6-2012

Cataloguing in the Era of ICT: What is Happening in Public Libraries of South-East Nigeria

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Introduction

The public library, being a local centre for information – making a variety of information and knowledge available to its users, requires a well planned and good method of organizing and keeping the records of its materials. This is the reason why cataloguing and classification in any library should be given the necessary professional touch(s) especially in the era information communication technology (ICT). ICT in the words of Ejedafiru (2010) refers to technology that transmits, stores, creates, displays, shares, or exchanges information by electronic means.

Cataloguing and classification of a book simply put, has to do with sieving out and organizing the bibliographic information of a reading material, arranging them in a particular order and grouping the reading materials mainly books into classes. Cataloguing and classification as well as other library activities/services have witnessed reasonable changes in the era of ICT. In the words of Arkoful (2007), these technologies have accelerated the rate at which library services and routines are carried out.

The work of cataloguers have changed and expanded as noted by Crosby (2001). According to her, cataloguers classify books, videos, CD-ROMS, and other materials so as to enable users find what they are looking for. Cataloguing has grown more important as searchers log on to on-line catalogues from home. Technology has made cataloguing more efficient. In the words of Youngman (1999), cataloguers are moving into new roles as they attempt to provide enhanced access to the new resources. They now process not only books, but also CD-ROMs, computer discs, and multi-format items. Cataloguers add the records they create to a shared international database. It is known that librarians have been sharing catalogues for a long time, but electronics and the internet have made it easier. Because of on-line access, making catalogues easy to use is more critical and more possible. Using computers, Crosby (2001) said, librarians are starting to create different catalogues for different kinds of readers. A catalogue designed for casual browsers for instance, she said, might display summaries of each book while the one designed for preschoolers might use more graphics or might not rely as heavily on putting things in alphabetical order.

Cataloguers in the present day information age are required to and must make informed decisions on matters such as linking to electronic journals and managing holdings "hooks" to various databases. Cataloguers today create records that accommodate multiple means of accessing a particular resource. Library patrons are coming to expect

records that include print holdings, microforms, and direct links to an electronic version of the item. Cataloguing the internet itself is a task that has fallen on librarians, affirmed Youngman. Application of the Dublin Core metadata tag systems is a skill that did not exist just a few years ago but is now rapidly growing in importance as an additional role for librarians. As Chepesuik (1999) earlier noted, "it is not a metadata element set to replace MARC, rather it is going to evolve alongside it". Crosby confirmed this by saying that some librarians are helping to organize the internet as they are setting their sights on digital information. Many pieces of materials on the internet have digital tags that describe them so that search engines can find them more easily. These tags – (metadata tags) might say who wrote the material or what it is about. So they organize books, but that is rarely done with card catalogues rather they use databases and digital metadata tags. Francis-Swanson (2010) presenting it in more common terms said that a feature of today's library is the Online Public Access Catalogue which is database containing the library's collection that can be accessed by anyone on-line. She added that academic libraries now can offer full text electronic subscription-based journals to their users that can be accessed via the library's web page in addition to supplying a user name and pass word.

Cataloguers no longer catalogue and classify books only but also electronic materials like C D ROMs (where available). Also they do access online catalogues, transform the available bibliographic records to machine readable formats, engage in resource sharing and networking. Yusuf (2009) asserted that in recent times, library systems developers have worked hard to create a machine readable library catalogue that provides functionality beyond that of analog card to accommodate technological changes. It has become obvious that book cataloguing cannot be relied upon in the era when information materials have come to take electronic formats and information flow virtually.

Impact of ICT on Cataloguing

ICT has impacted on the work of cataloguing in a number of ways. Ajibero (2003) admitted this fact while Yusuf (2009) enumerated some of these areas of change. Firstly, the use of computers has affected the way cataloguing is being done and by whom. Although cataloguing has over the years been the sole work of professional librarians, in most libraries now, especially the public libraries, para-professionals usually called library officers are involved very well in cataloguing. Ejedafiru (2010) saw ICT as technology that transmits, stores, creates, displays, shares, or exchanges information by electronic means. He asserted that for resource sharing amongst libraries to materialize, libraries must adopt and use ICT. One of the key areas where resource sharing reflects and helps a library is in the area of library cataloguing (sharing catalogue data). Yusuf maintained that such resource sharing reduces cost and duplication of efforts in cataloguing. Ejedafiru citing Song (2000) made it clear that no library can adequately provide for the needs of all its users using the resources within its walls. Users will need to have access to universal information before they can be satisfied.

On-line cataloguing is another major change that ICT has brought to cataloguing. according to Yusuf, it involves locating and subsequently copying cataloguing data on-line through international computer networks. Remote library catalogues are available on desktops (Rao & Babu , 2001). In addition to traditional card catalogues and micro fitche readers, most libraries now offer an On-line Public Access Catalogue (OPAC). They further stressed that catalogues of leading libraries these days are available in web-based and telnet based formats for platform independent easy browsing.

Brief historical Profile of the Public Libraries in South-East Nigeria

There are five main public libraries in the five states of the south-east geopolitical zone of Nigeria. These are the Abia state library board, Anambra state library board, Ebonyi state library board, Enugu state library board and the Imo state library board. All these libraries started from the same root and origin – the Eastern Nigerian Library Board then

in Enugu city. Due to creation and recreation of states the present five (5) state libraries emerged from the Eastern Nigerian Library board – 27th May, ……. first creation of states from regions gave birth to the old Anambra state and Imo state and their state libraries. Subsequently, in 27th August, 1991, the old Anambra was divided and Enugu state emerged with its library – the one that retained the historic Eastern Nigeria library board headquaters in Enugu city. The new Anambra had its own library with headquarters at Awka retaining the Onitsha branch library of the old Anambra state. Abia sate was created from Imo state and had its own library with headquarters in Umuahia. Lastly, on October 1st, 1996, Ebonyi state was created and the former Abakaliki zonal library was converted to the present Ebonyi state library board.

Each of these libraries has its headquarters in the state capitals. In the same vein, their acquisition and cataloguing are carried out at these central libraries while processed books are distributed to the branch and zonal libraries. That is why most of their professional librarians are posted to the central libraries although library officers do partake in their cataloguing these days.

Each of these libraries houses up to 8000-10000 volumes of different book materials with little or no electronic non-book materials like CD-ROM. Such materials can only come as supplements to some books – they accompany their book form. Acquisition of books in these libraries is mainly through gift – very few books come through purchase.

The Dewey decimal classification, DDC scheme is popularly used for the classification of books in these libraries while catalogue cards are prepared for the author/title headings and subjects. All these cards are filed in the same catalogue cabinets – no demarcation between author/title and subject catalogue.

Objectives of the Study

Considering the poor status of most if not all the public libraries in Nigeria in terms of materials and services, this study will look into the challenges facing the public libraries in South-east zone in adapting to the new developments in cataloguing of library materials abreast other libraries like many university libraries.

Specifically, the study will look into

1. The nature of collections acquired by the libraries
2. The availability and use of ICT the cataloguing of library materials.
3. Find out those that carry out cataloguing and classification in these libraries.
4. Find out the problems hindering the use of ICT for cataloguing activities in these libraries.
5. Find out strategies to facilitate and adapt to changes in cataloguing through ICT.

Statement of the Problem

The public library service in South-east Nigeria dates back to the 60s in the then Eastern Region. Cataloguing is a crucial aspect of the library work since without that, there will be total chaos in the organization of library reading materials making location and use of such materials almost impossible. In addition, ICT and automation have given a new dimension to the traditional manual cataloguing.

In spite of the fact that ICT has brought so many changes to cataloguing – making the work easier, much better and records more accurate, it has been observed that most of the public libraries in Nigeria today may be lacking ICT and access to on-line catalogues. If the issue is not addressed, there is tendency that the old manual method of keeping records like the card catalogue, may not give the users of these libraries adequate access to the library materials of the libraries and those of other libraries as well.

Methodology

The study is a survey; so, a descriptive survey is used for the study. The population and sample of the study includes the librarians in charge of cataloguing/ acquisition sections in the five (5) main state library boards. Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and the Imo state library boards. The library headquarters handle all acquisition and cataloguing procedures; already processed books are sent to their branches or zonal libraries. A structured interview was used to collect the required data from those in charge of cataloguing in the libraries. The interview schedule was validated by a senior librarian to ascertain its suitability in collecting the required data.

Analysis and Presentation

The data is analysed and presented in tables.

Table 1- Nature of collection acquired by the libraries

S/N	LIBRARY	BOOKS	Electronic materials	Others Like journals	Total
1.	Abia state library board	92%	-	8%	100%
2.	Anambra state library board	89%	-	11%	100%
3.	Ebonyi state library board	84%	5%	11%	100%
4.	Enugu state library board	90%	1%	10%	100%
5.	Imo state library board	85%	-	15%	100%

From the table above, it could be seen that most of the collections acquired by these libraries are books. These are acquired mainly through gifts; very few are purchased. This has been due to inadequate funds available for the purchase of books. Amongst the books acquired, over 90% are not current and this is the case in all the librariers. Very few periodicals are acquired and these are mainly local newspapers and magazines with few journals which are gotten through donations and not subscription. The few electronic materials – just CD-ROMs come with books – their book forms.

Table 2- Availability and used of ICT for cataloguing in the 5 libraries

S/N	ICT	Avai-lable	%	Not available	%	Total	%
1.	Computers for administrative purposes	5	100%	-	-	5	100%
2.	Few computers for library routine	1	20%	4	80%	5	100%
3.	Computers for cataloguing	-	0%	5	100	5	100%
4.	Functional internet	-	0%	5	100	5	100%

Table 2 above shows that all the libraries can boast of a number of computers but they

are not used for library services; rather they are used for administrative purposes. Although three (3) (60%) of the libraries studied have installed Internet facility through dial-up servers and providers, none of them is functional. This has been due to lack of maintenance and fund to sustain the facilities.

Table 3- The cataloguing staff of the libraries

S/N	LIBRARY	LIBRARIANS	LIBRARY OFFICERS
1.	Abia state library board	2	-
2.	Anambra state library board	2	2
3.	Ebonyi state library board	-	4
4.	Enugu state library board	3	-
5.	Imo state library board	2	-
	Total	9 (60%)	6 (40%)

G. Total 15 (100%)

Table 3 above shows that cataloguing in these libraries is handled by few librarians and library officers. In the case of Ebonyi library, only library officers do their cataloguing; no librarian is involved in cataloguing of books. It is obvious that the number of workers handling cataloguing in these libraries is not adequate.

Table 4- Training undergone on cataloguing by the 15 cataloguing workers

S/N	TRAINING PROGRAMME	Acquired	%	Not acquired	%
1.	Workshop/seminar on cataloguing	-	0%	15	100%
2.	Conference	-	0%	15	100%
3.	In service training	-	0%	15	100%
4.	Computer literate	13	86%	2	14%

Table 4 above shows that no meaningful training programme has been provided by any of these libraries to prepare those involved for automated library routines especially cataloguing. Few librarians admitted to have participated in conferences , workshops/seminars but not for the above purpose – skills in use of cataloguing software and on-line access to other catalogues.

Barriers to AUtomation of Cataloguing

Lack of fund- This was indicated by all the libraries to be a major setback to carrying out automation and computerized activities in these public libraries. The subvention and

overhead funds given to these libraries from the state governments can barely carry their salary paid to the workers leaving little or nothing to finance development of the library facilities. Nwokocha (2002) lamented on the mode of funding and the ill-effect of poor funding of public libraries in Nigeria as a major problem that has persistently afflicted public library services delivery in Nigeria.

Lack of ICT and other infrastructural facilities – These libraries lack infrastructures like steady power supply, internet facilities and even adequate number of computers to support automation. Most of the libraries agreed to have installed Internet facility in the past but none of them is functional presently. This has been due to lack of finance to sustain and maintain these facilities. Ebiwolate (2010) lamented on lack of ICT as one of the major problems facing Nigerian public libraries. This is primarily caused by inadequate funding of these public libraries.

Inadequate number of professionals and lack of skills and training- These libraries obviously do not have enough professionals to man their cataloguing and subsequently, there has been little or no training for the available workers towards acquiring the necessary skills in this regard. Due to these setbacks, these libraries have union catalogues that can be accessed by their zonal and branch libraries as well as other libraries.

The Way Forward

How would these libraries as well as many other Nigerian public libraries actualize their dreams and adapt to the automated and electronic cataloguing system in the present information age. Indications, observations and findings from these libraries showed that without positive change in the funding of public libraries – accommodating these libraries in government budgets and implementing such, the dream will not be actualized. Acquiring current reading materials in different formats – prints (books, journals) and non-books – CD-ROM; accessing on-line catalogues like OPAC; creating internal union catalogues all revolve around adequate funding.

Conclusion

Cataloguing has been seen as a very vital aspect of library work. This gives meaning and order to what should have been a chaotic scene – books acquired from different fields of knowledge. Bringing ICT into cataloguing has made the work much easier, time-saving and more accurate as against the manual card/book records.

All libraries alike need automation and electronic ways of keeping records and carrying out other library routines. The public libraries are not left out. The public libraries in Nigeria as a whole and South-east zone in particular, have had no significant change in ways of carrying out their services and as such have not adapted to the new information environment. They lack necessary facilities and skills required to the new information environment. They lack adequate number of professionals and even support staff not only in cataloguing but in other sections of the library. Summarily, the status of these public libraries is pathetic.

To help move the libraries forward in adapting to changes in the new information environment brought about by ICT, the state governments who have the responsibility of funding these libraries should include the public libraries in their priority and accommodate them in their budgetary allocations and implementation. They should realize the importance of library services to the populace especially the public library, in providing for the information needs of the people and moving the society forward.

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