

THE NEED FOR LIBRARIANS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION POLICY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigates the need for librarians in the management of information policy in Nigeria. The descriptive study employed a total enumeration sampling technique to cover all the librarians in the 22 public universities in South-west, Nigeria. An online questionnaire sent through WhatsApp was used for data collection. Descriptive statistical tools such as frequency counts, means, and standard deviation were used for data analysis. It was found that librarians are needed in the formulation and implementation of information policy, even though technological advancement has usurped the role of librarians in information policy to a great extent. The study recommended continuous incorporation of librarians into information policy formulation, as they are crucial for promoting digital learning and scholarship and for providing the information literacy skills required to understand information policy.

.Keywords: Information, Information policy, information policy instruments, Librarians, Policy

Introduction

Information is a vital resource of any nation and organisation, serving as the basis for decision-making, and the effective functioning of systems and processes. Information is the life-

wire that links all parts of society. Information is an influential factor for national and global development, with the potential to transform society. Mankind cannot do without information. People who do not use information have disenfranchised themselves from society. The use of information is guided by information policy. Information policy is a set of rules guiding the use and dissemination of information (Thiruppathi, 2024). All nations have information policy instruments. Technology is massively used for gathering and disseminating information these days because the world has been reduced to a global village due to the surge in technological innovations.

Librarians are facing some challenges as their roles are scrutinized to the level of raising vital questions about their relevance in information policy in the age of technology. Thiruppathi (2024) averred that the need for librarians to shape information policy is at a crossroads due to the diminishing role of librarians in information policy formulation resulting from technological development. Some scholars have argued that technology has reduced librarians to mere gatekeepers of knowledge and information (Boufarss & Harviainen, 2021). Basri et al. (2012) posited that information technology has cast aside the importance of libraries since 1994. This has led to reconsideration of the necessity for librarians in information policy (Arumuru, 2021). The belief that other experts and technologies such as information technologists and data scientists can satisfy this necessity more competently calls for serious debate.

Though technology has transformed the manner people access and use information (Doyle, 2019), the roles of librarians have evolved to meet new information needs. One vital factor that is crucial in the discourse of information policy is the incorporation of librarians in the

information policy-making process. This study is, however, novel as most of the previous narratives concentrated on the involvement of libraries in information policy without bearing in mind how technological advancement has hamstrung the need for librarians in information policy. This study thus investigates **the need for librarians in the management of information policy in Nigeria**. The focus is on librarians in universities in South-west, Nigeria

Research Questions (RQ)

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the need for librarians in information policy in Nigeria?
2. To what extent has technological advancement usurped the role of librarians in information policy in Nigeria?
3. What is the extent of involvement of librarians in the formulation and management of information policy instruments in Nigeria?

Literature Review

Need for Librarians in Information Policy

Information policy is a concept employed to define a set of interconnected philosophies, laws, guidelines, and codes of practice guiding **how** information is created, managed, accessed, and used (van der Heyden & van Veen, 2018). Information policy guides actions to ensure access to information (Mutongi & Marume, 2016). The debate regarding the need for librarians in information policy in the current era of technology is **ongoing**. **Advocates** of **the** involvement of librarians in information literacy hinge their claim on the fact that successful implementation of information policy requires **people to be information** literate (Abdulrahman et al., 2019).

Information literacy is a fundamental human right in the digital society which promotes social inclusion of every individual (Mutongi & Marume, 2016). Librarians are the facilitators of information literacy (Abdulrahman et al., 2019). Knowledge of information literacy enables people to know the necessity of, and the ethical use of information (UNESCO, 2023).

Librarians play a vital role in the development of information society (Owoeye & Abolarinwa, 2016). The stability of a nation depends on access to information (Obi & Mmejim, 2019). Likewise, an information society requires functional information policies (Jaegar et al., 2015). Meanwhile, librarians play significant role in the formulation of information policies due to their expertise in information management and provision (Arumuru, 2021). The roles of librarians keep evolving in the modern era of technology. With the penetration of technology into library practice, librarians are needed for data management, digital scholarship, and tackling matters of ethical considerations in the process of accessing information (Doyle, 2019).

Usurpation of the Role of Librarians in Information Policy by Technology

Modern information society is technology-driven (Owoeye & Abolarinwa, 2016). Technology plays a transformative role in information policy, influencing several professions, including librarianship. Technology has restructured several traditional responsibilities of librarians such as cataloguing and classification, and referral services (Doyle, 2019). Technological advancements diminish the dependence on conventional methods of managing information (Kala, 2023), including that of librarians. Artificial intelligence is now performing several library tasks without errors. Also, the emergence of data scientists in the management of information reduces the need for librarians in information policy (Sirje & Garoufallou, 2020). As

information policy is getting entwined with technology, specialists in data science are tackling this complex challenge (Owoeye & Abolarinwa, 2016). The proficiency of data scientists in data analytics gives them an edge in the design and implementation of information policies (Doyle, 2019).

Formulation and Management of Information Policy Instruments

Beginning in the 1990s, diverse organisations and nations have intensified efforts to formulate information policy instruments. Information policy instruments are written laws, and guidelines that define the manner of collecting, accessing, and using information (Arumuru, 2021). The information policy instruments include collection development policies, data protection policies, intellectual property guidelines, digital preservation policies, social media and internet use policies, open access policies, freedom of information policies, etc. (Case, 2010). The key stakeholders in formulation and management of information policy instruments are government agencies, National Libraries, departments of digital services; legislative bodies who pass laws and regulations on data protection and digital rights, etc. (Arumuru, 2021). The information policy instruments are managed by librarians (Atanda et al., 2024).

In Nigeria, there are various parastatals and departments in the Ministry of Information which manage and implement information policies. For instance, the Department of Culture formulate and execute the national cultural policies to promote diverse national cultural activities through the National Commission for Museums and Monuments and the Council for Arts and Culture (Owoeye & Abolarinwa, 2016). Policies guiding national museums are formulated and executed by the department. Also, under the Federal Ministry of Education is the National

Library of Nigeria which makes policies regarding the use and production of information resources in Nigeria. The Nigerian Library Association has organised numerous seminars, workshops, and conferences and developed a blue-print to support the government in the formulation of an information policy.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design. The population of the study was 292 librarians in the 22 public universities in South-west, Nigeria. A total enumeration sampling technique was used for the study. An online questionnaire designed with the use of Google Forms was used for data collection. To ensure a high response rate, the Dillman et al. (2014) total approach to mailed surveys was employed. In total, 83 librarians responded to the questionnaire, yielding a 28.4% response rate. The low response rate might be because it was an online survey. A similar study by Fasae et al. (2021) revealed that in a population of 584, only 108(18.49) responded to the online questionnaire. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequency counts, means, and standard deviation. Criterion means: <2.50 (Low Extent), 2.50 to 2.99 (Moderate Extent), 3.00 and above (Great Extent).

Results and Discussion of the Findings

RQ1: What is the need for librarians in information policy in Nigeria?

Table 1: Need for Librarians in Information Policy in Nigeria

Items	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean (\bar{x})	Std Dev.
Provision of information literacy	22	41	7	12	1	3.86	1.014
Provision of research assistance	22	41	6	13	1	3.84	1.128

Promotion of digital learning and scholarship	24	37	8	9	5	3.80	1.169
Assistance in addressing matters concerning privacy, and ethical considerations in information access	19	43	7	12	2	3.78	1.037
Support for community outreach	16	46	8	12	1	3.77	.967
Assistance in privacy and security matters in the digital territory	17	44	7	15	0	3.76	.983
Provision of expertise in data management	13	48	9	13	0	3.73	.957
Curation of digital collections, and offer direction on information assessment	15	46	7	13	2	3.71	1.018
Average Mean						3.32	

Criterion means: <2.50 (Low Extent), 2.50 to 2.99 (Moderate Extent), 3.00 and above (Great Extent)

Note: SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, N= Neutral, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree

Table 1 reveals that the average mean ($\bar{x}=3.79$) is greater than the criterion mean ($\bar{x}=2.50$ to 2.99). This means that librarians are needed in information policy in Nigeria. The respondents claimed that librarians are needed for provision of information literacy ($\bar{x}=3.86$, $SD=1.014$); and provision of research assistance ($\bar{x}=3.84$, $SD=1.128$). The findings of this study are in agreement with that of Arumuru (2021) who librarians provide information literacy on how to circumnavigate complex ethical considerations. Also, Boufarss and Harviainen (2021) posited that librarians have the skills for curating digital collections, and offering direction on information literacy.

RQ2: To what extent has technological advancement usurped the role of librarians in information policy in Nigeria?

Table 2: Extent Technological Advancement has usurped the Role of Librarians in Information Policy in Nigeria

Usurpation of the Role of Librarians	VGE	GE	ME	LE	VLE	Mean (\bar{x})	Std Dev.
Artificial intelligence can perform the traditional responsibilities of librarians	21	51	0	47	14	4.01	.862
Users can access information independently on the internet without the help of librarians	26	42	7	5	3	4.00	.988
Technology makes the creation, distribution, and use of information easy	21	48	7	7	0	4.00	.826
Digital information resources and online databases diminishes the need for librarians	28	38	7	9	1	4.00	.988
Technology provides easy open access to data generated from public funding	20	48	9	6	0	3.99	.804
Open Access publishing provides assurance for free access to scientific knowledge	22	47	0	4	14	3.93	.973
The proliferation of cell phones and social media diminishes the need to go to the library	18	49	8	8	0	3.93	.838
Average Mean						3.98	

Criterion means: <2.50 (Low Extent), 2.50 to 2.99 (Moderate Extent), 3.00 and above (Great Extent)

Note: VGE= Very Great Extent, GE= Great Extent, ME= Moderate Extent, LE= Low Extent,
VLE= Very Low Extent

As revealed in Table 2, the average mean (\bar{x} =3.98) is greater than the criterion mean (\bar{x} =2.50 to 2.99). This implies that technological advancement has usurped the role of librarians in information policy in Nigeria to a great extent. The respondents claimed that artificial intelligence can perform the traditional responsibilities of librarians such as cataloguing, answering queries, etc. (\bar{x} =4.01, SD=0.862); and users can access information independently on the Internet without the help of librarians (\bar{x} =4.00, SD=0.988). An agreement exists between the findings of this study and that of Thiruppathi (2024) who found that technology can perform many aspects of library work.

RQ3: What is the extent of involvement of librarians in the formulation and management of information policy instruments in Nigeria?

Table 3: Involvement of Librarians in Formulation of Information Policy Instruments in Nigeria

Information Policy Instruments	VGE	GE	ME	LE	VLE	Mean (\bar{x})	Std Dev.
Collection development policies	18	60	5	0	0	4.16	.506
Digital preservation policies	17	52	14	0	0	4.04	.614
Access and use policies	15	58	3	7	0	3.98	.749
Open access and institutional repository policies	22	42	9	9	1	3.90	.958

Privacy and data protection policies	14	48	17	4	0	3.87	.745
Freedom of information policies	7	12	9	42	13	2.49	1.173
Copyright and intellectual property guidelines	5	14	11	36	17	2.45	1.171
Social media and internet use policies	5	11	9	29	29	2.20	1.227
Average Mean						3.39	

Criterion means: <2.50 (Low Extent), 2.50 to 2.99 (Moderate Extent), 3.00 and above (Great Extent)

Note: VGE= Very Great Extent, GE= Great Extent, ME= Moderate Extent, LE= Low Extent, VLE= Very Low Extent

Table 3 shows that the average mean ($\bar{x}=3.39$) is above the criterion. This means a high extent of involvement of librarians in the formulation of information policy instruments. However, the librarians have low level of involvement in the formulation of freedom of information policies ($\bar{x}=2.49$, $SD=1.173$), and copyright and intellectual property guidelines. This is a testimony that technology cannot completely erode the role of librarians in modern times. Technology has only transformed, instead of eliminating the necessity for librarians in information policy (IFLA, 2018). More so, the digital era has transformed the role of librarians from mere keepers of physical books to tech-savvy, information-savvy professionals (Thirupathi, 2024) whose proficiencies are needed in the management of information policy.

Conclusion

Despite the heavy transformation of the information landscape occasioned by technological advancement, the roles of librarians have adjusted to the novel demands. As such,

the necessity for librarians in information policy is sacrosanct. More so, the roles of librarians have progressed to concentrate on high-touch, high-value services that support automation and artificial intelligence. The swift development of technology and the upsurge of specialised experts indicate that the need for librarians in information policy may decline, not be eliminated.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made.

1. There should be continuous incorporation of librarians into information policy formulation, as they are crucial for promoting digital learning and scholarship and for providing the information literacy skills needed to understand information policy.
2. Librarians should improve their digital literacy skills by attending ICT trainings for them to remain relevant in the modern era in which ICT has infiltrated the formulation and implementation of information policies.
3. The expertise and skills of librarians in preservation and conservation of information resources should be engaged in the formulation and management of information policy instruments in Nigeria.
4. Librarians in Nigerian universities should prove their relevance by acquiring and demonstrating diverse ICT skills required for effective management of information policies.
5. Library associations at local and national levels should organise conferences on privacy and data protection policies, freedom of information policies, and other topic related to

information policy as a way of letting librarians know their role in formation and implementation of information policy.

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