

PROMOTING BEST PRACTICE THROUGH ICT POLICIES IN THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION SERVICES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the integrate policies for better services delivery. The concepts of ICT and libraries services were defined. Also, how this concept can be blended to produce a workable policy document to promote effective and efficient library services delivery system for library users were highlighted. The paper identified strategies academic libraries could adopt to promote best practices in education. These includes: review ICT- library based environment to educate users in order to reduce fear and apprehension associated with the introduction of new technology, establish committee to access the type of computer to acquire, ICT retraining, ICT facilities resources, type of services to render, acquire competencies and skills needed among others. The study concluded by recommending that academic libraries should integrate and influence ICT policies with strategies to promote effective and efficient library services delivery. Library collaboration with government, education funding agencies be sort for to support library programmes for better and quality job performance.

Keywords: Best Practices, ICT, Policies, Information Services, Academic Libraries, Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

Academic libraries play very essential roles in any development programmes of a nation. They are valuable agencies of the universities established mainly to assist them to accomplish their statutory roles, primarily aimed at leading, leaning and research. They produce the workforce with knowledge, skills and competencies needed to carry out the duties, responsibilities and function of the universities. The universities are the highest learning institution of any nation. They are established mainly to produce the needed manpower to steer the wheel of the development of a nation. The social, economic, political and cultural development of the nation depends to a great extent on the manpower development of the universities. Hence, research will has significant bearing on the strength of the library

collections and the organization provision of library services render to the targeted users. The creation of easy access to users and the degree to which these services are exploited and put to use are crucial to the success and fulfillment of the universities goals centered on learning, teaching and research. The provision of adequate library resources in quality and quantity to ease the provision of library and information services efficiently and effectively both in print and non-print materials are very essential for academic libraries operations.

In today's libraries, much emphases is on Information and Communication Technology with their associated electronic devices leading to the emergence of virtual libraries, (E-libraries) internet, CD-ROM, telecommunication networks among others have drastically changed the traditional roles of academic libraries. Users of the libraries and their services have become more attracted to the use of ICT than that of the traditional services to the extent that there is now popular public views that the services provided by the libraries through the traditional formats may soon go out of extinction.

Although, the role of ICT is quite overwhelming the present day academic libraries, the role of print materials cannot be underestimated and taken for granted. Books and other associated formats such as journals, abstract, indexes, bibliographies, reference materials among others are still very relevant to teaching, learning, research and public services. It is very obvious to note that neither ICT materials nor the provision of library services to meet users satisfaction. It is the researcher's view that the integration of ICT with the print collection will lead to the promotion of academic libraries best practices in information generation and delivery systems to users.

Definition of Concepts

Definition

ICT viewed as devices or technology create, store, disseminate, manage information. It is a set of electronic device adapted for the generation. According to UNESCO "ICT is a scientific, technological and engineering discipline and management technique used in handling information, its application and association with social, economic and cultural matters". According to Bon (2010) ICTs have increased world productivity and global trade, facilitated business and industry growth, and enhanced education and research collaboration. UNESCO (2000) cited in Emwanta (2012) defined ICTS as the scientific, technological and engineering handling and processing. The term, information and communication technologies (ICT), is defined by (UNESCO 2006) as forms of technology that are used to transmit, store, create, share or exchange information.

Boritz (2000) posits that ICT is the emergence of tools of microelectronic and telecommunications that are used in the automatic acquisition , analysis, storage, retrieval, manipulation, management, control, movement, display, transmission, reception and interchange of quantitative and qualitative data. ICT is seen as key tools in acquiring processing and disseminating knowledge (Adedoyin, et. Al 208).

ICT Resources/ Facilities

Almost all types of libraries procure different types of ICT facilities. These include computers and networks, software, internet, CD-ROM, World Wide Web, facsimile, and Led projectors.

Why ICT (Reason for libraries)

Why to increase volume of information available to the society. The overdriven of information available and resulting to what is now termed as information, society, information age and knowledge society is as a result of ICT. Hence, it can be believed that the adoption of ICT is provision resources and enhancing services and bringing the entire world into a global village. The use of ICT is cheaper, easy, speedy, quicker to create or access to information.

Roles of ICT in Libraries

ICT use for Home keeping, routines and Remote access. Home keeping Routines Activities include:

- Budgeting
- Acquisition
- Cataloguing
- Circulation functions
- Serial control
- Library Administration
- Remote Access to Information
- Inter-operation ability library services

Effects of ICT on Libraries and Librarians

The revolutionary changes ICT has exerted on the libraries and librarians are enormous. The new technology has inculcated in the librarians changing concept of the libraries. In today's libraries, librarians have come to understand that emphasis is now on ICT library and information based resources/services which are in variance with the traditional models of library policies and curricula in order to integrate ICT into the library programs. The need for the present day librarians to quickly adapt to and align with the new technology in order to remain relevant in his information age has become imperative. The issue of library collections to incorporate the new electronic devices in order to skew into this new era has become obvious. The provision of ICT with its associated facilities has become inevitable and essential if library is to fulfill its role in teaching, learning and research. The uses of these research/facilities call for training and re-training of librarians.

Consequently librarians need re-orientation to be able to fit into the provision of ICT-library based resources and services to meet users need. Lim (1999) cited in Salman and Olasina (2010) stated that a lot of emphasis is laid on development of ICT infrastructure in developing countries without much attention given to ICT competencies of educations and it is not possible for ICT to super-transform information without the competencies of professionals put in place. The area of emphasis here is that to handle ICT related function to achieve results, certain related elements in the educational context must put in place among which in the ICT competencies.

ICT revolution has resulted to unrestricted access to library and information services without limit to time and space. Library is now considered as one out of many valuable information resources in the society.

Importance of ICT in the Libraries

Relevant ICT resources is the series emanating from the uses put on them cannot be overemphasized. ICT has imparted immensely on the society. It is now obvious that with the introduction of ICT, the university learning environment is charging and adapting to new scenario in academic activities in Nigeria. This has led to a renewed recognition of the roles of university libraries and librarians in national development associated with vast web

telecommunication. The integration of ICT into the library operations serves as a vital strategy in accelerating with the library operations serves as a crucial strategy in accelerating the nation's development and transformation through the provision of quality education.

Challenges in Adoption ICT in University Libraries

The success and the full benefits of adoption of ICT in the University environment can be achieved greatly based on the role of the librarians. The technologies have ushered in increased investment both in human and material resources. The need to increase budgetary allocation to libraries to be able to attend to their need has become obvious. There is the necessity to call for redefinition of the role of the libraries, review the curriculum, review library policies and programs that will accommodate emergence of commitments, challenges and problems. The challenges border on lack of fund, poor electricity and inadequate infrastructure.

Igun (2013) citing the work of Islam and Islam (2007) enumerated menace in the adoption ICT to libraries:

- Lack of share initiative.
- Lack of skill manpower - librarians does not have adequate knowledge regarding ICT.
- Computer (application).
- Lack of financial support – inadequate funding.
- Lack of social amenities.
- Lack of long term planning.
- Lack of e-resources selection policies.
- Reluctance of librarians to accept and adapt to new technologies.
- Lack of training programs for librarians.

Library Policy document is a critical factor in determining the success and sustainability of any organization including academic libraries. Policies are defined as “a set of interrelated principles, laws, guidelines, rules, regulation and procedures guiding the oversight and management of a programme or plan of action” (Duran, 1991 cited in Disco, 2010). They are formulated as a frame work for a systematic and orderly implementation of socio-economic, political or cultural programmes. Policies are defined and addressed issues which may be economic, political, educational, and scientific/technical or combination of some of the entire above factor. Their scope of coverage including timeframe within which they are implemented may be clearly stated.

A Way Forward

The relevance of ICT in the society especially the university libraries need to be given a serious consideration and priority attention by all stakeholders in university education. The introduction of ICT into the university system must take a holistic approach by embracing strategic planning and policies. The need b y library management to critically appraise the general library operations develops all embracing strategies that will take into consideration the mission of the university, the objectives of the library in meeting the goals of the university. The policy documents must address short and long-term planning that would incorporate curriculum review, acquisition/selection policy, libraries staff recruitment and development, funding and other external sources of fund. The realistic integration of ICT facilities and services into the library operation must be given a critical attention. The library ICT based policies should clearly state and address issues relating ICT applications in the library services with particular reference to

the type of resources/services to render the sources of power supply, approach to adopt in seeking for grant from donor agencies. Again, decisions on library matters should be structured towards committee approach. Members constituting the committee must be wide spread across the institutions comprising men and women of proven integrity and committee to university education. The need for a very cordial relationship between the university and the external public must be emphasized as to create friendly and favorable atmosphere to enhance smooth library cooperation when seeking for external support. Libraries and librarians must market themselves through library advocacy, lobbying and through education and training to be effective and efficient in the discharge of their duties and responsibility to the communities they serve.

Summary and Conclusion

The global trends in education are to skew into Information and Communication Technology Development. No University can claim to deliver the needed education services adequately without ICT application in its operations. University libraries and librarians must take all the necessary initiative to integrate ICT into the academic curricula and practically embrace this technology if it is to perform its statutory function of providing adequate learning resources both print and non-print materials, including ICT application for effective learning and research. The provision of funds, reviewing of the academic curricula to reflect library ICT based resources/services should be given a priority attention. The provision of effective and efficient services depends to a great extent on the role of the librarians. Hence, the need to provide information professional to update their knowledge and skills through continuing education must be given due attention. The role of ICT towards research and general administration is tremendous and the benefits derived there in cannot be quantified monetarily. Hence, the needs and the possibilities of transforming their needs into realities for educational needs of users are imperative.

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