a number of factors which include; adequate information resources, qualified personnel, adequate accommodation and availability of funds. The situation in Nigerian university libraries has been that of inability to provide the basic requirements for effective discharge of their duties. There will also be the need to shift emphasis from the present predominant use of traditional information acquisition, processing, storage and retrieval systems to modern electronic systems. Daniels, (2000) stated that the world is witnessing the wave of revolution in the Information Technology. The "information revolution" changes are occurring every day as a result of the application of information technology. According to Aina (2004) information communication and technology (I.C.T) has radically transformed most of the services provided by a library. I.C.T is heavily utilized in the storage, processing and dissemination of information. It has made the organization of information very efficient, the delivery of basic information services more effective and the dissemination information to users easier. It has eliminated a lot of routine and repetitive tasks in a library. I.C.T is now a core component of any library and information science curriculum at all

levels. Any **modern** library and information professional must be knowledgeable **in** library automation, networking, internet surfing, database **management** processing, software, statistical software etc.

Library Automation and Service Delivery

According to Fadayomi (2005) automation is the application of computers in the house-keeping operation and information retrieval. The term is used inter-changeable with terms such as electronic library, computer based library system, application of information technologies to library operations and services.

Application to house-keeping materials include circulation control, cataloguing, collection developments, serials control and management statistics. Rowley[5] identified four reasons why libraries should establish computer based systems and these are:

> ➤ To increase workload. Library automation increases workload but enhances service delivery.
> ➤ For greater efficiency. Library automation saves time and money. It is understandable that it is more accurate than the manual equivalents. Work flow is more rapid and systematic and also service delivery is super.
> ➤ New services are introduced. This is possible because of new discoveries in addition to existing ones. These new services enhance service delivery.
> ➤ Co-operation and centralization. There is availability of external data which can be exported maximally.

Library automation improves service delivery through its reliability, accuracy and promptness. There must be changes in the importance of information sources as well as changes in nature of information requirements for effective service delivery. As can be seen above, the need for library automation cannot be over-stressed. The world is now operating in which innovative use of information technology in organizations in general has led to the creation of new products, improved services and drastically reduced costs. Library services improved with automation and these are:

> ➤ Production of media technologies programmes and materials
> ➤ Evaluation, selection, repair and/or maintenance
> ➤ Loan or in house access to equipment

> Classroom services
> Circulation and distribution of materials should done promptly.
> Booking and other temporary acquisition of materials
> Facilities scheduling and management
> Technical and bibliographic instruction supporting use of materials
> Reference and consultation.

The Strategies Involved in Information Delivery Service

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of current English defines strategy 'as skill in Managing any affair tactics'. Adaramola (1998) stated in business where future, change and the accompanying uncertainties must be addressed and dealt with objectively". In the context of this paper 'strategies' simply means methods devised for making or doing something or attaining an end. Such terms as plans, blueprints, designs, game plan, and schemes could be employed.

(Ajibero 1993), sees information as "data of value in planning, decision-making and evaluation of program. (Kedem, 1993) also refers to information as knowledge communicated and received in relation to a particular subject" infact, that explains why strategies must be formulated by librarians and information practitioners for library and information service delivery in the new millennium or 21st Century.

Information Services

Information Service as defined by (Harrods, 1997) means "a service provided by, or for, a special library which draws attention to information possessed in the library or information department in anticipation of demand, this is come by providing a reference and information desk, preparation and circulation of news, sheets, and documented results of literature surveys, preparation bibliographies, reading lists, indexes and abstracts, particulars, of articles in current periodical, creation of data used through documentation of information which are anticipated would be of interest to potential users of the users".

Information Delivery

According to (Daniel, 2000) collectively information delivery is often used to refer to the wide range of mechanism that can be employed in order to send copies of various types of publication from one location to another. The information may be electronic or paper based. The supplier might be a library, a network server or a document archive of some sort. The recipient could be located in another library, a work place location or a domestic environment.

Strategies for Effective Delivery of Information Services to users by Academic Libraries

It is apparent that for our academic Libraries to deliver the much needed information services to their users in cost effective ways in the 21ˢᵗ Century, the following strategies have to be embarked upon. There is the need for radical socio cultural, attitudinal changes, financial re-orientation of staff, students, and administrators in our campuses (Ochogwu, 2001). If library users Communities are sympathetic to the services provided by their libraries, the latter are likely to have favourable disposition from their communities. Academic librarians must shift emphasis from their role as custodians of documents to that of practicing   i.e disseminating information to there communities. Another strategy is that more emphasis should be placed on the pooling of resources among libraries. In the form of resource sharing with a view to forming information network. It is only through this strategy that our libraries can serve their users from a more comprehensive data base of information resources and hopefully at cost effective rates. The professional librarians could be equipped with knowledge in the identified areas, as well as order emerging issues in the profession through distance education, learning and instructional resources on the internet and professional literature.   (Ciurlizza 1997) stated that the globalization of the economy has resulted in parallel process of information globalization in which information superhighways' are

being built to communicate with and supply the information required by "global collectivity. Hardly any nation can now develop without adequately organizing its information infrastructures.

The tools for Delivering Information Services in Academic Libraries

This refers to an access technology for centrally storing information. It has telecommunication for access and operates in a wide Area Network, with access the globe through a cluster of data networks. On-line searching has added advantages of fast response time, powerful retrieval capabilities such as multiple file searching using reviews will serve as useful tools for delivering information service to users.

Internet

The explosion of Internet use in the last two years has meant that libraries are increasingly becoming linked to the Internet. It is now one of the most important tools for information delivery. Internet is described as a worldwide network of computers. Now, academic and all libraries should have fast access to the Internet for delivering information service to users.

CD- Rom

According to Ajibero, (2001) Compact Disk read only Memory Technology has been available only for about the last six or seven years in Nigeria. The potential of CD-ROM lies in it storage compactness, portability, reduced shelf space, maintenance cost and durability up to a hundred years. CD-ROM is definitely set to serve as an indispensable tool or technology for delivering information service to users.

Networking or Resource Sharing

Daniel, (1999) argued that, with global resource sharing, the principle of one product for one user at one time has been replaced by networked products that support multiple users simultaneously and allowing multiple access to multiple resources from any workstation. Obviously, the growth of Library networking around the world is gradually increasing. This will serve as an important tool for

information delivery service.

E-mail (Electronic Mail)

E-mail is one of the components of internet connectivity. It is basically used for instant communication. It has the basic features of being connected internationally. It provides cheap means of communication and effective delivery of information service to users in Nigeria.

Problems Militating Against Effective Delivering of Information Services in Academic Libraries

Ehigiator, (2000) highlighted some of the problems militating against effective delivery of information services in Nigeria as follows:-

(i)   Inadequate funding to sustain information delivery services in academic Libraries in Nigeria,.

(ii) Lack of permanent library structure. Most academic libraries do not have permanent library building in order to provide effective information delivery services. They use any available structure for library.

(iii) Lack of proper planning and implementation of Library policies.

(iv) Inadequate resources, furniture and equipment.

(v)   Lack of infrastructural: facilities such as electricity, telephones, or telecommunication facilities.

(vi) Attitude of librarians and information scientists towards new Technology.

Suggestions for Effective Delivery of Information Services to Academic Libraries

(Daniel, 2000) listed some suggestions below:

(i)   Libraries must direct their intellectual and creative energies towards skill acquisition and mastering of these areas of the technologies, which enhance professional performance.

(ii) There is the need for an up ward review of library budget by library management in order to meet all the needs of users by Academic libraries in the information delivery service in Nigeria.

(iii) Training and retraining of personnel: Library management should embark on training and retraining of staff to enable them apply modern information technologies in order to improve their

services in the cost effective manner.

(iv)   The Federal, State and Local Governments in Nigeria should consider efficiency of those national infrastructures for effective information Technology delivery service. Such infrastructure include electricity, telephone, computers, internet, satellite facilities etc.

(v)   It is hereby suggested that government should reduce the tariff paid on education materials such as books, journals, computer facilities etc. to all free and balanced flow of information Services.

(vi)   There should be positive attitude academic librarians and information scientists towards new technology by way of attending seminars/workshops.

(vii)   There should be permanent library building/ structures where all facilities would be available. Academic library should have permanent library building in one place in order to provide tools for effective delivering of information services to users.

(viii)   Also there should be positive attitudes by library management towards information technology, in term of modern computer facilities.

Conclusion

Libraries existed for centuries without automation. However, as computers emerged in the world at large, librarians embraced them as a means of managing housekeeping operations and service changes for our users. The new tools are broadening on the horizons of information services and thus providing opportunities for information professionals to serve as information providers rather than information custodians.

It is of utmost importance, that the information professional of today is strategically positional and well equipped with human and technological resources to adequately cope with the challenges of change. By so doing, the Libraries will be able to face squarely the challenges of adequate and effective information provision for their teaming patrons.

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