Assessment of Library Automation by the Staff in Some Selected First Generation University Libraries in Nigeria

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Abstract: The role of libraries have change from that of collection development and organization of library materials to an information support personnel and an access point to relevant and timely resources. Application of computer to library services has changed library roles and operations with the last decade in Nigeria. This study, therefore assessed the attitudes of sectional heads and library staff to the use of information technologies in first generation university libraries in south-western Nigeria. The selected universities were Kenneth Dike library (K.D.L), University of Ibadan; Hezekiah Oluwasanmi library (H.O.L), Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-ife and the University library (ULAG) , University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria. The library staffs were categorized into three groups; professional, paraprofessional and junior staff, one-stage random sampling was used to sample 50% of the respondents in each category. In all, 80 respondents were chosen and structured questionnaires were used to collect the data. Descriptive statistics was used for analysis. The study revealed the level of automation of each library. None of them is fully automated, though most of the library staff in the three universities had some basic knowledge about information technologies but only few can practically work with the facilities. At ULAG, CD rom was rarely used while computers were made available for use occasionally; e-mail services were used regularly. At HOL, computer were used regularly while CD rom and fax machine were been used occasionally. On-line public access catalogue, computer and fax machine were used regularly at KDL, while CD-rom database and electronic-mail (e-mail) services were occasionally used. It should be noted that most library staff in 3 university libraries rarely used library database searching. Lack of fund for proper maintenance and adequate IT training of library staff were major problems of the use of information technology. In conclusion, information technology usage should be made compulsory for every library staff so that all will be involved at every aspect for more efficiency and a positive change of attitude in the library. There should also be more resource sharing and co-operative lending services among these university libraries.

Key words: Assessment, library automation, information technology, library staff, first generation universities

INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of any academic environment or college is to provide an atmosphere for learning and this enterprise depend solely on the effective dissemination of information at all levels. However availability, timeliness accuracy as well as presentation of information resources depend mainly on effectiveness of the library within any institutions/ colleges. The importance of a quality library cannot be over-emphasize in an academic society. Since both the lecturers and students need the library for research and learning. while the lecturers see the library as a necessity in preparation of their own research activities and as a source to enable them keep abreast on new development , the student on the other hand depend mainly on the library to find relevant information for their course work. Also the flow of information in a university must be timely, accurate and useful for research, planning and decision making in order to solve problems (Dougherty, 1978).

Alley (1990) affirmed that if libraries are to continue to serve man in his pursuit of knowledge, library and librarians must demonstrate commitment to a future in which technology allow man unprecedented potentials for sharpening his destiny. Popoola (2005) affirmed that there is a great demand for services of information management professionals in Nigeria, this means that there are challenges for libraries and information sciences professionals.

The task is both challenging and enormous since the spread of literacy and the amount of learning /information one need to know and the task of serving patron with relevant information with the old manual method of library services makes the work very tedious. Beyond any doubt

librarians should act as an access point rather concentrating on collection and organization, they should serve as information support personnel and not as a store keeper they should focus on how they do their work rather than what they do. Today the change that computer application brought to library service cannot be quantified, therefore the attitude of librarian to the use of these Information Technology (IT) resources become very paramount (Ibekuwe, 1983).

Information technology resources: Information technology can simply be defined as the control manipulation and sending of data to achieve a specific goal. It is the acquisition, analysis, manipulations, storage and distribution of information and the design and provision and the system require for this purposes. Also information technology can be defined as the application of development in technology to information handling, thereby making it possible to offer everybody, regardless of background and national creed, access to the worlds knowledge and wisdom. One will reasonably agree that the criteria for a good library is rapidly shifting from good and large collections of books to a timely access of relevant information to library users.

Today, computer application to libraries have become the subject of vital importance across the world because of new technological development and importance of information to virtually all spheres of life (Alabi, 1993). Without any reasonable doubt one can state that the main duty of the library is to use every techniques of modern science to facilitate and to accelerate access to the printed book and other information sources.

Adams and Banks (1995) affirmed that "libraries are uniquely positioned to develop and offer: Services and electronic or print publications that provide on going effective information on specific database and other electronic resources. Alley (1990) stated further that library automation has help remove all the difficulties experience in library circulation; this is because work can be done speedily and more economically. He further explain that if circulation activities are automated today they will even be more so in the next decade because library need automation for the following genuine reasons:

- Increase in library activities, the volume of books and library users are growing at a faster rate everyday and this increase library activities
- The need to improve library operations/services.

Osigwe (1988) stated emphatically that the availability of computer in various organization large or small is now a since quanon for maximum efficiency in library operation and standardization of library services.

Idowu and Mabawonku (1999) stated that "automation has made many operation including orders circulation, bibliographic compilation and literature search easier and much more efficient and that various operations have become much easier and more efficient and some services become possible for the first time".

The benefit of information technology to library operation and services can be summarized as follows, speed, accuracy, reliability, memory capacity, artificial intelligence and flexibility of applications. Therefore it is paramount to assess the application of information technology facilities on library services.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study population was library staffs, in each of the three university libraries selected, namely Kenneth Dike library (K.D.L), University of Ibadan; Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library (H.O.L), Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-ife and the University library, University of Lagos (ULAG), Lagos, Nigeria.

This research, which assessed the attitudes of sectional heads and library staffs to the use of information technologies in first generation university libraries in south-western Nigeria, was carried out using questionnaires, interview and personal observations. The library staffs were categorized into three groups; professional, paraprofessional and junior staffs, one-stage random sampling was used to sample 50% of the respondents in each category. In all 80 respondents were chosen; 30 from KDL, 25 each from HOL and ULAG. The method of analysis of this research is simply the use of descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Some of the information technology tools in the libraries were identified. At ULAG, larger percentage of the library staff mentioned that computer, CD-rom database and electronic-mail (e-mail) services were available in the library. Computer, CD-rom database and fax machine were also available at HOL while on-line public access catalogue, computer, CD-rom database and electronic-mail (e-mail) services were available at KDL. The finding further revealed the level of automation of each library. None of them is fully automated, they were all partially automated. Though most of the library staff in the three universities had some basic knowledge about information technologies but only few can practically work with the facilities (Table 1).

Table 1: Available information technology resources in the libraries

	Ulag		Hol		Kdl	
Variable	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)
*IT Tools						
On-line public access catalogue	-	-	-	-	28	93.3
CD-ROM databases	15	60.0	10	40.0	24	80.0
E-mail	20	80.0	-	-	20	66.7
Library database	-	-	-	-	-	-
Computer	25	100.0	23	92.0	25	83.3
Fax machine	-	-	15	60.0	-	-
Level of library automation						
Fully automated	-	-	-	-	-	-
Partially automated	25	100.0	22	88.0	28	93.3
Not automated	-	-	-	-	-	-
No response	-	-	3	2.0	2	6.7
Total	25	100.0	25	100.0	30	100.0
Computer training						
First degree	2	8.0	5	20.0	5	16.7
Diploma certificate	2	8.0	4	6.0	5	16.7
Certificate course	15	60.0	12	48.0	17	56.6
Orientation workshop	4	16.0	2	8.0	3	10.0
Others	2	8.0	2	8.0	0	0
Total	25	100.0	25	100.0	30	100.0
IT usage						
Yes	10	40.0	8	32.0	9	30.0
No	15	60.0	17	68.0	21	70.0
Total	25	100.0	25	100.0	30	100.0

Source: Field survey 2003

Table 2: Information technology tools used for library operations

	On-line public access catalogue	CD-ROM databases	E-mail services	Database searching	Computer usage	Fax machine
	(%)					
			ULAG			
Regularly	-	-	75.0	-	-	-
Occasionally	-	20.0	15.0	-	60.0	-
Rarely	70.0	76.0	-	90.0	30.0	-
No response	30.0	04.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	100.0
			HOL			
Regularly	-	-	-	-	66.0	-
Occasionally	-	48.0	60.0	-	26.0	64.0
Rarely	80.0	44.0	36.0	84.0	10.0	36.0
No response	20.0	08.0	04.0	16.0	04.0	-
			KDL			
Regularly	24.0	-	-	-	90.0	84.0
Occasionally	40.0	56.0	64.0	-	10.0	12.0
Rarely	32.0	32.0	36.0	84.0	-	-
No response	04.0	12.0	-	16.0	-	4.0

Source: Field survey 2003

Table 2 indicated how regular the information technology tools were used by the library staff. At ULAG, 76% of the respondents believed that CD rom was rarely used while 60% pointed out that computer were made available for use occasionally; about 75% confirmed that e-mail services were used regularly. At HOL, computer were used regularly while CD rom and fax machine were been used occasionally. On-line public access catalogue, computer and fax machine were used regularly at KDL, while CD-rom database and electronic-mail (e-mail) services were occasionally used. It should be noted that most library staff in three university libraries rarely used library database searching.

In the Table 3, it could be seen that most of the respondents in the three universities strongly believed that the information technology tools are very suitable in our present day library services and they also agreed that the introduction of IT resources had caused lots of improvement in the individual life and in the library services as a whole. Lack of fund for proper maintenance and adequate IT training of library staff were major problems against the use of information technology. Many solution are suggested.

Table 3: Suitability of information technology

	Ulag		Hol		Kdl	
Variable	No.	(%)	No.	(%)	No.	(%)
Suitability						
Very suitable	-	-	-	-	10	33.3
Suitable	15	60.0	10	40.0	20	66.7
Fair	10	40.0	10	40.0	-	-
Unsuitable	-	-	5	20.0	-	-
Very unsuitable	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	25	100.0	25	100.0	30	100.0
Improvement						
Strongly agreed	8	32.0	5	20.0	-	-
Agreed	10	40.0	10	40.0	12	40.0
Partially agreed	7	28.0	5	20.0	10	33.3
Disagreed	-	-	5	20.0	8	26.7
Strongly disagreed	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	25	100.0	25	100.0	30	100.0
Problems						
Lack of funds for proper maintenance	10	40.0	6	24.0	20	66.7
The system often breakdown	3	12.0	7	28.0	-	-
Computer illiteracy	12	48.0	5	20.0	10	33.3
All of the above	-	-	5	20.0	-	-
Others	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	25	100.0	25	100.0	30	100.0
Solution						
Train all library staff	4	16.0	-	-	8	26.7
Train all the users	-	-	4	16.0	-	-
Buy more computers	-	-	-	-	-	-
Provide funds for maintenance	-	-	-	-	-	-
All of the above	21	84.0	21	84.0	22	73.3
Others	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	25	100.0	25	100.0	30	100.0

Source: Field survey 2003

RECOMMENDATIONS

Application of information technology is the only way to run an efficient and effective university library system because of the increase in staff, student and publication across the world. The volume of publication one need to acquire process and disseminate to satisfy the information need of library patrons in university system makes library services very difficult if not impossible without information technology facilities.

Underwood stated that a regular review, perhaps annually is especially important for an automated system because technology development may supply solution to any problem which persist and that a review directs attention to such matters is much more crucial. Some of the persistent problems have been revealed and in order to resolve them some recommendation are suggested as follows:

Firstly, since the usages of information technology facilities are electricity dependent at no stage should a university library expect good patronage by patrons without a stand -by generator.

Secondly, there should be frequent users training and staff should go on sandwich or diploma programmes on maintenance and technical know-how of these equipment on regular bases. Also, university libraries should make these facilities available to users. It is unfortunate that some of these libraries have over twenty computers that are just locked up in a store.

Government adequately provide information technology facilities but nothing is on ground for the maintenance of the facilities. The library automation process should not just stop at computer acquisition but should go further to annual report presentation on the level of usage, (with adequate data) to the funding government.

University libraries should employ a graduate in computer science and computer engineering in order to take adequate care of some minor services of the equipment. Also, university employer should make it compulsory for any staff intending to work in a university library to have a minimum certificate in computer and train all the employed staff on computer application and usage.

Finally, there should be Nigeria university libraries networking services these will cater for the information need of most researchers, there should also be more resource sharing and co-operative lending services among this university libraries. It should be made compulsory for every library staff to participate in information technology application usage so that all will be involved at every aspect for more efficiency and a positive change attitude among library.

CONCLUSION

The performance of the application of information technology facilities in our university libraries is a reflection on the library users as well as the sectional heads of the three university libraries studied in south-western Nigeria. The study had revealed the attitude, interest and the weaknesses of the library staff.

Technology equipment cannot change or be persuaded to do better, inadequate use are due to human failure and lack of understanding on how to get the best out of the equipment. On a final note there should be regular review of the application of the use of information technology in university libraries to foster a better understanding and awareness services among university libraries in the country for efficient information flow for national development.

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