



# **LIBRARY RESEARCH JOURNAL**

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## Library Research Journal Authors Guideline

Library Research Journal is an annual publication of Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

### **Format for Submission**

Manuscript submitted for publication must not have been submitted or published elsewhere. Articles should not be more than 14 pages. Manuscripts should be typed on A4 sheet using MS word (Times New Roman, 12 points, double-spaced). The title, author's full name, institutional affiliation, position, phone number and e-mail address should appear on the first page.

Submissions should include an informative abstract of not more than 200 words. Four to six keywords should be included. Tables and graphs should be included in the body of the work (where necessary). The APA 6th Edition (Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association) referencing format should be used throughout the manuscript. All submissions will be peer reviewed.

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Library Research Journal is an institution based journal from Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. It is an online peer reviewed Google Scholar journal, published in the month of September. This edition is a compilation of research reports from various institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. The research reports cover a wide array of issues in Library and Information Science. This volume addresses topical issues in librarianship such as NgRen, Competency Appraisal of law cataloguers as well as law students' profile as a correlate of library use. Emerging concepts in librarianship such as MOOC's, parenting styles and readership were part of the compilation. Research reports from Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library focused on library practices in the Circulation Department, Information Literacy, Zik Research Centre and reprographic services in the library.

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# LIBRARIANS' EMERGING SKILLS FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY INFORMATION SERVICE DELIVERY IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

*Rapid technological advancement of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has changed the way information is created, packaged and disseminated. It has also affected the information seeking behavior of users of information as well as library users. Librarians by their training and profession are at the centre of this evolution. Expectedly, librarians of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century should envisage these changes, plan for it and strategize in order to remain relevant in the teaching, learning and research of the university. The integration of ICT in library services has changed the work schedule of the librarian. This means that the 21<sup>st</sup> century librarian will have to be armed with relevant skills that will enhance the provision of library services to meet client's changing information needs. This paper discussed the changing role of the academic librarian and the skills he should possess to remain relevant in the emerging technology.*

**Keywords:** *Information Technology, Librarians Skills, Academic Libraries, 21<sup>st</sup> Century.*

## **Introduction**

The era when librarians were involved in library operations such as acquisition, cataloguing and classification on print media is far gone. These days, they act as knowledge navigators and change facilitators to fulfill their user's specialized needs. It has become necessary to use cutting edge technology tools and techniques in library operations (Bundy, 2009). Rapid technological advancement of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has affected libraries; more especially academic libraries. Almost every function carried out in academic libraries has been altered to some extent by advances in electronics, computerization, and telecommunications. Adesode (2016) affirms that in library service delivery, technology is now an indispensable tool for information generation, organization, dissemination and use. This new information environment requires new skills in seeking, processing and using information (Hashim, Haliza & Mokhtar, 2012).

These days, environmental pressures are forcing academic libraries and librarians to focus on accelerating technology, innovation, technical complexities, social and legal issues, cost, risk, competence, skills and technology itself. These changes affect the role of librarians and information professionals hence the need to re-

strategize. Librarians working in these libraries need continuous re-skilling so that they will not become obsolete. They need to shift their focus from traditional library operations such as collecting, processing, storing and accessing information to offer clients – centered automated information services, generated by using online/offline databases, e-resources, e-journals, networks and consortia etc. Today, many libraries are using computers and latest ICT tools and techniques to perform various library operations such as acquisition, processing, serials control and delivering various computerized services to the users (Singh & Pinki, 2009). Today, technology is reshaping the world of librarians and academic libraries at an unimaginable speed. The core skills associated with librarians/ information professionals include information handling skills, training and facilitating skills, evaluation skills hence concern for users' satisfaction is paramount. These skills cover cataloguing, classification, indexing, enquiry work and user education.

## **Librarians in the 21st century: changing roles and skills in information service delivery**

The emergence of technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has changed the information landscape (Johnson, 2015; Davis, 2014). In this era, information is in digital form and librarians need to be proactive in

learning new technologies, integrating them in their information delivery jobs, and in teaching users how to use them (Johnson, 2013). Present day information professionals are learning to integrate technology in their information services delivery, not only to meet the current needs of users but also to prepare them for the demands of a digital society where information is managed, accessed, and used from remote places using emerging technologies (Johnson, 2012b). To achieve this, librarians need to be aware, not only of new technological tools but also acquire the skills for using them in library services. Twenty-first century librarians are working in an environment where users believe that all they need is on the Internet. In order, to meet the needs of these new users, librarians need to get into technologies that they use (Quinnery, Smith, & Galbraith, 2010).

In support of this claim, Jatto (2018) added that we are in an era of flexible information resources and use and as libraries continue to evolve into the global collection of digital content, users want the information at the command of their fingertips delivered to them, thus librarians' capacity to facilitate resources location and delivery becomes imperative. Information resources in print media are bulky and time consuming to consult. Trivedi (2010) posits that information users are no longer satisfied with the resources of the traditional libraries, they want supplement which the dynamic digital library now provides. So the 21st century librarians are expected to be technologically-savvy. They are expected to be actively engaged in the exploration and implementation of new technologies in their libraries. By implementing a variety of digital web-based projects, initiatives and infrastructures, librarians preserve, extend, and facilitate access to information and knowledge comprising human kind's cultural, scientific and intellectual heritage (CARL, 2010). As information systems increase in complexity and new resources continue to spring up, librarians are becoming indispensable counselors in the electronic environment. As the information and technology specialist for the whole school community, librarians are uniquely positioned to assume leadership roles in the use of technology (Clephane, 2014; Ray, 2013).

Biddiscombe (2001) stressed the need to maintain and preserve those essential skills that have always

made librarians respected in their communities. Librarians need to retain their flexible working skills, openness to new ideas, personal attention and caring approach to user needs. New environment demands that LIS professionals must remain flexible and adaptable to the change. Sridhar in 2000 predicted that LIS professionals must have technical skills, IT skills and managerial skills as the world is in transition. Thus acquiring new skills is the demand of the time for a number of reasons such as:

- Fast incoming technological changes;
- Emerging structural changes;
- Preparing staff for changes coming in the work culture of the parent organization or to give transferable skills to make the staff more employable anywhere.

The librarian's job is to provide information and skills training that will enable users to use this information. The 21st century librarian is a technology application leader who works with other members of the information management team to design and evaluate systems for information access that meet user needs. When required, the 21st century librarian provides instruction and support so that end users can make optimal use of the information resources available to them. They are capable of working in the hybrid world of print and electronic media and providing the best mix of information resources in the most appropriate formats for the environment (Hashim, Haliza & Mokhtar, 2012). The 21st century librarians are professionally directed by their job to be technology leaders. They integrate technology to create a learning community. The American Association of School Librarians (2009) mandates librarians to assume a leadership role in building 21st century information literacy skills, which include digital and technology literacy.

Furtherance, the 21st century librarians play a key role in developing information policy for the organization, ensuring that access to all information resources -- from internal records to external databases -- is provided in the most strategically- effective and cost-effective manner. They can now use Google Drive, Google docs, Instant Messaging (IM), Skype, Twitter, Wikis etc to explore how they can share, engage, and connect with other learners and content that assists users to

learn. Librarians also need to have knowledge of social networking sites for knowledge sharing. Obi, Okore and Kanu (2019) informed that Social Networking Sites (SNSs) allow users to share ideas, pictures, posts, interests with people in their network. It provides an innovative and effective way of connecting users all over the world. SNSs such as LinkedIn, Myspace, Facebook, Blogs set up personal communities that allow users to view profiles of their friends which is widely used worldwide and very popular in Nigeria too. Social media is more than just a means of seeking information. Social media is used to connect with others, for business or commercial purposes, to make new friends, reawaken old friendships. Social media involves networking of information or knowledge using 21st century gadgets like smart phones or computer through the means of platform (website) and it is sharing among community or group of people that have the same ideology.

In the academic community, especially in the library parlance, social media is another modern word for “Resources Sharing” “Knowledge Sharing” “Consortia”, “Library co-operation”, “Networking” “Library Collaboration”, “Open Access Service” Web 2.0, 3.0, 4.0 and “Library Alliance”. Therefore, social media offers librarians a way to promote library services directly to young adults, and any member of academic community instead of waiting for users to seek out the library (Lucky, 2018).

Social media sites such as Facebook, Myspace, Youtube, Flickr, Blogs, Twitter and Wiki are used in education to enhance students’ skill acquisition and academic performance. Omekwu (2003), stated that librarians should have basic knowledge of computers and their capabilities; competence with search engines; Internet facilities; e-mail; Internet navigator tools, web browsers and web file formats; database software; Internet development and management know-how. The 21st century librarians can use Google Drive for communication and collaboration since it allows them to create and store documents online (in the cloud) free of charge. What is required is Internet connectivity and a Gmail account that can be used to login. Documents that are created and stored in the cloud can be accessed anywhere, allowing those who share the documents to work on them in real time (Kulikowski, 2012). Kulikowski (2012) also

pointed out that in the library, Google Drive can be used for communication. To collaborate, one need to set a sharing feature and anybody sharing the document has permission to view and edit the document (Louisville Free Public Library, n.d.). In addition, Google docs are a key web 2.0 tool for collaboration. It allows multiple editors to edit a single document. Google docs have features that allow editors to chat and look up dictionary definitions and translate documents into different languages (Hoya, 2010).

The 21st century librarians, given their familiarity with the information market place, can be key contributors to the development, marketing and use of information. With the use of Jing Screen cast, Delicious, and Scoop, the 21st century librarians now provide virtual reference services in the libraries. Virtual reference service is an online reference service where information sharing is done real time online. Jing is a screencast that allows one to take a screen shot of an image or a video of a document one is looking for sharing with others. It is also free application software that gives the user quick and simple way of showing a process or procedure on a computer screen to others for them to learn how to do something. Jing facilitates instant sharing. With Jing, the user is able to get an option of setting up a screencast.com account that can be used with Jing (Carleton University Data Center, 2013). With Jing, librarians can create screen-casts video recordings of the library’s activity on a computer screen showing every step being demonstrated while listening to narration (English, 2011). Once Jing screen cast is uploaded, screencast.com provides URL that can be shared through e-mail, instant messaging and website (Griffis, 2009). This technology can be used in libraries, archives, and museums to produce informative tutorials and to explain step by step procedures on how to use the library’s websites, repositories, catalogues, and databases overload.

O’Connell, (n.d) observes that 21st century information users are challenged by information overload. To overcome this challenge, web content curation has become every librarian’s business. This involves identifying, organizing and sharing information that is related to a specific topic. Content and web curation should be thought of as a skill that is specifically needed by librarians, educators, and information users. Robertson



(2013) posits that curation is an important 21st century skill for information seekers and users. He pointed out that “information users need to learn how to locate, filter, evaluate and rank content activities that lead to organizing and sorting information and ideas, and creating original content.

**Scoop.it** is one of several tools librarians can use for web content curation. **Scoop.it** is easy to use as it only requires one to create an account just like any other social media site (O’Connell, nd). One can curate information by finding preselected information on the chosen topic or search on one’s own using comprehensive search terms on the chosen topic. The curator has to choose if information is relevant to the topic. Curated information can be shared with students or teachers (Bouffard & Owem, 2014). The advantage of Scoop.it is that it can be linked to a traditional catalog record to be accessed through the Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC).

Delicious is another social bookmarking Internet application that allows users to collect and label information for their own use or to share with others. Users can bookmark links and tag them with specific keywords of their choice (Gilmour & Stickland, 2009). Some librarians use this social bookmarking service to collect lists of Web resources that they later include in subject guides, use during bibliographic instruction sessions, or use for their own research. Delicious is a social media platform that puts together websites and groups them using keyword tags. For this, the virtual reference can help students on campus to find better resources when they are conducting searches online (Gardner, 2005).

Librarians are also taking on new teaching roles within the academy. They are partnering with faculty to teach information literacy to their students. They are working with their instructional technology / teaching support centres to enhance the resources available to instructors. They are seeking out, and often earning seats at the table when key decisions are being made concerning learning support software and systems. They share with faculty members the interest of helping students use information efficiently and ethically in a “copy and paste world” (Wilson & Linke, 2009). The 21st century librarian harnesses the current and

appropriate technology tools to deliver the best services, provide the most relevant and accessible resources, develop and deliver teaching tools to maximize clients’ use of information, and capitalize on the library and information environment of the 21st century, assesses, selects and applies current and emerging information tools and creates information access and delivery solutions, applies expertise in databases, indexing, metadata, and information analysis and synthesis to improve information retrieval and use in the organization maintains current awareness of emerging technologies that may not be currently relevant but may become relevant tools of future information resources, services or applications (Abels, Jones, Latham, Magnoni & Marshall, 2003).

Technology-based library skills are acquired by librarians to operate today’s library information services in an innovative way to enhance more efficiency and better service delivery through: job satisfaction, job involvement, better working environment with good conditions of service, promotions and better salaries. Currently, emerging technologies are revolutionizing traditional library and information services. Digital library is now providing access to flexible world-class information resources for learning and research. Library users are no longer obliged to visit the library at regular open hours to meet all their information needs. They search the library online catalogue, use subject guide or database to access a citation from the Internet or access a full text article from web-based journals, browse e-journal, email reference question via ask-a-librarian service or borrow an e-book, all by remote access (Bashorun & Isah, 2011).

### **Roles of Academic Libraries in the 21st century**

The emergence of ICT has redefined the role of academic libraries in the 21st century. Print materials are no longer sufficient to store information. CDROM databases, electronic document delivery, automated cataloguing, online circulation systems and online information retrieval (OPAC) have become the order of the day. At the start of the 21st century, academic libraries explore service developments to support a series of new scenarios (Brophy, 2001).

This includes:

- new publication and scholarly communication scenarios;
- more intensive use and delivering of digital resources;
- serving increasingly heterogeneous student population;
- continuing high demand from students for traditional resources;
- new modes of study, including ICT-based and distance learning, with which libraries have had little involvement in the past;
- ever-reducing levels of resources, particularly in staffing, leading to enormous pressures on individual staff and a severe challenge to management.

The new student-centered paradigm and new learning and teaching approaches have created the need for a reconceptualisation of the roles and responsibilities of librarians in the learning and teaching processes. In ICT context, librarians will have to rethink and reassess information strategy, offering alternative modes of delivery. Many academic libraries are experimenting with online information literacy tutorials, courses and instructions. Hepworth (2000) confirms that Web-based guides such as guides to literature searching are increasingly common.

This century has also witnessed a dramatic change in users' information seeking pattern. Nigerian academic libraries in the 21st century are gradually changing to fit into their clients' information seeking patterns. The situation has brought about the establishment of digital libraries to compliment traditional ones. This is evidenced in the attempt to digitize library resources to cater for the information needs of new generation users that is, the 21st century library users who exhibit much dexterity in using new sources and new technologies.

### **Challenges faced by librarians in providing information services in the 21st century**

To keep abreast with new technologies and become relevant in the information service profession, librarians are assuming leadership roles in knowledge of new technologies and how they can be used (Stranack, 2012; Johnson, 2013). However, the researcher observed that most librarians are not competent in using the emerging technologies. Johnson, (2012) affirms that

librarians are still using traditional ways to reach out to their users. He laments that those who use social networking and the Internet cannot select technology to deliver library services. This situation does not only make them irrelevant in their role, but also causes them to under serve their clients (Cassidy et al., 2011). Some of the librarians lack adequate knowledge of new technology and preparedness to use it.

As cited in Omoskejimi, Eyaufe, Nwobu & Nweke (2019), when librarians are not properly trained and retrained to acquire 21st Century technological skills, they are bound to face some challenges in the course of discharging their duties. Some of the problems emanating from lack of staff training for effective ICT service delivery in libraries as identified by Emezie and Nwaohiri (2013) are: Lack of competency, poor technology literacy, poor knowhow of Internet connectivity and its uses among librarians, lack of recent technological knowhow, primitive information delivery, poor librarian/user relationship, slow articulation of user needs etcetera. To be able to deliver effective library services in this age of information explosion, librarians needs to acquire 21st century ICT skills.

There is also a lack of financial resources for training and professional development of library staff. Paucity of funds is endemic in most public institutions in Nigeria. Librarianship is characterized by lack of innovation and conservatism in the system. Omekwu and Echezona (2008), highlighted the training needs of librarians to include: basic knowledge of computers and their capabilities; competency with search engines; Internet facilities; e-mail; Internet navigator tools, web browsers and web file formats; database software; Internet development and management know-how amongst others.

### **Conclusion**

The astounding growth of the Internet and the rise of electronic communications and storage media generally have transformed the work of the librarians. Information overload is a growing problem and librarians are needed more than ever to filter and provide quality information to their users. To meet this demand, librarians need to acquire the requisite skills.

Present IT based environment demand new job requirements, new roles, adequate competence and different kinds of skills from the professionals which will help them to develop new product and services in response to new technological advancement.

### Recommendations

- Librarians and information professionals need to continue to learn, update and refresh their knowledge to avoid obsolesce and lethargy.
- They should embark on regular training and development to keep abreast with the rapid technological advancement of the present age.
- Regular attendance to professional conferences workshops.
- Both the LRCN and National Universities Commission should review the course content of LIS professionals to reflect the global best practices.
- ICT infrastructure in the university should be improved.
- Public universities in Nigeria are poorly funded. There is need for improved funding. Similarly, university libraries should look inwards and source for funds through viable internally generated revenue.
- The problem of epileptic power supply and poor telecommunications infrastructure should be doggedly addressed by the Nigerian government by injecting the necessary funds and technical expertise.
- Librarians should strive on their own to equip themselves with 21st Century information service delivery skills through attending seminars, conferences, workshops and the acquisition of higher degrees so that they can deliver effective services in this era of IT driven library services.

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