

APPLICATION OF CONVENTIONAL AND ONLINE CATALOGUING PRACTICES BY LIBRARIANS IN TWO FEDERAL UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

This study examined conventional and online cataloguing practices by librarians in two Federal Universities viz: University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and Federal University of Technology, Owerri. Five (5) research questions were formulated based on the purpose of the study to guide the work. Questionnaire and oral interview were used to elicit information from the respondents that consisted of ninety three (93) university librarians who formed the total population of respondents. Major findings show that online cataloguing is a recent development and that, conventional cataloguing is practiced more than online cataloguing in university libraries. The study shows that librarians are highly skilled in conventional cataloguing. Problems identified include poor network connectivity, Lack of incentive, lack of skills in using tools, and inadequate power supply. The study concluded by recommending improved network connectivity, provision of relevant tools, positive management approach, need for competent chief cataloguers, improved work environment, provision of funds for cataloguing and provision of necessary incentives/motivation of staff by relevant agencies as ways of enhancing conventional and online cataloguing practices by librarians in the university libraries.

Introduction

Cataloguing as one of the technical services is unarguably the hub of librarianship. Cataloguing is very important because it is the principal means whereby the library can find the content of the collection (Bowman 2013). The library is surely the most dependable source of information. The function of the library catalogue is to provide access to the collection of information materials housed in that library or group of Libraries. According to Adedeji (2004), the functions of cataloguing in any library are the provision of access to the library resources. According to Taiwo (2012), if library users are not able to gain access to the library resources, the resources are then considered a waste. There is therefore the need for proper organization of such resources. The extent of the use of the library collection depends greatly on the quality of the library catalogue.

The product of cataloguing is the catalogue. Imeremba (2011) defined the library catalogue as a list of materials in the library arranged in a kind of order for smooth information retrieval of the clientele. It is always the first thing to meet in any library after meeting those at the circulation desk (i.e. the wooden catalogue cabinet). But if the library is automated, this would not be the case. The catalogue is an important retrieval device which assists in the choice of a document by providing details of the character and content of the book and ensures quick accessibility to the collection.

Conventional cataloguing has been defined as a process whereby bibliographic details of materials are described on cataloguing worksheets (pre-cataloguing sheets) or, on cards (Ezekwe & Moukebe (2012). They pointed out that most university libraries would prefer to use cataloguing worksheets because it makes it possible for several members of staff to participate in cataloguing. In descriptive cataloguing, the physical and other bibliographic details of books: series, publisher place of publication, illustrations, ISBN, dimensions etc. are given. The focus of this paper is to examine the conventional and online cataloguing practices by librarians in three federal university libraries in North Central and South-East, Nigeria

Online cataloguing grow out of card catalogues, automating records that were designed for manual environment with interfaces that were intended to bring a generation of library users familiar with card catalogs into the online world. The online library catalog evolved from the printed source, the library card catalog. Before the advent of online catalogs, library catalogs were pieces of furniture that contained numerous small drawers in these drawers were contained the records of a particular item in the library. Ajibero (2002), states that online library catalogs is an electronic bibliographic database, which describe the books, videotapes, periodicals etc housed by a particular. It is common to see libraries hooked to the catalogues of other libraries to copy cataloguing details instead of locating and cataloguing data online through international computer networks. Today's online catalogs hold many

millions of records that were constructed for card catalogs and retain the same underlying structure. Changes to cataloguing rules and relevant standards must support the migration of old data to new formats, for libraries have created for too much data already to start over. Online catalogs are an established technology in major research libraries in developed western countries, but in most of the world, card catalogs are current technology for all types of libraries and they continue to be maintained in many smaller libraries in developed countries.

The benefits identified by libraries include increased awareness of and access to their collections, improved quality of catalogue records and increased visibility for their library and its collections. Researchers identified the efficiency gains brought about by online searching and ability to access catalogues outside the library. They regard collections covered by valuable and convenient to use than those covered by manual catalogues.

Statement of the Problem

The extent of use of library resources depends greatly on the quality of a library catalogue. The catalogue is a key to the resource of a library. A comprehensive and well organized catalogue enhances the use and reputation of a library. On the other hand, an incomplete or poor catalogue mars the reputation, misguides, not only users but also reference librarians, book selection experts and other librarians.

The danger of poor cataloguing is that the needs of users or potential users of the library which is the principal target in producing the catalogue would not be met. After all, the user is the person for whom the library services exist, so the catalogue must respond to various user needs and approaches. This is bound to discourage the use of the library. Ultimately, it may adversely affect the library support from all quarters. The obvious lack of studies of this complex aspect of librarianship has necessitated a

research on this topic. The problem of this study can, therefore be put in the form of a question: what are the conventional and online cataloguing practices by librarians in university libraries in North Central and South-East, Nigeria?

Purpose of the Study.

The purpose of this study is to determine the Conventional and Online Cataloguing Practices of Librarians in three selected Nigerian Federal University libraries. The specific objectives are to:

1. Determine the conventional and online cataloguing practices in the libraries.
2. Ascertain the extent of application of conventional and online cataloguing by librarians in the three libraries.
3. Find out the factors responsible for the preference of one practice to the other in the libraries.
4. Identify the level of competences of the librarians in conventional and online cataloguing in the libraries.
5. Determine strategies for enhancing the conventional and online, cataloguing practices in the libraries.

Literature Review

The library collection is organized to give easy access to materials. According to Maloney (2004) the role of the library is to organize information resources and services in a way that supports user needs. Cataloguing and classification are basic processes in organizing information. Reitz, (2004) sees a library as a collection or group of collections of books and/or other materials organized and maintained for use. Historically, libraries have served as places where books used for the documentation of knowledge were kept, but they are now portals to global information relevant in education, research, individual and national development (Omekwu & Ugwuanyi, 2009 in Okore, Kkere, and like, 2009). According to Maloney (2004) the role of the library is to organize information resources and services in a way that

supports user needs. Cataloguing and classification are basic processes in organizing information. Cataloguing is the process of describing material so it can be identified. The library catalogue is an essential tool. It is an index or a key to the collection, containing an entry representing each item (Clark, 2000).

According to Idris (1995), online catalogue is the term used to describe the type of a user assistance whereby the user can interact with the system directly and in real time. Online catalogue normally includes a complete bibliographic record in machine readable form of all the library holdings with improved access points and can be searched interactively by users through terminals. Adeyemi (2001) and Egberongbe. (2003), states that large amounts of cataloguing data available in the database of the online library center (OCLC), world-cat and the library of congress (LC) online catalog have saved libraries from the repetitive value of catalogue information in all libraries. This evidence that has accumulated in library literature is to support the usefulness and positive impact of online cataloguing and classification. According to Zaid (2008), the advantage of online cataloguing cannot be over-emphasized, for cataloguers and classifiers that-have embraced the new technology, it is no longer common to see newly acquired information resources held up in the cataloguing units for months.

Cataloguing of library materials embodies the very fabric of knowledge, structures that shape the traditional and contemporary practice to find, identify, select and obtain information. Original cataloguing of library materials is a painstaking and time consuming exercise, it is possible, using this method, to have library materials that should be processed fast to spend months in cataloguing section. The application of the internet as supportive tool would no doubt turn most cataloguing section of most libraries into a livelier environment. According to Omekwu (2007), the journey of the book and other information resources do not just jump to the shelves; it follows a delineated process that is both

technical and intellectual. A traditional model follows this pattern; a book is published, a librarian receives notice and decides to add to the collection, submits an order; the item arrives, is processed, catalogued and classified, then it appears on the shelf ready to be found, identified, selected, obtained and used for (or borrowed) by user. These processes are long, tortuous and repetitive. The obvious results are: books spend weeks, months or years gathering dust on the shelves without being processed.

The library cannot function by itself, it is above all a human enterprise and depends ultimately upon the skilled minds and talents of the libraries if it is to perform its proper role in our changing society for many generations. The librarians was (to the lexicographer), one who has the care of charge of a library- a definition strongly suggesting, a keeper, one who watches and guards while these have often been characteristics of libraries, they have not been the only characteristics.

A librarian is defined as a “Specialist in the care and management of a Library”. The Random House Dictionary of English Language adds to the definitions the phrase “trained in the library sciences”. But these definitions are somewhat diluted by the perception of the librarian by the common man as one whose vacation is working with library books. Ojiha (2010) is of the opinion that the librarian is perhaps the only professional who is best known, popularly for the and onerous task as he has to perform, such as stamping and checking books. From these kinds of activities, it is a common believe in some quarters that being a librarian is very demanding. This is probably part of the reason why the public has long been complacent about the shortage of librarians. Not understanding what a library really is and what its management requires, nor the fact that a librarian is educated for specific function, the public has often been satisfied with a “book” and a “keeper” to whom they have given the name librarian. Librarianship may be a profession in which the professional title is not reserved wholly for the professional.

The university library is meant to support the university’s total programmed and since the image of the total programmed extends from the doctoral candidate engaged in scholarly research, the university

library must try to offer resources and services of comparable range. Inyanda and Salau (2006) see university libraries as buildings, instructional and self development centres, which operate as an integral part of the entire university environment. Also, Ranganathan as quoted by Inyanda and Salau (2006) describes university as public institutions or an establishment charged with the care of a collection of books, the duty of making them accessible to those who require the use of them and the task of converting every person in its neighbourhood into habitual library goers and readers of books. University libraries provide resources for knowledge acquisition, recreation, personal interests and interpersonal relationships for all categories of users, including, academic and non-academic staff, students and researchers.

Research Method

The study uses the descriptive survey design. This design is appropriate for this study as its basic element will be fundamental in achieving the objectives of the study which focuses on investigating the conventional and online cataloguing practices in university libraries. These basic element are skills, knowledge, people's opinion and belief.

Results and Discussion of the Findings

Practice of Conventional and Online Cataloguing in the libraries

The interview conducted with the chief cataloguers of the libraries in response to the research question indicates that the practice of conventional and online cataloguing are the same throughout the university libraries. The interview shows that there are two basic approaches to conventional cataloguing namely descriptive and original cataloguing, Descriptive cataloguing involves the physical attributes of the books like author, title, sub-title, publisher, place of publication, year of publication, year of publication, pagination, illustration etc. This finding validates the argument of Ezekwe and Moukebe

(2012) that in descriptive cataloguing, the physical and other bibliographic information of-books, series, publisher, place of publication, illustration, ISBN, dimension etc. are given.

The interview also revealed that original cataloguing is carried out by the academic librarians with at least Bachelor or Masters Degree in library and Information Science. This agrees with Kumar (2008) who opines that in most university libraries, the descriptive cataloguing is done by the library officers while original cataloguing is carried out by the library's chief cataloguer who must be holders of Bachelor or Master Degree in Librarianship.

Extent of Application of Conventional and Online Cataloguing in the Libraries.

Table 1: Responses on the application of conventional and online cataloguing in the libraries.

| S/N | Items | UNN | | FUTO | | X | OVERALL | |
|-----|--------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------------------|------|
| | | x | Dec. | x | Dec. | | Rank | Dec. |
| 1 | Conventional classification using LC | 3.51 | VHE | 3.19 | VHE | 3.66 | 1 st | VHE |
| 2 | Conventional filling of cards | 3.8 | VHE | 3.7 | VHE | 3.66 | 1 st | VHE |
| 3 | Manual spine labelling | 4.1 | VHE | 2.9 | HE | 3.6 | 2 nd | VHE |
| 4 | Conventional cuttering of numbers | 3.9 | VHE | 3.2 | HE | 3.46 | 3 rd | HE |
| 5 | Conventional subject cataloguing | 3.6 | VHE | 3.2 | VHE | 3.39 | 4 th | HE |
| 6 | Conventional descriptive cataloguing | 3.9 | VHE | 3.4 | VHE | 3.0 | 5 th | HE |
| 7 | Online classification | 2.6 | HE | 2.8 | HE | 2.63 | 6 th | HE |
| 8 | Automated descriptive cataloguing | 2.5 | HE | 2.8 | HE | 2.62 | 7 th | HE |
| 9 | Online subject assignment | 2.3 | LE | 2.0 | LE | 2.60 | 8 th | HE |
| 10 | Automated cuttering of numbers | 1.87 | LE | 1.53 | LE | 1.9 | 9 th | LE |
| 11 | Automated spine labeling | 1.3 | NA | 1.2 | NA | 1.6 | 10 th | LE |
| 12 | Automated Filling | 1.3 | NA | 1.2 | NA | 1.5 | 11 th | LE |

Research question two indicates that conventional cataloguing and classification using the library of congress is practiced more in the university libraries than online cataloguing, given the high mean score. Conventional cataloguing has become very popular in the university libraries because it has long been used in the description and organization of library resources even before the advent of online

cataloguing in recent times. Cataloguers have become so used to it as a result of constant practice. The results of the study also show that in the university libraries, online cataloguing is a new development. It is gradually gaining ground in the University libraries under study. However, Namdi Azikiwe library with the complement of computers and internet facilities has to a good extent adopted and adapted online cataloguing tools more than the other university library. Altar (2012) noted that the online cataloguing evolved from a printed source, the library card catalogue. He argued that before the advents of online catalogs were pieces of furniture that contained numerous small drawers.

Factors Responsible for the Preference of One Practice to another in the Libraries

Table 2: Factors Responsible for the Preference of One Practice to Another in the Libraries.

| S/N | Items | UNN | | FUTO | | X | OVERALL | |
|-----|--|------|------|------|------|------|------------------|------|
| | | x | Dec. | x | Dec. | | Rank | Dec. |
| 1 | Poor Network connectivity | 3.91 | SA | 3.78 | SA | 3.84 | 1 st | SA |
| 2 | Lack of incentives | 3.93 | SA | 3.7 | SA | 3.81 | 2 nd | SA |
| 3 | Lack of relevant tools | 4.0 | SA | 3.59 | SA | 3.73 | 3 rd | SA |
| 4 | Inadequate power supply | 3.87 | SA | 3.59 | SA | 3.73 | 3 rd | SA |
| 5 | Poor funding level | 3.84 | SA | 3.6 | SA | 3.71 | 4 th | SA |
| 6 | Lack of skills in using tools | 3.9 | SA | 3.7 | SA | 3.7 | 5 th | SA |
| 7 | Inadequate training in the use of ICT Facilities | 3.9 | SA | 3.59 | SA | 3.69 | 6 th | SA |
| 8 | Work environment | 3.9 | SA | 3.5 | SA | 3.67 | 7 th | SA |
| 9 | Outdated cataloguing tools | 3.91 | SA | 3.9 | SA | 3.66 | 8 th | SA |
| 10 | Lack of ICT facilities | 3.78 | SA | 3.5 | SA | 3.63 | 9 th | SA |
| 11 | Lack of competent chief cataloguer | 3.8 | SA | 3.56 | SA | 3.62 | 10 th | SA |
| 12 | Negative management approach | 3.7 | SA | 2.9 | SA | 3.60 | 11 th | SA |
| 13 | Lack of proper training in tools application | | SA | 3.4 | SA | 3.46 | 12 th | A |

The finding also revealed a number of factors responsible for the preference of one practice to another in the libraries. The major ones are lack of incentives, poor network connectivity, lack of relevant tools, inadequate power supply, poor funding level, and lack of skills in using tools. Many of these factors are similar to those listed by Oketunji (cited in Okoroma, 2010) including general

inadequacy in infrastructure, particularly telecommunication facilities and human resources supply, a large exploitative local computer market, an unsatisfactory after sales in maintenance and support, an inadequate pool of relevant technical staff and factors of recruitment and retention.

Strategies for Enhancing Conventional and Online Cataloguing the Libraries**Table 3: Strategies for enhancing the conventional and online cataloguing in the libraries**

| S/N | Items | UNN | | FUTO | | X | OVERALLL | |
|-----|---|------|------|------|------|------|------------------|------|
| | | x | Dec. | x | Dec. | | Rank | Dec. |
| 1 | Improved network connectivity | 4.1 | VA | 3.8 | VA | 3.9 | 1 st | VA |
| 2 | Provision of relevant tools | 3.91 | VA | 3.8 | VA | 3.81 | 2 nd | VA |
| 3 | Positive management approach | 2.6 | VA | 2.8 | VA | 3.63 | 3 rd | VA |
| 4 | Need for competent chief cataloguer | 3.76 | VA | 3.5 | VA | 3.55 | 4 th | VA |
| 5 | Pro vision of ICT facilities by relevant agencies | 3.7 | VA | 3.6 | VA | 3.53 | 5 th | VA |
| 6 | Pro vision of necessary incentives/ motivation by relevant agency | 3.5 | VA | 3.2 | VA | 3.33 | 6 th | A |
| 7 | Pro vision of current tools | 3.81 | VA | 3.4 | VA | 3.30 | 7 th | A |
| 8 | Regular power supply provision of alternative power supply | 3.69 | VA | 3.15 | VA | 3.27 | 8 th | A |
| 9 | Improved work environment | 3.2 | VA | 2.8 | A | 3.0 | 9 th | A |
| 10 | Provisions of funds for cataloguing | 2.8 | A | 2.2 | D | 2.5 | 10 th | FA |
| 11 | Training of staff in conventional Cataloguing FA | 2.8 | A | 2.27 | D | 2.45 | 11 th | D |
| 12 | Training of cataloguers in the use of ICT FA | 2.6 | A | 2.32 | FA | 2.27 | 12 th | FA |

Finding to the preceding research question shows that some strategies can be adopted toward enhancing conventional and online cataloguing in the libraries. The major ones include provision of relevant tools, improved network connectivity, positive management approach, need for competent chief cataloguer, provision of JCT facilities by relevant agencies, provision of necessary incentives/ motivation by relevant agencies, provision of current tools, regular power supply, and improved work environment.

Recommendations

Based on the finding of the study, the following recommendations were made;-

- ❖ The university administration should vote adequate fund for the university libraries through avenues like Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) and Petroleum Trust Development Fund

(PTDF). This will enable the university libraries to acquire the resources needed to facilitate cataloguing processes.

- ❖ University libraries should understudy the processes and methods adopted for conventional and online cataloguing by other libraries, especially university libraries abroad in order to implement what they did to succeed. They should also take note of the challenges faced by these libraries. This will enable the university libraries to know what to avoid in the course of the process.
- ❖ Librarians, especially cataloguers should be exposed to skill acquisition platform such as workshops, seminar and symposia in order to acquire the needed competencies required for cataloguing processes and tools involved.
- ❖ The advance in cataloguing and knowledge of tools for online cataloguing such as metadata, resource description and Access (RDA) among others should be included in the curricular of library schools in Nigeria in order to produce graduate librarians who are knowledgeable in cutting edge in cataloguing.
- ❖ For achieving efficient performance, the work in a catalogue department should be planned, organized and controlled properly. A desirable degree of coordination between the working of this department and other departments should be achieved.

Conclusion

The study discovered that the practice of both conventional and online cataloguing systems is the same throughout the universities under study. There are two basic approaches to conventional and description which are descriptive and original cataloguing. It was equally found out that conventional cataloguing and classification using the library of congress is practiced more in the university libraries more than online cataloguing. Recommendations on some strategies that can be adopted toward enhancing conventional and online cataloguing in the university libraries were made. These include

provision of relevant tools, need for competent chief catalogue, improved work environment, positive management approach and provision of funds for cataloguing. The work further stated the need for cataloguers to be exposed to skills acquisition platforms, proper planning of the work in cataloguing department and effective deployment of ICT infrastructures and use in the university libraries.

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