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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE UTILISATION FOR PROMOTING SERVICE DELIVERY IN SOUTH-WEST BRANCHES OF NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the utilisation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for promoting service delivery in the South-West branches of the National Library of Nigeria (NLN). Specifically, it investigated personnel awareness of AI applications, the extent of AI tool utilisation, the perceived benefits of AI, the challenges hindering its utilisation, and strategies for enhancing it. A descriptive survey design was adopted. A census of the 280 professional and para-professional staff of the six South-West branches was conducted using a structured questionnaire (Cronbach's alpha = 0.84); 270 copies were validly completed (96% response rate). Data were analysed with frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, using a criterion mean of 2.50. Respondents showed moderate awareness of AI applications (cluster mean = 3.03) but lower utilisation of AI tools (cluster mean = 2.80). They strongly endorsed the benefits of AI (cluster mean = 3.39) and agreed that poor ICT infrastructure, limited technical expertise, inadequate funding, inconsistent policy, and resistance to change hinder its utilisation (cluster mean = 3.33). Increased government funding, vendor collaboration, continuous training, institutional support, and an AI policy framework were the most endorsed strategies (cluster mean = 3.44). The study concludes that although awareness of AI is growing among NLN personnel, its practical utilisation remains limited, and recommends investment in infrastructure, staff training, and policy development.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, National Library of Nigeria, service delivery, digital libraries, information retrieval, library innovation

Introduction

Advances in digital technology have transformed the global information environment. Libraries, which traditionally preserved and disseminated knowledge, are

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evolving into intelligent information centres that provide efficient, personalised, and technology-driven services. Among emerging technologies, Artificial Intelligence (AI), which refers to computer systems designed to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence such as learning, reasoning, language processing, and pattern recognition, has become one of the most influential. In library and information services, AI supports automated cataloguing, intelligent information retrieval, virtual reference assistance, and digital preservation (Asemi et al., 2021; Cox & Mazumdar, 2024). Libraries in advanced economies increasingly use these tools to improve operational efficiency and to offer more responsive, user-centred services.

The National Library of Nigeria (NLN) occupies a unique position in the country's information infrastructure. As the apex library institution, it is responsible for collecting, preserving, and disseminating Nigeria's intellectual heritage while supporting education, research, and national development. Growing volumes of information resources and changing user expectations require the NLN to adopt technologies that improve accessibility and service quality. AI offers practical solutions: automatic metadata generation, more accurate retrieval, round-the-clock chatbot reference services, and predictive analytics for collection development. Yet the practical use of AI in Nigerian libraries remains limited. Inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, shortage of technical expertise, weak policy frameworks, unstable electricity supply, and insufficient institutional support continue to constrain implementation, and manual methods of cataloguing, indexing, and reference service still dominate many library operations (Ajani et al., 2022).

Recent Nigerian studies report rising awareness of AI among library professionals alongside early-stage implementation (Abayomi et al., 2021; Eiriemiokhale & Sulyman,

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2023). However, existing empirical work has concentrated on academic and university libraries, and little attention has been paid to the NLN. The problem this study addresses is therefore the gap between the recognised potential of AI to improve library service delivery and its limited utilisation within the NLN. Evidence on this gap matters to the NLN, which needs it to guide investment and policy; to government agencies, which set funding and infrastructure priorities; to library professionals, whose training needs it identifies; and to researchers, for whom it provides a baseline on AI in national library systems. The study covered the NLN branches in the South-West geopolitical zone (Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti States) and was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the level of awareness of AI applications among NLN personnel in the South-West branches?
2. To what extent are AI tools utilised for service delivery in the NLN South-West branches?
3. What are the perceived benefits of AI utilisation in the NLN South-West branches?
4. What challenges hinder the utilisation of AI in the NLN South-West branches?
5. What strategies can enhance the utilisation of AI in the NLN South-West branches?

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

AI is the capability of computer systems to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence. The term was proposed by McCarthy et al. (1955) in the proposal for the 1956 Dartmouth Summer Research Project, and McCarthy (2007) later defined AI as the science and engineering of making intelligent machines. It draws on machine learning, natural language processing, expert systems, robotics, and predictive analytics.

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In libraries, these technologies are applied to cataloguing and classification, semantic search, chatbots and virtual assistants, recommendation services, and digital preservation (Asemi et al., 2021; Shupe & Bergman, 2019). Reported benefits include reduced workload from repetitive tasks, faster and more accurate retrieval, and extended access for remote users (Eiriemiokhale & Sulyman, 2023; Jha, 2023).

For national libraries, such applications bear directly on core functions such as legal deposit, bibliographic control, and preservation of documentary heritage. Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT have added new possibilities for virtual reference and research support, while raising concerns about privacy, misinformation, and copyright (Adetayo, 2023; Mannheimer et al., 2024). The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA, 2020) has accordingly set out principles on intellectual freedom, privacy, equity, and digital literacy to guide library use of AI.

Empirical Review

Studies in Nigeria point to high awareness but low practical use of AI. Abayomi et al. (2021) found relatively high awareness among university librarians but limited application, which they attributed to inadequate infrastructure and funding. Ajani et al. (2022) similarly reported that academic librarians were aware of AI's potential but rated their institutions' readiness much lower. Ogwo et al. (2023), in a literature-based review, identified poor ICT skills, high initial costs, and epileptic power supply as the main constraints on AI in Nigerian academic libraries, and recommended training for librarians and guidelines on AI use. Eiriemiokhale and Sulyman (2023) found that awareness of AI influenced librarians' perceptions of it, that librarians saw AI as useful for reducing repetitive tasks, and that poor internet connectivity and lack of expertise were the major barriers. Moustapha and Yusuf (2023) reported little AI adoption in university libraries

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in Kwara State, with skills gaps, irregular power supply, and inadequate infrastructure as obstacles, and recommended staff training and institutional support. Yusuf et al. (2022) linked effective AI-based service delivery to trained personnel rather than to technology procurement alone.

Evidence on chatbots suggests that they can strengthen virtual reference service and are best viewed as augmenting, rather than replacing, human librarians (Adetayo, 2023; Panda & Chakravarty, 2022). Beyond Nigeria, Cox et al. (2019) found that library thought leaders expected AI to reshape academic library services but cautioned that skills gaps could slow adoption, and Luca et al. (2022) argued for structured competency development for library professionals. Jha (2023) identified infrastructure, cost, and staff readiness as recurring barriers, and Monyela and Tella (2024) found that institutional and infrastructural constraints, rather than staff attitudes, were the main barriers in South African academic libraries. At the continental level, Adarkwah et al. (2024) observed that rising awareness in African academic libraries has outpaced infrastructural readiness. Most of these studies, however, concern academic libraries; few examine the NLN, which is the gap this study addresses.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) proposed by Davis (1989). TAM holds that intention to use a technology is determined mainly by perceived usefulness, the belief that using it will enhance job performance, and perceived ease of use, the belief that using it will be free of effort. The model is suitable because it explains why personnel may be aware of a technology and still not use it: utilisation depends less on the technology's objective potential than on users' perceptions of its usefulness and usability. In this study, perceived benefits correspond to perceived

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usefulness, while barriers such as limited technical expertise and poor infrastructure correspond to constraints on perceived ease of use.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design to collect data on library personnel's perceptions and experiences of AI in service delivery. The population comprised all 280 professional (218; 78%) and para-professional (62; 22%) staff of the NLN branches in Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti States, and a census was used because the population was small and manageable. Data were collected with a structured questionnaire developed from the literature, with sections matching the five research questions and items rated on a four-point scale. After permission from the branch heads and informed consent from respondents, who were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, the researchers and two trained research assistants administered the 280 copies in person in 2025, and 270 were correctly completed and retained for analysis (96% valid response rate). Frequencies and percentages summarised respondents' characteristics, while means and standard deviations answered the research questions. A criterion mean of 2.50, the midpoint of the scale, was used for decision-making: items with means of 2.50 or above were accepted, and those below were rejected.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 270 respondents. Professional librarians formed the majority (78.1%), while para-professional staff accounted for 21.9%. The sex distribution was fairly balanced, with slightly more females (51.1%) than males (48.9%). Most respondents (68.1%) were aged 30–49 years, indicating a workforce of mid-career personnel. Respondents were spread fairly evenly

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across the six branches, from 40 in Osun to 52 in Lagos, so no single branch dominated and the findings reflect the zone as a whole.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Respondent category	Professional librarians	211	78.1
	Para-professional staff	59	21.9
Sex	Male	132	48.9
	Female	138	51.1
Age bracket	20–29 years	38	14.1
	30–39 years	96	35.6
	40–49 years	88	32.6
	50 years and above	48	17.8
Branch (state)	Lagos	52	19.3
	Ogun	42	15.6
	Oyo	48	17.8
	Osun	40	14.8
	Ondo	44	16.3
	Ekiti	44	16.3
Total		270	100.0

Field survey, 2025.

Awareness of AI Applications

Research Question 1: *What is the level of awareness of AI applications among NLN personnel in the South-West branches?*

Table 2: *Level of Awareness of AI Applications Among NLN Personnel*

AI application	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
Machine learning	130	90	30	20	3.22	0.92	Accepted
Natural language processing	118	102	38	12	3.21	0.85	Accepted
Chatbots/virtual assistants	96	112	44	18	3.06	0.89	Accepted
Image/document recognition	72	96	60	42	2.73	1.02	Accepted
Predictive analytics	84	104	56	26	2.91	0.95	Accepted

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AI application	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
Cluster mean					3.03	0.92	

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Respondents were moderately to highly aware of foundational AI technologies such as machine learning (M = 3.22) and natural language processing (M = 3.21), but less aware of image/document recognition (M = 2.73) and predictive analytics (M = 2.91). The cluster mean of 3.03 (SD = 0.92) shows that personnel are generally familiar with AI concepts, although technical understanding of the more advanced applications is still developing. This agrees with Abayomi et al. (2021) and Ajani et al. (2022), who reported relatively high awareness of AI among Nigerian librarians, and it supports the view that awareness of AI in the NLN is growing.

Utilisation of AI Tools for Service Delivery

Research Question 2: *To what extent are AI tools utilised for service delivery in the NLN South-West branches?*

Table 3: *Extent of Utilisation of AI Tools for Service Delivery*

AI tool	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
Automated cataloguing	104	94	46	26	3.02	0.97	Accepted
Plagiarism detection	92	106	48	24	2.99	0.93	Accepted
Chatbots for reference services	60	82	80	48	2.57	1.02	Accepted
Recommendation systems	68	88	70	44	2.67	1.03	Accepted
Smart classification tools	76	80	78	36	2.73	1.01	Accepted
Cluster mean					2.80	0.99	

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Automated cataloguing (M = 3.02) and plagiarism detection (M = 2.99) were the most utilised AI tools, whereas chatthe Nationalbot reference services (M = 2.57) and recommendation systems (M = 2.67) were the least utilised, and only just above the

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criterion mean. The cluster mean of 2.80 (SD = 0.99) is clearly lower than the awareness cluster mean of 3.03 in Table 2, which indicates a gap between awareness and actual utilisation. Within TAM, awareness alone does not lead to use unless personnel also find the technology useful and easy to use in their institutional context. The pattern echoes Abayomi et al. (2021), who found high awareness but low practical application in Nigerian university libraries, which suggests that the awareness–utilisation gap is a wider feature of AI diffusion in Nigerian libraries rather than one peculiar to the NLN.

Perceived Benefits of AI Utilisation

Research Question 3: *What are the perceived benefits of AI utilisation in the NLN South-West branches?*

Table 4: *Perceived Benefits of AI Utilisation in Service Delivery*

Benefit	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
Improves cataloguing accuracy	148	98	16	8	3.43	0.74	Accepted
Enhances information retrieval speed	130	104	26	10	3.31	0.79	Accepted
Reduces repetitive workload	142	104	18	6	3.41	0.72	Accepted
Supports decision-making	124	112	22	12	3.29	0.80	Accepted
Improves user satisfaction	156	96	12	6	3.49	0.69	Accepted
Cluster mean					3.39	0.75	

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Respondents strongly endorsed all the listed benefits, particularly improved user satisfaction (M = 3.49), improved cataloguing accuracy (M = 3.43), and reduced repetitive workload (M = 3.41). The cluster mean of 3.39 (SD = 0.75) indicates general agreement that AI utilisation yields meaningful operational and service benefits, even though actual use (Table 3) remains limited. These findings are consistent with the benefits reported by Eiriemiokhale and Sulyman (2023) and Jha (2023). In TAM terms, perceived

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usefulness of AI is high among NLN personnel, so low utilisation cannot be attributed to doubts about its value.

Challenges Hindering AI Utilisation

Research Question 4: *What challenges hinder the utilisation of AI in the NLN South-West branches?*

Table 5: *Challenges Hindering the Utilisation of AI*

Challenge	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
Poor ICT infrastructure	166	82	16	6	3.51	0.71	Accepted
Lack of technical expertise	148	92	22	8	3.41	0.76	Accepted
Inadequate funding	140	98	20	12	3.36	0.80	Accepted
Inconsistent policy framework	104	116	38	12	3.16	0.82	Accepted
Resistance to change	120	98	38	14	3.20	0.87	Accepted
Cluster mean					3.33	0.79	

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Poor ICT infrastructure (M = 3.51), lack of technical expertise (M = 3.41), and inadequate funding (M = 3.36) were rated the most serious challenges, followed by resistance to change (M = 3.20) and an inconsistent policy framework (M = 3.16). The cluster mean of 3.33 (SD = 0.79) confirms that these factors materially constrain AI utilisation in the NLN South-West branches. This agrees with Moustapha and Yusuf (2023) and Ogwo et al. (2023), who identified skills gaps, irregular power supply, and inadequate infrastructure as the main obstacles to AI use in Nigerian academic libraries. Taken together with Table 4, the results suggest that the obstacle is not scepticism about AI's value but infrastructural and institutional. Within TAM, perceived ease of use is undermined by factors largely beyond individual librarians' control, such as unreliable power supply, inadequate infrastructure, and limited training.

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Strategies for Enhancing AI Utilisation

Research Question 5: *What strategies can enhance the utilisation of AI in the NLN South-West branches?*

Table 6: *Strategies for Enhancing the Utilisation of AI*

Strategy	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
Increased government funding	164	94	8	4	3.55	0.63	Accepted
Continuous professional training	142	102	20	6	3.41	0.72	Accepted
Collaboration with technology vendors	158	90	14	8	3.47	0.73	Accepted
Institutional support and leadership commitment	140	106	16	8	3.40	0.73	Accepted
Development of an AI policy framework	136	110	16	8	3.39	0.73	Accepted
Cluster mean					3.44	0.71	

Field survey, 2025.

Increased government funding (M = 3.55), collaboration with technology vendors (M = 3.47), and continuous professional training (M = 3.41) were the most strongly endorsed strategies, followed by institutional support (M = 3.40) and an AI policy framework (M = 3.39). The cluster mean of 3.44 (SD = 0.71) indicates strong agreement. These strategies map directly onto the barriers in Table 5, which suggests that respondents' proposed solutions are well targeted at the constraints they experience. The results also imply that investment in funding and infrastructure without parallel investment in staff training is unlikely to close the awareness–utilisation gap, since technical capacity, and not equipment alone, is a distinct constraint. This is consistent with Yusuf et al. (2022) and Moustapha and Yusuf (2023).

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

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1. The NLN management should audit the ICT infrastructure, including power supply, connectivity, and hardware, in each South-West branch and address the gaps before investing in AI systems, since poor infrastructure was the most serious challenge.
2. The NLN should organise continuous AI-literacy and technical training for professional and para-professional staff and recruit ICT and AI specialists, because limited technical expertise was a major barrier.
3. The Federal Government, through the supervising ministry and the National Assembly, should provide a dedicated budget line for AI and digital infrastructure in the NLN's annual appropriation, as increased funding was the most endorsed strategy.
4. The NLN should extend its use of automated cataloguing and plagiarism detection and pilot chatbot reference and recommendation services in branches with the strongest infrastructure, before scaling them across the zone.
5. The NLN should form partnerships with technology vendors and university library schools to support training, system customisation, and maintenance at reduced cost.
6. The NLN should develop an AI policy framework covering data privacy, algorithmic accountability, and staff usage guidelines, drawing on IFLA (2020), and its management should show leadership commitment by monitoring progress against the baseline provided by this study.

Conclusion

This study examined the utilisation of AI for promoting service delivery in the South-West branches of the NLN. Awareness of AI applications is moderate to high, but utilisation is lower, and is concentrated in automated cataloguing and plagiarism detection. Personnel strongly recognise the benefits of AI, so the main barriers are infrastructural, financial, and institutional rather than attitudinal. Poor ICT

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infrastructure, limited technical expertise, and inadequate funding were the leading challenges, and respondents favoured government funding, vendor collaboration, continuous training, and policy development as remedies.

The study has limitations. It covered only the South-West branches of the NLN, so the findings should not be generalised to other zones or to Nigerian libraries generally. The analysis was descriptive and based on self-reported perceptions, so the relationships discussed are patterns in the data rather than statistically tested effects. Future studies could cover other geopolitical zones, apply inferential tests, and examine how AI use affects user outcomes. In sum, AI offers considerable potential for improving service delivery in the NLN, but realising it will require strategic investment in infrastructure, human capital, supportive policy, and partnerships.

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