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# Toward Improving Library Automation in Delta State University Library, Abraka

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Abstract
The study investigated the library automation in Delta State university library. A total of 50 library staff including professional and para–professional librarians were sampled for the study. Three research questions were formulated to guide the study. The instrument used for the study was the questionnaire. The data collected were analyzed using frequency count and percentages. The findings from the study revealed that the facilities necessarily for automation services were available. The study also revealed that though the automation facilities were available, the library automation service is not effective. The findings from the study showed internet services and electronic mails as efficiency/skills found among librarians. The finding of the study also indicated that of all the factors that affected library automation sponsorship was the main factor that impeded library automation in the university library. This was followed by improper coordination and lack of funding. The study concluded that as a result of the low performance to discharge automation services effectively to users calls for serious concern on the part of library management as it enhances information service delivery. The study recommended seriousness on the part of library management and decision makers, the creation of an enabling environment for network connectivity and proper planning in the implementation of library automation.

• • Systems were text-based, with no graphics, sound, or multimedia capability. They ran on powerful super-microcomputers, minicomputers or even mainframe computers (http://www.essay.uk.com). The greatest effect that library automation had in the 1980s was the introduction of online publication access catalogs. These OPACs provided users with a few access points i.e, ways to find library materials (Encyclopedia of communication and information, 2002).

Automating the library no longer refers only to computerizing operations in a discrete, physical place. It has assumed a wider frame of reference-namely that of enabling the library user to reach beyond what is merely local to an information and knowledge base that is truly global and interconnected (Ezeama, Ugwanyi & Ugwu, 2004). The concept of a library system as a gateway is no longer sufficient. Library users' expectations have grown to include more than resources from other places. Users now expect to be able to manipulate what they find and interact in new ways. Users see themselves as adding value to what they find, manipulating the information for their own purposes with the library catalog no longer just a list of resources. It is a database that can be merged with or linked to other databases and other resources in other places. The library's automated (Kohn, Kelsey & Keith, 2001).

The application of information technology to library is not different from other sectors, worth discussing briefly in this work. Electronic information processing has been used in business processes for more than four decades and has evolved through several identifiable phases. In the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, routine business data handling was automated by punched cards, electronic accounting machines (EAM), and physically large but relatively low-power electronic computers. Because these early capabilities were readily applied to accounting and financial activities, the data processing (DP) or electronic data processing (EDP) departments were usually within the accounting or finance functions. In many firms, these early EDP departments struggled to automate financial applications in isolation from the rest of the organization and were viewed apprehensively by some employees who feared job loss through automation (Pitkin, 1991 & http://www.essay.uk.com).

During the early period, investments in DP were based on traditional budgeting processes handled as overhead. When firms attempted to recover costs through charge-outs, some clients

served by DP became dissatisfied since they were paying for an organization that only marginally served their needs. At the same time, however, firms found EDP essential to their

• • operations. Typically, as EDP managers grappled with immature technology, they neglected some of the managerial dimensions of their jobs. For them, just keeping the system running was, at times, a full-time task (Pitkin, 1991).

A decade later, in the 1970s, engineers connected terminals to mainframes, and database management systems were introduced to handle the large business data files that accumulated. During this time, as computers began to support functions other than finance and accounting, the emphasis shifted from providing data to creating information, and the function responsible for managing this shift became a centralized entity more likely to be called information systems (IS). Information infrastructures began to emerge within firms, and massive reports of financial and production data proliferated as IS tried to assist managers with information systems designed for their use. Meanwhile, decision-support systems (DSS) were also beginning to emerge. In this era of management information systems (MIS), much confusion remained over what management information really was (Pitkin, 1991; Salaam & Adegbore, 2010).

During the 1980s, telecommunications and networking flourished with the introduction of distributed data processing, office systems, and personal computers. With the proliferation of incompatible systems and distributed operations, however, firms discovered infrastructure fragmentation and experienced the accompanying loss of operational discipline. Recognizing the potential for enormous gain from information system, firms searched for competitive advantage through information systems development and business transformations. This was also around the time when the function began to be called information management, information resource management, or information technology (IT) management. As telecommunications and computers merged into one discipline, the leader of the combined function began to be called the chief information officer (CIO) (http://www.essay.uk.com).

The introduction of electronic information technology usually creates major changes in employee tasks and disrupts traditional social and organizational structures. These changes can be major because automation through IT not only requires various new inputs and instructions, but it also produces useful data about the tasks being automated. This data often provides important new insights into the task itself and presents new opportunities for applying technology, thereby reinforcing the cycle of change.

• In contrast to previous automation efforts, applications of computerized information technology have a two-fold nature. They can supplement human activities in routine operating, and thereby improve productivity and increase operational quality. Simultaneously, they can provide important information about the process being automated, and this can be used to make further improvements. Increasingly widespread technology implementations lead to improved processes, greater benefits from information technology, increased responsibility for technology implementation by the leaders in the organization. For this reason, workers at all levels face a constantly changing environment. (Kohn, Kelsey & Keith, 2001; Ezeama, Ugwanyi & Ugwu, 2004).

The Delta State University library developed plans to automate their services to bring

about improved services to users. The library decided to automate its operations to make available its large stores of bibliographic information in machine-readable form. It embarked on retrospective conversion to provide their records, both present and past online. The development of on-line catalogues and for on-line catalogue projects to be well established. The library with its large collection needed to be automated so that the client can have easy access to the collections. The library currently is using (Strategic Library Automation and Management Software (SLAM) as its automating software. SLAM is a client/server software solution for automating the 'library. It can assist to transform a library into a more useful centre and enhances to effective management of user's information needs.

Many academic libraries in Nigeria are gradually but steadily moving or converting from manual to computerized system of library operations. It was, for example, that as publishing goes more and more electronic in the 21st century, many primary journals and secondary services previously acquired by libraries through subscription to hard copies can only be accessed through the Internet. Any academic library that is not linked to the Internet would as it were be

- automatically isolating its users from the best of world's current literature for higher educational

and research. (Nwalo, 2002).

Library automation results in improvement of access to information for users. With library automation, the library can easily access the collection of other libraries through interconnectivity. Okeke (2Ol0) rioted that accessibility issues are becoming more crucial as a social discourse with the emergency of information society to the e3tent that modern economics are judged rich or poor based on the quantity of information available and accessible to the citizens. Libraries being at the center of this information business, must dance to the tune of these changes by getting automated or else remain irrelevant. With automation, the basic functions of a library which include acquisition, organization, dissemination and maintenance are performed. Some library tasks that can be performed using automated system include compilation of accession lists, maintaining of library statistics, charging and discharging of books, compilation of overdue notices, keeping records of books on the reserve and maintenance of library roster.

Through wide area networking, other libraries OPACs are co-operatively combined into common databases to produce single system. This has led to the provision of new forms of services by libraries to the patrons. Networking can be in various forms such as Local Area Network (LAN), Wide Area Network (WAN) and Regional Area Network (RAN). Networking involved collection of computers that share hardware, software and data. (Omekwu, et al, 2009). However, despite the numerous benefits of library automation, the implementation is not without challenges, such as, consults costs, purchase costs, purchase of hardware and software, conversion costs, database and training costs. Consulting costs include the direct and indirect costs associated with getting started. While initial purchase costs include acquiring the initial system hardware and software and of preparing a site or sites for the equipment. Purchase of hardware, software, requires the design and implementation of a local are network architecture, a

interconnectivity. Okeke (2Ol0) rioted that accessibility issues are becoming more crucial as a social discourse with the emergency of information society to the e3tent that modern economics are judged rich or poor based on the quantity of information available and accessible to the citizens. Libraries being at the center of this information business, must dance to the tune of these changes by getting automated or else remain irrelevant. With automation, the basic functions of a library which include acquisition, organization, dissemination and maintenance are performed. Some library tasks that can be performed using automated system include compilation of accession lists, maintaining of library statistics, charging and discharging of books, compilation of overdue notices, keeping records of books on the reserve and maintenance of library roster.

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- network operating system compatible with the system selected, but also available via the internet.

Conversion expenses include staff costs-associated with inputting data, as well as the machine costs the costs are incurred when moving from an old automated system to a new one. The cost of accessing these databases, subscription and other cost of accessing these databases, including subscription and other fees, factored into library's budget. Ongoing operating costs include hardware and software maintenance fees and costs for utilities, bar-code labels, miscellaneous supplies, and telecommunications. Training costs extend beyond those costs associated with vendor-provided training on the integrated system. Typically, vendors expect their library clients to maintain certain levels of technological competency. For example, staff members being trained must be familiar with the windows environment, while library staff who are the system operators must, at minimum, know how to install, maintain, and troubleshoot network serves and workstations. Libraries must be prepared to fund such training initially-and budget for the continuing education of both library staff and system operators. (Cohn, Kelsey & Fiels, 2001).

Library automation work is hindered by internal and eternal problems of the library. According to Sager and Walterson (2005), money and personnel as well as the need to change the mind of the people, to come from pre-electronic era to move into electronic era form one of the biggest challenges to library automation.

Similarly, adequate funding is needed to procure the necessary automation facilities. Ifidon (1999) however, stated that more serious than financial problem is the lack of political will on the part of decision-makers to support the concept of library automation. Other problems according to Okeke (2010) include inadequate knowledge of ICTs by library staff, lack of enthusiasm or interest in library development, and erratic power supply which seriously affects the planning for and implementation of automation. Unless a library manager knows what the

institution's goals are, his own effort might be affected by the psyche of other members of the institution who have negative thoughts about the library.

• The researcher embarks on this study to ascertain the reality of library automation work in Delta State university library. The study involves a conscious re-examination of our library as well as automation effort over the years. This re-examination entails knowing where we are at the moment in the history of library development.

Purpose of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are:
• To examine the availability of automation facilities in Delta State University Library.
• To find out the effective services of library automation in the university library.
• To determine the efficiency/skills of librarians in Delta State university library.
• To determine the problems militating against automation in the university library

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study
• Are the facilities necessary for automation services available in Delta State University Library?
• Does the library automation enhance effective services delivery to users?
• How effective/skills in automation of librarians in the university library?
• Are there problems militating against the automation of the University library?

Research Method

The research adopted a descriptive survey using non- probability sampling technique and sampled 56 librarians from both the academic librarians and the senior non- academic staff of the university library. The instruments used for this study is the questionnaire. A total of 50 respondents duly completed and returned the questionnaire. It is • The study showed that most of the facilities are available for automation. The automation

has brought transformation in the educational section. It is a most source of information to librarians, students, lecturers and university management. It is used to research, access, send and receive e-mail.

The finding from the analysis of data also showed that the automation process is low. A problem attributed to lack of sponsorship and improper coordination as revealed in Table 3. This finding agreed with Ifidon (1999) on barriers to automation in African university libraries which states that more serious than financial problem is the lack of political will on the part of decision-makers to support the concept of library and information. However, Sager and Walterson (2005) added that money and personnel as well as the need to change the mind of the people, to come from pre-electronic era to move into electronic era form one of the biggest challenges to library automation.

The library management and its relevant organs including the institution's administration should create an enabling environment for network connectivity to facilitate information acquisition, access and retrieval for the benefit of the student and staff (Mohammed, 2000). This would improve the quality of information, skills and knowledge that the users would acquire to fit into the present century digital age. Unless a library manager knows what the institution's goals are, his own effort might be affected by the psyche of other members of the institution who have negative thoughts about the library (Aibieyi 2009).

Conclusions

The benefits of library automation are enormous. It is therefore very necessary for the

university libraries to be automated in other to overcome the difficulties of providing information services to users. Library automation has been attempted by many academic libraries in Nigeria • • with dismal failure in most cases. This calls for serious concern among librarians and library management as it enhances information services delivery in the university libraries. This is not different from the library automation system of Delta State university library. However, automation is an irreversible trend in our university systems. As Delta State university library is making effort towards improving its automation, library management and decision makers in the universities must brace up to the challenges if we must improve the quality of information and knowledge of users.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations are made:
• Library management and decision makers in the university library should be serious in the task of implementing library automation.
• The need for creation of enabling environment for network connectivity.
• The need for proper planning to improve the quality of library automation services.
• Adequate training and retraining of staff is compulsory.
• The need for adequate motivation of staff is very useful.

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