



CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN ICT APPLICATION IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

There could hardly be any record of adoption of innovations without challenges/issues that hinders the immediate realization of the aim of implementation of the innovation. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) have, been and will remain the catalyst of development in every facet of the world. Library cannot continue to play its vital role as the engine of research without full adoption of ICT, but with some issues. This paper highlights the concepts of ICT and Library, the importance of library, the benefits of ICT, issues affecting ICT application in library and information services, and recommended way to overcome them.

Keywords: Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Library, Issues, Application.

INTRODUCTION

The world is not only increasing in the number of infrastructure and number of people in it, but also in different ways things are done. It has evolved from the stone age, renaissance age, industrial revolution, to the present day information age. Information is power, the way and where it is obtained, processed and with which speed, the ways it is presented to the user and how it is used is of great importance in today's world. Njoku and Elejene (2012) identified information as a resource for growth and development of individual, organization or a

nation, and also as a fundamental for the generation of knowledge and the satisfaction of multi-variant demand of the populace in an efficient manner. Information and Communication Technology has changed the way information is retrieved, processed, stored, communicated, displayed, but not without challenges.

Library is an essential component of any society, particularly academic set up where both the teachers and the students are always in the learning process, hence, importance of library cannot be over emphasized. Application of Information and Communication Technology in library and information services cannot be without hitches in the current state of our society. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a 21st century innovation aimed at meeting and managing the knowledge and information explosion of the century. It's relevance is in making information easily available and usable, and assist in solving the problem of time, distance and volume, which are the challenges of information dissemination in this age, (Madumer, etal 2013).

Lievrouw and Livinstone (2006) cited in Egere (2016) rephrased ICT to “new media” which they defined as “Information and Communication technologies and their associated social context , incorporating: the artifacts or devices that enable and extend our abilities to communicate; the communication activities or practices we engage in to develop and use these devices; and the social arrangement or organizations that form around the devices and practices” Egere (2016) agreed to the linkage of ICT with their related social frameworks from Lievrouw and Livinstone (2006) definition, pointed out three elements brought together: technological artifacts and

devices; practices and uses; and social arrangements and organizations that form around the devices and practices.

Paulina and Abdulsalami (2013) recognised that Information and Communication Technology has become fundamental to the daily, social, economic, political, administrative and cultural life of any society. They went further to identify the duality of ICT capacities firstly as the basic infrastructure for information communication, and secondly as an enablement, which supports and in many cases, drives practically all other sectors through its products and services, of which library, the bedrock/engine that powers research is not left out. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is the key to innovation and self development and a vehicle for developmental effort at all levels of human endeavour, (Njoku and Elejene, 2012).

Essharenana and Kpangban (2010) cited in Ezegbe et'tal (2013) sought to determine the application of ICT in Nigeria Secondary Schools and found out that limited/poor information infrastructure, inadequate ICT facilities, frequent electricity interruption, poor ICT policy, inadequate manpower and high cost of ICT facilities are factors that influence the application of ICT in Nigeria secondary.

Library is noted for provision of information to its teeming users worldwide, particularly for knowledge and research, mostly in educational setups. Attama and Ezema (2015) defined library as a collection of books and other related materials housed, organized for access following a systematic order, interpreted to meet broad and varying people information needs, knowledge, recreation and for aesthetics. A library is a collection of wide variety of learning and

teaching materials in-house, organized by staff, professionally equipped to administer for both staff and students services and activities which will support and enrich educational programmes. It could comprise not only books, periodicals, pamphlets, maps and illustrations, but also televisions, films and filmstrips, slides and tapes, (Angib *et al*, 2014).

Importance of Library in the Provision of Information Services

Amebo, (2007) cited in Angib (2014) highlighted the importance of library to include some of the following:

- Support and enrich teaching and learning within the school system
- Encourage reading habits and skills
- Stimulate research and independent study
- Provide opportunities for further readings and use of materials other than prescribed classroom textbooks
- Develops students critical, creative and independent thought
- Help the students to develop the habit of reading for pleasure
- Provide students with vocational information leading to the choice of a suitable career
- Provide current information to keep teachers and student abreast of latest development in their fields
- Provide opportunity through library experiences for students to acquire desirable social and cultural attitude and better understanding of life
- Inculcate in students information handling skills.

In addition to the above highlighted importance, library also served it teeming users as a recreation centre.

Benefits of Information and Communication Technology

An outstanding benefit of ICT in all facets of human life is process automation. In manufacturing, embedded computer in equipment controls the thickness of materials, signals reduction of input material beyond minimal during production, controls the flow of production, detects unwanted object among material during production, maintains proportional combination and many more. In the banking industry, customized software detects and classify dormant accounts, large inflow of cash accounts, accounts with frequent transactions, accounts with large balances, and even send customized messages to customers automatically on their anniversaries. With ICT, reminders of borrowed books on the due dates and overdue messages can be sent to the borrower of books in the library to help the user be informed on the due dates and make sure he returns the information resource in his/her possession.

Ojohwoh and Okoh (2011) agreed that major characteristics of ICT is mass customization, which implies different application perfectly accommodated irrespective of each other goals, process style and resources, individual pace and operational time, with well organized comfort to all concerned. Speed and Accuracy are the focal point of any organization. The speed and accuracy at which computer and computerized devices process data is beyond human comprehension, thereby reduce cost, eliminate errors and reduce times of operation. An important benefit of ICT is massive storage capability. Many ICT gadgets are built with trillions and quadrillions of bytes storage capacities. This makes it possible for large volume of transactions and other information to easily be stored.

Concurrency is a fundamental benefit of ICT. The introduction of networks technology, coupled with distributed and cloud computing has made a single data/information point to be accessed by multiple users at the same time independently without the activities of any user to affect that of another on the data point. Enumerating the benefits of ICT is a task that may not be exhaustive.

Some Library Services and their ICT Applications

One of the major services provided by library is services to the users (readers). Public libraries and some private ones encounter difficulties managing effectively the inflow of user of it facilities. Angib (2014) opined that the record of books and users are better kept and maintained with computer, and information about a particular book can be retrieved with relative ease by library staff, with overdue notice automatically. In addition, surveillance cameras, metal and explosive detectors are needed at strategic locations to track down criminals and terrorist who may take advantage of the serenity of the library to plan and unleash mayhem on their innocent victims.

Cataloguing is another essential service of the library. Bibliographic information can be entered and retrieved with ease with customized database applications which will allow concurrent access in a networked environment. Dulle etal (2000) cited in Angib (2014) frowned at the use of manual processing in today's information age based on the speed of processing with ICT and solicited for proper improvement to deploy electronic cataloguing and classification of information materials. Application of ICT to reference services in a library cannot be overemphasized. Library staff can attend to users

with relative efficiency, as needed information could be accessed with high processing speed through the use of ICT, (Angib, 2014)

Issues of ICT Application in Library and Information Services

Application of ICT in all human endeavour and in particular library and information services is highly appreciated but not without some issues. Ojohwoh and Okoh (2011) enumerated some issues of ICT applications in our society which are not exception in Library and Information services which are discussed in this paper as follows:

Inadequate Awareness About Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the Technical Knowledge Inherent

Most Nigeria ICT users though possessed ICT gadgets but are unaware of some vital facilities in their gadgets. Their knowledge of the resources and the technical knowledge on how to use, set and reset them could enhance their efficiency of ICT use, curbing ignorance and improve productivity. For instance, most users of Android Operating System smart phones are not cognizant of office applications in the smart phones which they can use to view documents, type documents, perform data analysis or prepare and run presentations

Negative Attitude of Government Through Inadequate Funding

Funding of education sector in Nigeria has not been up to half of UNESCO budgetary percentage requirement of a country's allocation to education sector, to which Library and Information services belongs. In Nigeria 2017 appropriation, the budgetary allocation to education is below the UNESCO benchmark, it is not a good mark for a developing country like Nigeria that needs much research to spur up development.

Unstable Power Supply

There is hardly any city, town, village or hamlet in Nigeria that can be assured of 20 hours of public power supply for 30 consecutive days. No developing economy can stabilize without relatively steady power supply. Nigeria and Nigerians are eluded of this vital utility for the basic-day-to day activities, (Ekuma *et al*, 2017). How can it be possible to automate Libraries and its information services without steady power supply?

High Cost of Acquiring ICT Gadgets, and Service Subscriptions

Almost all ICT gadgets in use in Nigeria are imported due to the developmental stage of the country. Import duties on these gadgets and the continuous rise in exchange rate differential between Naira and Dollar make it unattractive for most organization to use their desired gadgets and services as the equivalent of the cost in local currency translates to a large portion of their budgets

Unreliability of Connections to Services

One major demand of automation of Library and Information services is the availability of network to access the servers that host the services. If the network connection is down, a client will not be able to access any of the applications, server or data from the server. For effective ICT application in Library and Information services, there must be a dedicated and reliable network access, (Ekuma *et al*, 2017).

The Growing Rate of Cyber Crimes in the Country

The ease accessing Library and Information services through computer network can also give nefarious (wicked and immoral) users the

ability to scan, identify and exploit loopholes and vulnerabilities within a system. For instance, in a multi-tenant Library and Information services architecture where multiple library services are hosted on the same server, a hacker might try to break into the data of other users hosted and stored on the same server. Also, media news on financial fraud in the Nigerian banking sector can intimidate many library automations intending organisations to be wary of full ICT use for their library services, (Ekuma et al, 2017).

CONCLUSION

Today Information and Communication Technology has brought revolutionary changes in human interactions across the globe. Issues /challenges arising from its application in library services are enormous. However, it is pertinent to note that without immediate automation of Library Services in all Libraries in Nigeria both academic and Social activities remain stagnant. With Information and Communication Technology application in libraries, services such as cataloguing and classification, current awareness services, circulation services references could be easily customized to reach out to the library clientele

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the need to effectively be part of the Information and Communication Technology space, libraries, particularly in Nigeria should fully embrace ICT in all its services. The following if implemented will enhance, support and promote automation of library and information services:

- There should be training and retraining of ICT technicians to enable them tackle some challenges that may arise while on duty
- Government should increase funding to libraries and other research institutes
- There should be public private partnership in the funding of libraries
- Power supply to all libraries should not only be increase, but should be made steady with alternative back-up for round the clock use of libraries
- All library staff must be ICT literate and up to date with all available ICT services in the library

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