

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)

Libraries at University of Nebraska-Lincoln

January 2020

RE-POSITIONING THE 21ST CENTURY UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA: THE ROLE OF LIBRARIANS AND THE NEED FOR INNOVATIVE SERVICES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Lawrence Arumuru

Delta State University, Abraka, arus.lawrence@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac>



Part of the [Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons](#), [Educational Methods Commons](#), [Educational Technology Commons](#), and the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Arumuru, Lawrence, "RE-POSITIONING THE 21ST CENTURY UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA: THE ROLE OF LIBRARIANS AND THE NEED FOR INNOVATIVE SERVICES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT" (2020). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 3936.
<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/3936>

**REPOSITIONING THE 21ST CENTURY UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA: THE
ROLE OF LIBRARIANS AND THE NEED FOR INNOVATIVE SERVICES FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

By

Arumuru, Lawrence

Lecturer in the Department of Library and Information Science,

Faculty of Education,

Delta State University, Abraka

e-mail: arus.lawrence@gmail.com

phone number: 08073119130

REPOSITIONING THE 21ST CENTURY UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA: THE ROLE OF LIBRARIANS AND THE NEED FOR INNOVATIVE SERVICES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Abstract

This study looked at repositioning the 21st century university libraries in Nigeria: the role of librarians and the need for innovative services. The 21st Century as brought about different technological innovations which has invariable turned the world into a global village or knowledge society where information can be accessed with ease from any location irrespective of the distance. These have brought about huge challenges to libraries, librarians and the library profession generally to look for more proactive ways of generating information and making the generated information available to library users. This paper has successfully discussed issues that has to do with repositioning the 21st Century University libraries in Nigeria, the need to reposition the 21st Century University libraries, the role of librarians in repositioning the 21st Century University libraries, innovative services in University libraries and the challenges in repositioning the 21st Century University libraries in order to do justice to the topic of discussion.

Key words: repositioning, 21st century, university libraries, role of librarians and innovative services

Introduction

The need to reposition the modern-day university libraries by introducing innovative services has gone beyond national (within Nigeria), regional (Africa) to a worldwide discourse due to the prevalent circumstance of the constant advancement of computers and its accompanying technologies in the creation, access and eventual dissemination of information to the end users in the 21st Century.

The 21st Century is characterized by the use of ICT that is rapidly changing the social, economic, political and educational landscape. Thus, putting librarians under immense pressure to demonstrate the worth of the library in the present-day knowledge society where universities have shifted the goal post for the measurement of success from the era of taking attendance of

users in the library, copies of print information materials consulted in the library per day by library users, the collection (print materials) strength of the library, etc. to the era where success is measured by how the library has been able to impact and effect change to pressing needs of man in the attainment of their goals (Angie, Ria, Diane, & Yan, 2016; Basahuwa, 2017). Waghmare and Salve (2014) opined that due the avalanche of information in circulation and the corresponding emerging evolution of ICTs which have brought about the application of different automation software for carrying out library routine activities. Thus, the traditional system of carrying out library services has been rendered obsolete.

In repositioning the modern-day university libraries in Nigeria, librarians must come to terms with the realities that the library is no longer the custodian of information resources but a gate way to access information resources. Therefore, the need to introduce innovative library services that will make information readily available and accessible to those who are in need of it irrespective of their location, distance, etc. without visiting the library by carefully sifting out only the relevant information from the sea of information on the internet as users often discovered that most of the information on the internet overlap or are irrelevant to what they are looking for (Wu & Hao, 2011). Wu and Hao went further to emphasize that it high time for librarians to migrate from the era were users look for information, to era were information will look for users. In order words, new and relevant information (that is, current awareness services and selective dissemination of information services) will be delivered to the users at the appropriate time via the library's website without them (library users) visiting the library.

Purpose of the Study

The major aim of this paper is to take a glimpse at repositioning the 21st century university libraries in Nigeria:the need for innovative services, how to reposition the 21st Century

university libraries, the need to reposition the 21st Century university libraries, the role of librarians in repositioning the 21st Century university libraries, innovative services in university libraries and the challenges in repositioning the 21st Century university libraries.

Review of Related Literature

Repositioning the 21st Century University Libraries in Nigeria

The university library from its cradle is saddled with the responsibility of providing information resources that will support the teaching, learning and research activities of staff and students of their parent institutions. The rightful position of the library has been diluted by the presence of ICT resulting to digitization and access to information via the internet. In order for the 21st Century university libraries to fully recover its almost lost glory, there is need for repositioning by applying strategies that will make libraries to be more practical than theoretical oriented. Lewis (2007) observed that the 21st university libraries should be seen as a means to an end and not an end in itself. The acquisition, organization and storage of printed collections of information materials should not be regarded as the major reason why the library was established but how can these information resources be effectively utilized by library users in meeting their teaching, learning and research needs. In repositioning the 21st Century university libraries, emphasize should also be placed on how to migrate gradually from the collection and purchase of print resources to electronic resources, migration from purchasing of print collections to curator (organizers of information) of collections, establishment or creation of library portal that contains the electronic collections of literature cutting across different disciplines where students and other library users can have access to them via the internet, etc. (Lewis, 2007; Eghe-Ohenmwun, 2015).

Ramos (2007) affirmed that in repositioning the 21st Century university libraries, there should be concerted efforts to migrate the library from paper to digital based environment with the use of search engines, online database, data mining, etc., from acquisition of print materials to creating access by purchasing of license to electronic sources of information, from inter library loan to a wider collaboration with IT professionals, other type of institutions, NGOs, private and government establishments, from utilizing modern technologies to full automation of library functions, from library centered (physical structure of the library) to information centered approach in the provision of information, etc.

The Need to Reposition the 21st Century University Libraries in Nigeria

The world is now referred to as a global village due to the presence of ICT and its application for the creation and dissemination of information to those in need of it via the internet. This calls for the need to reposition the 21st Century university libraries to be at the fore in the creation and dissemination of information in order not to relegate libraries to mere store house of human knowledge. Campbell (2006) in his EDUCAUSE review article, expressed a great concern that recorded human knowledge is moving at a speed of light towards the web and this pose a great challenge on what will become of academic libraries in the next decade. The need to reposition the 21st Century university libraries was also taken cognizance of on the report presented by the Association of College and Research Library's (ACRL's, 2006) roundtable on technology and its inevitable changes on academic libraries, emphasizes were placed on the constant adjustment made by academic libraries in the provision of information using modern technologies due to information explosion and the threat posed by these modern technologies when it comes to handling of information. Toying the same line of argument, De Rosa (2006) presented a report to the Online Computer Library Centre (OCLC) on college students'

perception of libraries and information resources. It was concluded that the library is not the first port of call or final bus stop when students are searching for information but they often use different search engines, e-mail and instant messaging via the internet to obtain and share information. The report also established that undergraduates begin their search on the web, live on the web, often finish their research with Google and mostly use the library as a place to study. This calls for a great concern for librarians and the urgent need to reposition the 21st Century university libraries which is gradually metamorphosing into a place where undergraduates visit for the sole purpose of studying and not the major provider of recorded human knowledge.

Walter (2011) also emphasized the need to re-position the 21st Century university libraries in order to address the ever changing library users' perceptions of the position of libraries in higher institutions of learning, reconsider the core "value statements" of libraries in light of the changes in the access to scholarly contents, pursue collaborative initiatives based on shared service goals with other information centres and professional organizations, re-envision what "excellence" in academic librarianship means, promote greater interaction and collaboration across different type of libraries, facilitate strategic planning and resource allocations, etc.

The Role of Librarians in Repositioning the 21st Century University Libraries in Nigeria

In repositioning the 21st Century university libraries, the role of librarians cannot be over emphasized this is because the onus of what becomes of the university libraries in the 21st Century lie on the shoulders of librarians being the professionals in the field of librarianship. Haber (as cited in Emezie&Nwaohiri, 2013) asserted that the digital era has changed the role of librarians from the standalone function of information provision to a more task demanding role in order to be in tune with the current trend in technological advancement. Librarians' are now

expected to play active rather than passive role as it used to be with the application of traditional system in information handling and dissemination. They are expected to be the gateway to information and no longer the custodians of information bearing materials in the library. They are also expected to be proficient in the use of computers and its accompanying technologies for the creation, organization and eventual dissemination of information to library users.

According to Emezie and Nwaohiri (2013), “library users see the library as one of the fundamental requirements for a university to get accreditation and not as an essential part of their teaching, learning and research activities” (p. 31). This implies that university libraries are gradually losing their primary objectives which is to support the teaching, learning and research activities of lecturers, non-academic staff, students and researchers within and outside the university environment rather than a mere building that is comfortable for study purposes. Librarians must therefore top up their game by engaging in more result oriented roles or activities that will place the library on the right footing and change the negative mind set of library users.

However, for librarians to meet up to their expectations in the 21st Century, Parke (2013) opined that they must:

“support scholarship and be scholars themselves, they must support students and be learners themselves, they must grasp and deploy new technologies, they need to understand the legal and ethical dimensions of their roles, they must be curators and teachers, possess outstanding interpersonal skills, be skilled classroom and online practitioners, be able to articulate and simplify the complex information landscape for their community, they must be advocates, ambassadors and evangelists for their profession and their service. We need thinkers, communicators, the curious, the resilient and the bold. We need builders and listeners, activists, designers, drivers, coaches and teachers who understand theory and can apply it in practice”(p. 37).

In the same climes, Ramos (2007); Emezie and Nwaohiri (2013) were of the opinion that in repositioning the 21st century university libraries, the following are some of the roles that must be assumed by librarians:

Advocates: where they will seize every given opportunity to reach out to library users in order to keep them abreast on the innovative services and current acquisitions of the library rather than wait for them to visit the library before they get to know of what is happening in the library

Collaborators: librarians should expand their tentacles beyond inter library collaboration and liaise with other information professionals, seasoned IT experts and other establishments that provide information services.

Web site designers/ managers: Librarians should seize the bull by the horn by engaging in the design/ creation/ development of library's web site, decide and constantly partake in what should be included in the web site instead looking for already made web sites to purchase.

Educators: The 21st Century librarian should assume the role of training library users on how to use modern technologies, use of search engines for accessing electronic information, e-mail, etc. A section in the university library manned by competent librarian(s) who is or are vast in the use of computers and other modern technologies should be in charge to train library users on various search strategies and different search engines available online from where electronic sources can be accessed.

Pace setters or image makers:The 21st Century university libraries need librarians who are creative, passionate and adds value to librarianship in order to win or gain university management's support and project a positive image of the library to the outside world.

Innovative Services in University Libraries

The library in the 21st Century is seen as a means to access information resources (print and electronic), ideas and works of imagination of man created on a daily basis rather than an end in itself by merely acquiring recorded human knowledge. The onus lies on librarians to come up with innovative library services in order to fit in to the modern-day knowledge society. Innovative library services involve the translation of ideas or initiatives of librarians into creating a service that are unimaginable in the 20th Century but that are compulsory in the 21st Century in order to meet the quest for knowledge by information seekers (Muthu, Rameshbabu & Baskaran, 2015). The need for librarians to engage in innovative services was also emphasize by Martell (2000) who eloquently implored librarians “to create a range of services that are unthinkable in the twentieth century, but mandatory in the twenty-first century, if librarians are to provide society with the value-added services it will need from its professionals.” (p. 3).

Merriam Webster's Advanced Learner's English Dictionary, (2015) defined innovation as a new idea, device or method or the act or process of introducing new ideas, devices or methods. Innovative library services can be seen as services that are directed towards addressing the information needs of a group of library users, services that are brand new or services that are created from existing library services, services that are created as a result of new technologies or inventions, etc. (Muthu, Rameshbabu & Baskaran, 2015). It therefore implies that innovative library services have to do with the introduction of a new library service(s), the application of modern technologies in rendering library services, the development/ advancement of a library service to be in tune with the modern realities or library services created to address the information seeking behavior of library users, etc.

Innovation per say is not new in librarianship, because the modern-day library is a product of innovative programmes, services and ideas put in place to enable the library to move and cope with the current trend at hand. According to Riggs (as cited in Ilako and Ikoja-odongo, 2011) who observed that the “introduction of classification schemes such as LC, DDC, UDC, etc. in 1800, 1876 and 1885 respectively, the establishment of Carnegie libraries to serve as public libraries in 1879, the development of catalogue code and lately the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) all points out to the demonstration of innovations in the library development” (p. 1). In introducing innovative services in the 21st Century university libraries, Wu and Hao (2011); Muthu, Rameshbabu and Baskaran (2015) called for a push library services where emphasizes will be on information looking for users and not the traditional system of users looking for information in the library by visiting the library in order to consult organized information sources in the library. They further advocate that the push library services can be carried out via e-mail services, establishment of library call centres (mobile phone services), use of social network sites, etc. Gerolimos and Konsta (2009, 2011) also emphasized the need to reposition libraries in the 21st Century by engaging in innovative or modern library services such as: Really Simple Syndicate (RSS) services, Instant Messaging (IM) services, streaming media services, weblogs services, OPAC-tags services, social network services (that is, the use of facebook, twitter, whatsapp, linkedin, etc.) and reference services via mobile phones as way of constantly updating library users on the current happenings in the library. Librarians can also engage in push services such as online document delivery services via e-mail, online inter-library borrowing services, online virtual reference services (ask a librarian) using skype, facebook, e-mail, etc.

The Challenges in Repositioning the 21st Century University Libraries in Nigeria

The 21st Century is a fast growing/changing economy brought about by an expanding global digital information environment. The community of users that the library serves is now part of a global community that does not rely solely on the library for information, this pose a greater challenge to librarians and the entire library profession to redeem its rightful position as the leading force in the organization and dissemination of information. Therefore, repositioning university libraries in the 21st Century in Nigeria is one thing librarians must strive to achieve because it is not an easy task as it seems as it comes with some challenges that librarians must surpass. Matthews (2011) observed that in repositioning university libraries to suit the demands of users in the 21st Century, librarians encounter numerous challenges and some of these challenges among others are: the broadest spectrum of library users that librarians have to deal with, library users becoming more information/computer literate, the issue of computers replacing librarians, the transition from print to digital contents, the diminishing value of the library to its user community, etc.

Conclusion/Recommendations

This study has established from literature consulted that computers and other technologies have shifted the goal post from the era where library users are expected to visit the library before they can get access to information to an era where information are made to look for those that are in need of them. Thus, universities libraries in Nigeria should embrace this change and constantly think of new roles for librarians and innovative library services that will put the library users first in its agenda. It therefore implies that librarians in university libraries should top up their game and assume more active and result oriented roles such as an advocate for the library, collaborating with other sister information professionals, web site designing, education of library users on how to use different technologies in searching for information. Librarians in university

libraries should also focus more on push library services that are user centered which is a deviation from the traditional practice where emphasizes were placed on the acquisition of print materials that are stocked in the library waiting for users to come and consult them. Thus, the university library services should be designed in such a way that the information resources in the library are made to look for the library users by constantly updating library users via e-mail and other social networking sites on the current happenings in the library and not the other way-round as it used to be.

REFERENCES

- Angie, T., Ria, L., Diane, J. B., & Yan, H. (2016). The impact of the academic library on students' success. *Libraries and the Academy, 16*(2).
- Association of college and research libraries (ACRL). (2006). *Changing roles of academic and research libraries, roundtable on technology and change in academic libraries*. Chicago, Illinois. Retrieved from www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlissues/future/changingroles.htm
- Basahuwa, C. B. (2017). Innovation in academic libraries in the 21st century. *International Journal of Applied Technologies in Libraries and Information Management, 3*(1), 18-30.
- Campbell, J. D. (2006). Changing a cultural icon. *Educause review, 41*, 30.
- De Rosa, C. (2006). *College students' perceptions of libraries and information resources*. a companion piece to perception of libraries and information resources. Retrieved from www.oclc.org/reports/perceptionscollege.htm
- Eghe-Ohenmwun, A. (2015). Best practices for repositioning towards global competitiveness in academic libraries of privately owned universities (ACPUS) in Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice, 6*(13), 50-52.

- Emezie, N. A., & Nwaohiri, N. M. (2013). 21st century librarians and effective information service delivery. *Journal of Information and Knowledge Management*, 4(1), 30-43.
- Gerolimos, M. & Konsta, R. (2009). "Academic libraries and Library 2.0. *IFLA Satellite Meeting*, (pp. 19-21). Athens, Greece.
- Gerolimos, M., & Konsta, R. (2011). (2011). Services for academic libraries in the new era. *D-Lib Magazine*, 17(7/8), 5-15. doi:10.1045/july2011-gerolimos
- Ilako, C., & Ikoja-Odongo, R. (2011). (2011). Creativity and innovations in uganda libraries. *world library and information congress: 77th IFLA general conference and assembly*, (pp. 1-7). Puerto Rico. Retrieved from www.ifla.org/past-wlic/2011/97-ilako-en.pdf
- Lewis, D. W. (2007). A strategy for academic libraries in the first quarter of the 21st century. *College and Research Library*, 418-432.
- Martell, C. (2000). The disembodied librarian in the digital age. *College and Research Libraries*, 61, 10-28.
- Matthews, S. (2011). Five challenges every librarian must face. *21st century library blog*. Retrieved from <https://21stcenturylibrary.com/2011/10/12/five-challenges-every-librarian-must-face/>
- Merriam-webster's advanced learner's english dictionary (MWALED) . (2015). *innovation*. U.S: Merriam wester Inc.
- Muthu, M., Rameshbabu, P., & Baskaran, C. (2015). Rethinking of innovative LIS services for libraries in digital era. *Knowledge librarians" an international peer reviewed biblingual e-journal of library and information science*, 2(2), 31-43.

Parkes, D. (2013). Future librarians, future skills. *Sconul Focus*, 58, 37-38.

Ramos, M. M. (2007). The role of librarians in the 21st century. *International Rice Research Institute*.

Waghmare, D.D., & Salve, S.R. (2014). Innovative practices in academic libraries in ICT environment. *International Journal of Educational Research and Technology*, 5, 16-21.

Walter, S. (2011). Distinctive signifiers of excellence. *College & Research Libraries*, 72(1), 6-8.
Retrieved from <http://crl.acrl.org/content/72/1/6.full.pdf+html>

Wu, C., & Hao, J. (2011). Innovative information services in the digital age. *World library and information congress*, (pp. 1-14).