

Preparedness of Cataloguing Section for Library Automation in Academic Libraries in Lagos State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The survey examined the extent to which the Cataloguing sections of Academic Libraries in Nigeria are prepared for automation of their operations. The effects of automation on cataloguing practice in particular, as well as the problem of Library automation systems were discussed. The study indicated that despite the positive effects of automation on cataloging especially on efficiency and effectiveness of their operations, there are still some problems associated with automation of cataloguing section, which include attitudes of personnel (Librarians and System Analyst/Programmers), poor planning, lack of enough staff and facilities among others. Consequently, it was recommended among others that management of academic institutions should collaborate with appropriate agencies to provide necessary and relevant facilities such as inverters to cater for the epileptic state of power supply in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Cataloguing, Academic Libraries, Library automation*

INTRODUCTION

Looking at most write up on library automation, the successes are normally reported in the literature, fully and detailed information about them is always available to interested readers. Problems and failures most often are not reported. If such information is provided, it serves as a tool for positive development in Library automation especially in the Cataloguing section, which can best be described as the engine room of the library. The changes taking place in the world today have continued to affect the pattern of Library services and modern librarianship is responding to these influences. Information explosions as well as the expansion of higher education facilities have produced an increase in the number of people engaged in teaching and research, the results of which are made available to end users. Chukwu (2002) observes that too much material is available for the most energetic and hardworking expert to handle, even in his own little field of study, while the complexity of their information need continue to be made complex and the urgency with which the information resources is to be supplied, might be crucial to the success of activities for which, the world over have turned to computer seeking its solution to the complex information needs. Hence the introduction of automated library system, for effective and efficient information handling, especially in academic libraries. Kazaure (2001) notes that in the scheme of information delivery and services, it is considered that, information that is not timely delivered is as good as no information at all, hence the need to automate library processes and services. Ajibero (2004) defines Library automation as the application of computer to Library housekeeping operations and services. Ugorji (2002) highlights two basic aims behind the desire to automate libraries, as:

- a. To be more efficient in what is already being done.
- b. To offer service and support which could not be achieved manually.

Iheaturu (2004) confirms this, when he stated that manually operated libraries are fast changing to modern libraries systems in which Information and Communication Technology holds way for fast, accurate and efficient service delivery. Key library functions such as acquisition, cataloguing and circulation of information that have originally been manually performed are automated. Today, urban automation is being phased out in many libraries. Cataloguing is an act of describing books and non-books materials pointing out important bibliographic information about the materials. It has remain one of the most technical duties that practicing librarian engaged in. It is also a function that exerts energy, requires great concentration, commitment and application of high intellectual ability on the part of the librarian as to be able to perform creditably in the task of information processing (Eguavoen, 2000 as cited by Egberongbe, 2003).

The Cataloging section in a typical Nigerian Academic Library can generally be divided into three units. The Cataloging and Classification unit, Cataloguing Maintenance Unit and Book Finishing and Mending Unit. Egberongbe (2003) maintains that the Cataloguing and Classification Unit is responsible for Cataloguing and Classification of library materials, in order to easy access to library collection. The Catalogue Maintenance Unit is responsible for producing and maintaining catalogue record, while the book finishing and mending unit duties includes labeling of books, minor book repair jobs among others. Vickers (1975) reports that the success of a computer based library system frequently depends on the existence of a key person to provide strength, intelligent and enthusiasm for the new system. Nwalo (2002) confirms this when he stated that, the success or failure of a library automation programme depends to a large extent on the successful and computer literate personnel who should be able to take the right step when necessary. This summed up by Ifidon (2002) who said that computer based systems are marvelous tools for achieving librarianship objectives namely, access , quick and effective delivery of information .

Considering the level and kinds of jobs in the various units, one can easily state that, there are two categories of staff, that is the library assistants/attendants and professionals with each category performing different duties. Due to the specialized nature of some of the jobs and wide variety of duties carried out by these groups of staff, there is the probability that certain group of staff will be more concentrated in one unit than the other (Egberongbe, 2003). The function of a library catalogue is to provide access to the collection of information materials housed in that library or group of libraries. According to Adediji (2004), the functions of cataloguing in any library is the provision of access to the library holding.

The cataloguing staff are expected to perform their duties mostly with the use of automation especially the cataloguing and classification of library materials. In other to achieve the advantages of computer based catalogue systems, which includes Efficiency in networking and resource sharing which enhanced, the quality of service rendered by the library, high degree of access to information with minimum delay, ensures maximization of information resources and provide the means to offer new improved services to patrons. Ajibero (2002) gives reason for application of information communication technology

(ICT) in cataloguing by stating that due to large amount of cataloguing data available, the cataloguing of same publications in thousands of libraries, the repetitive nature of cataloguing and the desirability of having consistence cataloguing information in all libraries combined to make cataloguing the first operation for the application of computer. Omotosho (2004) blends this, by saying that the whole essence of utilizing library automation system is motivated by the need of the library to satisfy clientele particularly in providing organized access to information materials. Despite the advantages of computerized cataloguing unit, backlog of unprocessed materials can still be observed in some libraries cataloguing units. It was based on this observation that this study was conducted:

1. To determine how prepared the cataloguing section of academics libraries to library automation are.
2. To identify problems encountered in the process of automating the cataloguing section of the library.
3. To suggest solutions to identified problems.

METHOD

A survey method was used for the study. Being a survey of academic libraries, this study covers only University, Polytechnic and College of Education/research Libraries in Lagos State. Questionnaire was the research instrument and it was distributed to some participant for collection of data at the Nigaria Library Association (NLA) Annual Cataloguing, Classification and Indexing workshop, Topo-Badagry in 2011, in order to obtain information on Automation of their Cataloguing unit as well as the preparedness of the unit for Automation. The distribution of the questionnaire was done randomly among participant, which represented the three categories of academic libraries. Questionnaire was administered to participants representing cataloguers from academic libraries covering almost the whole country. The questionnaire administered was divided into three sections. First section consisted of questions 1-4 which sought background information of the respondent. Section two consisted of questions 5-7 inquiring about the composition of the cataloguing section of the respondent libraries. Section three consisted of questions 9-26 inquiring about the level of automation of their libraries, the extent of their preparedness, as well as the problems faced. Out of the 80 copies of questionnaires distributed, 81.25% were returned, 38.46% were filled by those who are not representing institutions in Lagos State, hence not usable, while 61.52% were found usable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 indicated that 50% of the respondent are from University libraries, Polytechnic libraries represent 37.5% while 12.5% represent the College of Education/research libraries. This showed that all the forty respondents indicated the existence of the cataloguing section in their libraries. Table 2 shows that 10% of the respondent are Ph.D holders, 50% are Masters Degree holders, 25% are first-degree holders while only 15% are diploma holders. This is an indication that most of the respondents were librarians. Table 3 shows that 37.05% of the respondent indicated that their cataloguing section comprises of three

units viz-a-viz the cataloguing and classification unit, the catalogue maintenance unit and the book finishing and mending unit indicated as *a*, *b* and *c* respectively 35% indicated that, they have *a*, while only 27.5% have *a* and *c*. The study showed that the absence of a particular cataloguing unit does not have any adverse effect on cataloguing output. Table 4 shows the types of software package in use in the respondents libraries. 42.5% indicated that their libraries use Libplus with the Polytechnic having the highest number of usage. Followed by others, which were not specified with 32.05%. 20% of the respondents signified the use of Alice for window, which is mostly used in the Universities library while 5% were identified with CDS/ISIS. The respondents indicated that they were not involved in library automation process including selection of software. Their bosses did the processes as well as the software selection. The implication of this is that, librarians in the cataloguing section may not understand the capacities as well as functionality of the system, since none of them understands the existing procedures at least not with the precision and detail requirement for designing alternative methods of accomplishing the same tasks.

If there is any problem in the cause of using the system, the problem may remain unresolved and these may have negative effect on the job. Table 5 indicated that, most of the respondents (57.5%) undergo in-house training on automation. However, 20% of the respondents developed themselves through certification programmes. Also, 17.05% signified that they trained themselves while 5% indicated that they were trained by software vendors. Table 5 shows that, if the institutions were not ready to organize training programmes most of the respondents might not have being computer literate. Hence, causing one of the major setbacks in library automation. The entire respondents indicated that, they have System Analysts although the relationship between them is fair. This may be due to the fact that, some librarians may believed that, the system analyst are trying to take over their jobs and some system analyst too may be feeling they are more superior to the librarians hence there may be power tussle especially when there is a bit of politics by the overall boss. Everyone wants to secure his/her job.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents

Type of Libraries	Number	Percentages of Respondent
Universities	20	50
Polytechnics	15	37.5
College of Education/ research	5	12.5
	40	100

Source: Survey, 2011

Table 2: Qualification of Respondents

S/N		MLS	%
1	Ph.D	04	10
2	M.Sc.	20	50
3	B.Sc.	10	25
4	Diploma	06	15
	Total	40	100

Source: Survey, 2011

Table 3: Composition of the Cataloguing Departments

Units classification	University	Polytechnic	College/Research	Total	Percentage
<i>a, b and c</i>	15	-	-	15	37.5
<i>a only</i>	-	10	04	14	35
<i>a and c</i>	05	05	01	11	27.5
Total	20	15	05	40	100

Source: Survey, 2011

Table 4: Types of Software in Use

Types of software	University	Polytechnic	College/Research	Total	Percent
Lib.plus	05	12	-	17	42.5
CDS/ISIS	-	-	02	02	5.00
Glass	-	-	-	-	-
Alice for window	06	01	01	08	20.00
Others	09	02	02	13	32.05
	20	15	05	40	100

Table 5: Staff Training

Training	University	Polytechnic	College/Research	Total	Percent
In-house training	10	03	23	57.5	
Training organized by vendor	02	-	02	5.00	
Personal training prog.	03	03	07	17.5	
Certificate	05	02	08	20.00	
Total			40	100	

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study showed that all the respondents' have cataloguing sections in their libraries regardless of the composition, which may differ. It also showed that most of the respondents were highly qualified librarians, which suppose to be an indication that there should be no much problem but despite that, there seems to be problems. The large percentage of the respondents actually did not trained themselves on the automation project, meaning if the institution did not organize any training, they would not have trained themselves and without any further training, they are likely to remain where they are, which will have negative effect on productivity and effectiveness of the library.

Information and Communication Technology as well as Library automation are not static rather they are dynamic in nature, the attitude of Librarians waiting for institutions to organize training before we develop or update our knowledge shows that, we are not ready for automation. Another observation made is about the relationship between Librarians and System Analyst. Librarians should de-emphasize the belief that the system analyst are coming to take up their job, this is not possible, most of them are not trained librarians, they don't know, except they, the librarians want them to know viz a viz, need to work together to achieve the library objective making information/information materials available to users at the right time. The issue of status should not overwrite our focus; it is easy for

librarian to be system analyst, if they wish to. In other to move the library forward, all need to work together and be prepare for change. Also, it was noted that Librarians are not involved in Library automation project (hardware and software selection), this is not good enough, librarians are the end users, they should be carried along to enable them understand the processes and procedures involved, so that they can understand as well as contribute their quota for improved efficiency. Without this, there will definitely be negative effect on productivity. Non-availability of stable electricity supply is another problem, without constant and stable electricity supply, the automation project is not feasible.

Other problems include inadequate number of professionals in some sections, most of the respondents complained of lack of enough professionals in the section that they have more library assistant, than librarians who can actually work on the system. The issue of facilities was also discussed, the respondents complained of lack of enough network points in the section due to lack of fund by the institution and the Internet service for online cataloguing is almost none existence, since the former is not frequently subscribed. All these have negative effect on preparedness of the cataloguing section of the library for library automation.

Cataloguing section staff especially the professionals should be involved in library automation project for the success of the project from the planning to the implementation stage. Also, training and retraining of cataloguing staff, is very important, in order to keep trend in the world of information provider. Without some knowledge in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), the automation project cannot succeed. The management of the institutions should provide facilities such as inverter in other to solve the problem of electricity supply to facilitate the library automation process, though library automation is expensive, if fully achieved the benefit outweighs the challenges. More professionals should also be employed to compliment those that are on ground, since no one can do it alone. Also libraries using the same software should form users` group in order to solve common problems as they manifest, instead of waiting for vendors endlessly, this will increase performance and efficiency of the system. All these will facilitate automation of cataloguing section and reduce backlog of unprocessed materials.

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