



Challenges and Prospects in the 21st Century Academic Libraries in Delta State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper dealt on challenges and prospects in the 21st century academic libraries in Delta state. Libraries have been adjudged as the heart of tertiary institutions in which both students and staff run to in the pursuit of knowledge and personal development. As mediators between the average users and information resources and services, libraries have deemed it fit in acquiring print and non-print resources in order to promote quality educational research in the institutions in which they serve. The paper therefore, examined the challenges and prospects in the 21st century academic libraries in Delta state.

Keywords: *Academic Libraries, Library services, Challenges, Prospects, Nigeria*

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Background to the Study

Academic libraries are power house that provide resources in form of print and non-print taking into cognizance the school curriculum; they are the heart if not the vein of the institutions in which they serve. Ntui et al. (2015) noted that academic libraries provide vital resources and services in the teaching-learning encounter; these resources are important for the preparation of lesson plan by teachers and for educational advancement in order to achieve the set instructional objectives; library resources include; textbooks, journal, indexes, abstracts, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, reports, bulletins, project booklets, dictionaries, encyclopedias, etc.

Academic libraries as observed by Omeluzor (2017) are those libraries that can be found in higher institution of learning which enables the undergraduates and post graduates' students otherwise known as users, carry out their information search and research effectively. Academic libraries make sure that their information resources are well utilized to enhance student's studies and satisfies their research needs and support its institution curriculum (Anhwere, 2017). Apart from the print academic library resources, another valuable resources student can lay hands on in the library are non- print resources. According to Anand (2014) non-print resources are resources in electronic format that is accessible electronically examples include; e-journals, e-books, online databases, pdf documents, webpages etc. Igbo (2013) added that e-resources are information resources that are traversed through modern ICT devices, refined and reshaped and often stored in cyberspace in the most substantial and compact form that can be infiltrated simultaneously from infinite point by a great number of audiences.

These materials now preferred by academic and other libraries for many reasons which according to Adewole (2013) are not limited to personal visits to the library but linked from and to indexing and abstracting databases which access can be from the users' home, office or dormitory whether or not the physical library is open or not; electronic resources have many advantages among which are; information needed can be delivered from the most appropriate source to the users and users can re-specify his or her needs dynamically. Academic libraries nurture information literacy and provide resources to students, researchers as well as staff to address their diverse needs, characteristics and interest; apart from these print and non-print resources housed in the library, academic libraries provide services such as circulation of books, cataloguing and classification to ease book searching, photocopying, bindery services, clearance services, user education services, reading room arrangement services, subscription of subject related scholarly journals services, etc (Shukla, 2018).

Challenges Facing Academic Libraries in Delta State

The 21st century has ushered in a lot of changes in the style and manner in which academic library services are performed; information communication technologies (ICTs) are now adopted in the provision of library services, these changes have brought in innovation by creating more sophisticated gadgets for rendering library services to users. The assistance or services provided determines the quality of patronage and full consideration of the recipient of this services, it is meaningful to consider library services and their users as a system of

interacting parts because library services is an open system, an activity that takes place in the provision and use of library, indeed, what takes place in the provision and use of library appears to be highly susceptible to interference by and interaction with things external to it as defined; for example, delay in the acquisition of library materials; the library location; unconducive library environment and perhaps, changes in the outside world are some of the setback to academic library services (Ibrahim, 2015).

Some other challenges as identified by different scholars are discussed below:

1. **Financial challenges:** Lack of adequate funding has posed a serious threat to the growth of academic libraries in Delta state. According to Nworie, et al. (2023), the budget of academic libraries in the 21st century has risen high and the fund to cater for this budget is grossly inadequate leading to shortfalls; academic libraries need to be funded better now than before because of the paradigm shift to procure and install electronic databases as well as print collection acquisition.
2. **Changes in library services:** The 21st century era, despite its beauty and benefits, has brought in its own challenges. In this age, library services are designed to enable users to become independent in the pursuit of information, resources and services. Libraries provides user education services to their users to enable them use the library at their own pace, users of academic libraries in Delta state finds it difficult doing so. The case of Covid-19 was a typical example while most academic libraries the world over, were hooked to various online strategies in rendering services, the situation in Delta state was different as services were interrupted and library doors shut, this scenario posed serious challenge to academic library users. There is need for library users in an academic environment to embrace modern strategies of user education to facilitate library use.
3. **The saying that the internet has killed libraries has equally posed a serious threat to the system,** many users preferred the internet to academic libraries, unfortunately, many academic libraries in Delta state do not have these facilities, the few libraries that are equipped with information communication technologies (ICTs) gadgets are ignored due to wrong impression the internet has created thereby making these resources abandoned, encouraging new users to take advantage of this resources is another task faced by librarians. Academic libraries in Delta state need to sensitize their users on how their information resources are filtered by removing unwanted material such as pornographic and crime related contents from their resources.
4. **Attitude of library staff,** has posed a challenge on the smooth running of libraries in Delta state, some of the staff of these libraries are not interested in carrying out shelving and shelf reading routine which is the hall mark of librarianship. A book left for users to shelf is likened to a book that is hidden from open access of the library since they are not trained to do so, this attitude of some library staff could be due to lack of motivation or the leadership style of the chief librarian or incompetency on their part. The need for in-service training and retraining of library staff as well as incentives to arouse their interest be given utmost priority.
5. **Policy making:** The library ought to be a growing organism, most libraries in Delta state are not up to date in policy making. Ashiq, et al. (2020), underscored the need for

policy making in all aspect of the library profession. Some of the policies and standard earlier made might be obsolete and that there was a need to make policies in line with the current situation. Policy change is required for libraries and if done properly, it will have positive effect on libraries, librarians and profession. For instance, making the use of library a compulsory general study course, and a condition for certification will promote library use among academic libraries. This way, attendance of users taken will serve as a partial fulfillment for graduation.

Prospects of the 21st Century Academic Libraries in Delta State

The prospects of the 21st century academic library in Delta state remained progressive realizing that the use of information communication technologies (ICTs) is coming to stay considering the new normal as enshrine in the revised minimum standard, people are now aware that ICTs, can be used to plan the activities of the library, carry research and do registration of users. The prospects are not limited to the following:

1. **Media Marketing:** with the proliferation of information in the 21st century, there is need for librarians to market library and information services and activities. Libraries now employ the use of social media platforms such whatsapp, telegram, face book, YouTube, etc for publicity of their activities to get the needed support for libraries in Delta state to grow.
2. **In the Aspect of Funding,** the 21st century libraries are looking inward to source for fund through internally generated revenue, possibly, this fund could be used for subscription in their e-libraries. This, will attract both old and new users to the use of libraries, resources and services.
3. **Adequate ICTs facilities for Library Services:** The 21st century academic library has recorded massive introduction of various information and communication gadgets for information delivery, there is need for libraries in Delta state to exploit this opportunity and the future of libraries in the state will be brighter.
4. **Promoting Resource Sharing and inter Library Cooperation:** There is more to learn when library and information professionals share knowledge, ideas, and opinions outside their environment especially in the area of information management, library services, public relation, marketing, conferences, seminars and workshops as well as networking will go a long way in ensuring that information professionals meet the demands of information seekers. Libraries as information house requires librarians with wide knowledge of almost every field to meet user's needs.

Conclusion

Academic libraries in Delta state are doing tremendously well in ensuring that the needs of their users are met. Though, with lots of challenges which this paper succinctly discussed. In addition, there are many prospects these libraries stand to benefit if put into practice, will provoked a lot of challenges in the business of information gathering and provision. Therefore, it was observed that before the 21st century, users depended solely on print resources but, as at today, there is a paradigm shift from analog to digital, this change will continue to increasingly redefine how academic libraries function for enhanced library and information service delivery (Ashiq, et al. 2020).

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