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## An Empirical study of Librarians and Libraries as drivers of access to Knowledge in Ebonyi State, Nigeria

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# **\An Empirical study of Librarians and Libraries as drivers of access to Knowledge in Ebonyi State, Nigeria**

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## **Abstract:**

The library from inception plays a very crucial role in the extension and modification of knowledge. The growing need for knowledge management has influenced every component and operation of a library. This is built on the fact that it is only by transmission of knowledge by each succeeding generation can civilization maintain itself and make advance upon the knowledge of the past. The individual and social meaning of education can only take place on the backdrop of beliefs and values of a particular social setting. In both, the library has a crucial role to play. The library we know is a social system that stores and disseminates information which is knowledge. This paper therefore is an empirical study of Librarians and libraries as drivers of access to knowledge using Ebonyi State, Nigeria as a case in point. This researcher applied a descriptive study method with a sampled population of 138 randomly selected from the different libraries in the State. The study investigated ways through which librarians and libraries operate as drivers of access to knowledge as well as the various challenges encountered by librarians that militate against their optimal performance as drivers of access to knowledge. The study also identified ways of enhancing the role of Librarians and libraries as drivers of access to knowledge. The instrument for the study was structured according to the modified Likert scale on four point rating scale. On this scale, the average mean cut off is 2.50. To this end, an item is accepted if it is 2.50 and above and rejected if it is below 2.50. Statistically, frequencies, percentages and mean scores were used to compute the data collected that led to the decision rule.

**Keywords:** Access to information, Knowledge, Library, Librarian, Information and Communication Technology and Human development

## **1.0 Introduction**

From historical perspective, the library is seen as a place where books are kept. No doubt, the true place of the library is not buried on this etymologically concept. Professionally, the library has been defined as an organized collection of books and other information materials kept for reading, study and references (Onwubiko & Uzoigwe 2004 and Nnadozie, 2007) while Bernard

Library Glossary (2017), makes its more explicit in its definition thus explains that a library is a place where information is acquired, stored, processed, organized, retrieved and disseminated to potential users when the need arises. But today, there is a paradigm shift; Libraries are now portals to global information relevant in education, research, individual and national development (Okore, Ekere and Eke, 2009)

The importance of library to human development and transmission of knowledge can be traced from the fact that library from inception has been playing the crucial role of conserving, organising and transmitting knowledge from one generation to another. These noble roles, have maintained civilization and making it possible for succeeding generations to make advance upon the knowledge of the past. The individual and social meaning of education can only take place against the backdrop of belief and values of a particular social setting. In both instances, the library has a crucial role to perform. Onwubiko and Uzoigwe (2004) also corroborated the above assertion as they state that knowledge, no doubt is power but the *raison d'etre* of knowledge is information. Information well organized and disseminated gives a sound knowledge. And this forms part of the primary functions of the library.

With the emergence of new technologies that facilitates access to information, an economic struggle has arisen in libraries. The library, as a conduit for information, serving a wide spectrum of information seekers, has a critical role to play in the facilitation of knowledge generation; hence, an unhindered access to knowledge is essential in a development process. It serves as a liberator from poverty and deprivation and as a springboard in the quest for innovation and change. According to Tise, Raju and Masango, (2008), access to information is a complex concept. Libraries have the mandate to drive access to information to alleviate poverty and deprivation due to paradoxical situation of a scarcity of information in an era of information explosion.

### **1.1 Statement of problem**

A library without adequate access to information, books and knowledge is as chaotic as a world of books without any form of order; the world without order or the Internet without form and organisation is utterly useless. Access to knowledge is very crucial if any nation is to develop in line with the trends of thing globally. In this context, the library of any sort as the hub of information has a prominent role to play more so, in an era of information explosion but paradoxically, there is dearth of information as a result of information over-crowding. This situation makes it imperatively difficult for the people to flow with the right information vis-a-

vis knowledge. The fact is that, the right information leads to the right knowledge. Which is to say that information and knowledge are like siamese twin – inseparable. The right of access to knowledge can only be guaranteed when the librarians allow the information to be accessible without hindrance or interference. It is the ability of the librarians and libraries (base on library policies) to facilitate this important factor that will help people participate and contribute to development and in decisions that affect them. Since librarians and libraries are at the fore-front of access to knowledge, there is the need, to access their roles in the promotion of knowledge using Ebonyi state, Nigeria as a case in point.

The established fact is that the library is the home of knowledge and that the library does not operate in isolation of librarians. This is because, without the librarian acquiring the relevant information materials, processing, organising, preserving and making these materials available to the users who are in need of them at the appropriate time, the building called the ‘library’ will only be heaps of books. Ironically, many researches on library as a driving access of knowledge forgot the geese that lay the golden egg – the Librarians. Furthermore much emphasis is laid on public libraries forgetting other libraries such as: academic, special, school and national libraries. According to Oltman (2009), access to knowledge remains, for the most part under conceptualized and infrequently studied in Library and Information Science (LIS).

This study therefore is aimed at re-writing this erroneous impression by seeking to bridge the gap by including librarians and other libraries in Ebonyi State in the scope of study as they are involved as drivers of access to knowledge.

## **1.2 Study Objectives**

The objectives of this study are to:

- I. Find out librarians and libraries involvement as drivers of access to knowledge in Ebonyi State;
- II. Identify ways and methods librarians and libraries in Ebonyi State employ as drivers of access to knowledge;
- III. Establish the challenges librarians and libraries encounter as drivers of access to knowledge,
- IV. Suggest best ways that librarians and libraries can effectively function as drivers of access to knowledge in Ebonyi State.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

- I. How are librarians and libraries involved as drivers of access to knowledge in Ebonyi State?
- II. What ways and methods do librarians and libraries in Ebonyi State employ as drivers of access to knowledge?
- III. What are the challenges librarians and libraries encounter as drivers of access to knowledge in Ebonyi State?
- IV. What are the best ways that librarians and libraries can effectively function as drivers of access to knowledge in Ebonyi State?

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Conceptual overview of knowledge and access**

The concepts of knowledge and information are so intertwined that they could and are used interchangeably. Complementing the concepts of *knowledge* and *information* is the concept of *access*. Knowledge as defined by Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2019) is familiarity gained by factual experience, practical skill, acquaintance with fact and large scope of information while information is seen as the communication of news and knowledge and that which helps to reduce uncertainty and assist us in decision making (Onwubiko, 2016). Knowledge, according to Reitz (2004) expressed either in formal or systematic language, codified in form of data, scientific formulae, etc. It can be defined as information that has been comprehended and evaluated in the light of experience and incorporated into the knower's intellectual understanding of the subject. While knowledge is in and of itself an extremely valuable commodity, there are those who view knowledge as being even more valuable than precious metals such as gold, diamonds and platinum. Knowledge has become quantifiable in terms of its economic worth. Knowledge is the only commodity that increases in value with use – there are no diminishing returns when knowledge is used. In fact the use of existing knowledge often leads to the creation of new knowledge thereby enhancing the inherent value of this commodity (Tise, 2011). In exploring the concept of knowledge, Harris (1996) draws distinction between the concepts of data, information and knowledge. When accumulated and processed, data, the lowest form of information, becomes information. While information has substance and purpose on its own it does not have meaning. For information to acquire meaning and representation it has to be combined with context and lived experience. It is through the injection of the human factor into information that this body of data becomes knowledge. Complementing the concepts of *knowledge* and *information* is the concept of *access* in the

process of information provision. In fact, all knowledge and information is inconsequential if there is no access. Access to information is therefore an imperative for the development and use of knowledge. Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2019) defines access as the freedom or ability to obtain or make use of something. IFLA and the library world are cognizant that unfettered access to information is an essential in facilitating political stability to the world, quickening the pace of recovery from the internationally experienced recession, eradicating poverty, decreasing disease and ensuring a green environment. At its core, access to information ensures a just society for all.

Knowledge generation is essential to the process of development. Knowledge is functional at many levels: it can alleviate poverty and deprivation; it serves as a springboard for innovation and change; and, it is a catalyst for national development and personal achievements. Without knowledge all effort is naught. Without sound, accurate and reliable knowledge, decisions and actions that we or others take can have disastrous consequential effects for a very long time. Knowledge is the key to success (Tise 2009). In the process of information provision and knowledge creation what actually comes to mind as a professional is that librarians and libraries drive access to information and knowledge.

## **2.2 Librarians and libraries as drivers of access to knowledge**

In the new dispensation, librarians and libraries have turned gateway and guide to knowledge. To this Akintunde (2004) explains that librarians and libraries from the foregoing have imbibed a new paradigm of service. There has been shift from being documentalist and archivist, to being a gateway to knowledge. The librarian has also shifted from being the all knowing 'custodian' of knowledge to a 'guide' by the side. He explains that the librarian guides clients on how to navigate effectively through the wide world web (www), creates portals for his clients because of the mesh of data now readily available. Anyakoha (2005) also captured the same thought as she averred that since information available online are enormous and good number of library users are not conversant with the use of the internet, librarians who are computer literate and know the application of ICT are still needed to tutor and direct such users. Many users are still not able to use the web efficiently. In this particular situation therefore, librarians are still recognized as search experts and information specialist thus are expected to help users to locate and access information. According to Dike (2007), information communication technology (ICT) or no ICT, it is the responsibility of librarians to help users formulate their enquiries and develop a search. This is because they have knowledge of the vast array of information sources,

how they can be located and accessed, the strong and weak point of each, and the method for evaluating them. Feather (2006), Mathur and Ambani (2005) and Godlee et al. (2004) opine that libraries are critically important in driving access to knowledge. Librarians and libraries make every effort to dismantle all barriers that exist between users and the information and knowledge contained in their collections (in the broadest sense possible). The crucial role that libraries play in the empowerment of their users is that they (librarians) are the facilitating agencies to access the information they need. One of the ways in which librarians and libraries empower their users is that they, the users, are assured that they are accessing information with the knowledge that the information they receive is authentic and trustworthy. Libraries provide users with a considerable level of comfort, placing themselves in a strong position as a social service of the highest order (Gothenburg 2010). Igwe (2010) concluded that libraries provide access to an endless variety of information resources and opportunities for interactive communication. Though the fundamental mission has remained, to facilitate and give access to information and knowledge, the processes, tools and techniques have undergone remarkable changes. To Fagbola, Uzoigwe and Ajegbomogun (2011), access to knowledge is critical for the development and growth of the society and for participation in democratic processes. The library is an integral part of the society that surrounds it. It is shaped and changed by many of the same forces that shape other types of institution.

According to Tise (2011), the exponential growth of information fuelled by the exploitation of media such as the web and social networking, demands that there be a mediator with the skills and capacity to extract trusted and authentic information. Such an intermediary also has to be able to deliver reliable and authoritative information to the information-seeking community as well as the new knowledge and information that has been created in recent times. It is this new knowledge and information that help to stimulate the growth and development of societies and the world. Libraries as primary gateways to information are therefore important vehicles for the acquisition of knowledge. As knowledge institutions, libraries provide spaces for information-sharing and learning for all ages, genders, ethnicities and socio-economic groups regardless of their information/knowledge needs. The above assertion was corroborated by White (2012) as he opines that as the gateways to knowledge and culture, libraries play a fundamental role in the society. The resources and services they offer create opportunities for learning, support literacy and education, and help shape the new ideas and perspectives that are central to a creative and innovative society. They also help ensure an authentic record of knowledge created and accumulated by past generations. In a world without libraries, it would be difficult to advance research and human knowledge or preserve the world's cumulative knowledge and heritage for future generations.

Further, libraries facilitate access to information thereby providing the means through which new knowledge is developed and made available to all. Knowledge is foundational to all spheres of life. An interrogation of this concept reveals that knowledge is critical for the growth of society and that knowledge is produced when information is absorbed, processed and internalized by individuals (McCallum, 2013). Libraries, as critical providers of information have an important role to play in the creation of new knowledge. They are vital institutions for the creation, development and sustainability of knowledge societies. Information is a key input into the creation and maturation of knowledge, therefore, a significant criterion for a growing and healthy society is access to information. The library, as a major source for/conduit to information, serves a wide spectrum of information-seekers. Libraries are not only vital but also central to the facilitation of knowledge generation.. In the words of Ukoha (2013), Libraries remain portals of knowledge for everyone and they guarantee that whoever you are you can open the door to information, knowledge, learning and help.

To Vrane and markovic (2015), libraries have always been educational, cultural and spiritual centres, places where people had access to relevant knowledge and information. These institutions invest greatly into the intellectual development of their users and contribute to the development of overall democracy of knowledge. They maintain that Librarians are intermediaries between library users and the knowledge whether in printed or digital form.

According to witek (2014), Librarians are not only knowledge creators but knowledge providers. He explains that historically, libraries and librarians are perceived as primary conduits for accessing knowledge as librarians provide knowledge to those who seek it through classification schema, bibliographic instruction, and purchase or license of scholarly materials. However, librarians frequently are also engage in traditional subject based research, innovative technological projects and development of new processes or services at their libraries that would be great contributions, in written or other forms, to the broader knowledge base. Academic librarians typically, produce scholarly content out of obligation; they work at an academic institutions that grant them tenure or promotion on the basis of their publication activities. (American Theological Library Association (ATLA), 2019)

As unhindered access to knowledge is essential in any developmental process for individuals and nations, the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), in the context of the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda, believes that increasing access to information and knowledge across society supports sustainable development and improves people's lives. (IFLA, 2017). The above assertion supports Obasi (2015) declaration that access to knowledge continue to be an issue in



the library and information discipline, as it is the basic and fundamental tenet upon which all libraries' policies, activities, operations and resources are built upon.

In the opinion of Solanke and Osuchukwu (2018), Libraries irrespective of type should enhance its information management system to create, organize and share usable information with the people. They further state that the notion of ascribing particular type of information to a particular library should be discouraged explaining that a librarian is for all first before belonging to a particular library as believing in this assertion will make librarians work effectively and successfully as driver of access to knowledge. While Nwajiuba (2019), in the context of the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 and the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ministerial Roundtable on Information Access declared, I believe the success of every educational institution depends on its library as the availability of the right information at the right time and form is of utmost importance to users and an improvement of our library systems and access to information/knowledge will bring about social and human capital development. IFLA (2019) in her description of 3<sup>rd</sup> Roundtable of Ministers Responsible for Public Libraries in Africa held in Accra, Ghana from 28 – 30 October, aimed at improving information access and library systems corroborated the above assertion as it posits that Africa is faced with some of the world's most acute development challenges and needs to draw on all of its innovative potential. Information and equitable access to it IFLA declared will play a key role in achieving this, and libraries across the continent are working hard to deliver on this mandate.

One can therefore deduce from the fore-going that librarians and libraries of any sort are indispensable drivers of access to knowledge which leads to individual growth and development as well as national, economical, political, social and human capital development.

### **3.0 Research Methodology**

The study applied descriptive survey research design which according to Nworgu (2015) is a type of study which aims at collecting data on and describing in a systematic manner the characteristics features and facts about a given population. This type of study is only interested in describing certain variables like dependent and independent variables in relation to the population.

#### **3.1. Area of Study**

The area of Study in this research is all the libraries in Ebonyi State. Ebonyi as a State was created on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1996 by the then Head-of-State of Nigeria late General Sani Abacha. It was carved out of the old Abakaliki, present Enugu State, old Afikpo and Abia State areas. It is located in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria and has mostly Igbo Speaking inhabitants with Abakaliki City as the capital. The State is surrounded by Benue state, Enugu state, Imo, Abia, and Cross River States and is made up of 13 local Government Areas. The State presently has two Federal tertiary institutions (Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ikwo and Akanu Ibiam federal Polytechnic, Afikpo), three State owned tertiary institutions (Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki; Ebonyi State College of Education, Ikwo and Ebonyi State College of Health Technology, Ezzamgbo), Ebonyi State Public Library, Abakaliki and 225 public secondary schools

### **3.2 population of Study**

The population of this study include all librarians and library officers of Alex Ekwueme Federal University Library, Ikwo (23), Ebonyi State University Library, Abakaliki (27), Ebonyi state College of Education library (20), Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic Library, Afikpo (24), Ebonyi State College of Health Technology Library, Ezzamgbo (12) Ebonyi State Public library, Abakaliki (30) and (14) public secondary Schools libraries totalling 150

### **3.3 Sampled population**

The sampled population for this study is 138 which was randomly selected from the stratified libraries with the exception of the 14 school librarians that were purposively selected

### **3.4 Instrument for data collection**

The primary instrument used in this study for data collection is the questionnaire. Apart from section 'A' of the instrument which dealt with demographic data the other aspect of the instrument was structured according to the modified Likert scale on four point rating scale. On this scale, the average mean cut off is 2.50, in which case, an item is accepted if it is 2.50 and above and rejected if it is below 2.50 hence the decision rule. The questionnaires were administered face-to-face by the researcher and returned 100%

## **4.0: Data Presentation and Analysis**

**Table 1:** Ages of respondents

Age	N	Percentage
Below 24 years	8	5.8%
25 -34 years	58	42.0%
35 – 44 years	47	34%
45 - 54	17	12.8%
55 and above	8	5.8%

N=138

The data collected as stated in Table 1, show that 8 of the 138 respondents representing 5.8% are below 24 years, 58 or 42% of the respondents are within 25 to 34 years while 34% or 47 respondents are from 35 to 44 years. 17 representing 12.8% of the respondents are between 45 to 54 years and the remaining 8 which is 5.8% are 55 years and above.

**Table 2: Working Experience**

Years of experience	No of respondents	Percentage
Below 5 years	38	27,5
6 - 10	51	37.0
11 - 15	25	18.1
16 - 20	12	8.7
21 years and above	12	8.7

N=138

The table above shows that 38 respondents representing 27.5% working experience is below 5 years while 37% or 51 respondents have been on the job between 6 to 10 years. 18.1% that is 25 respondents have worked between 11 to 15 years. Those who have worked between 16 to 20 years and 21 years and above are 8.7% respectively or 12 respondents each.

**Table 3: Gender**

Gender	No	Percentage
male	62	44.9
Female	76	55.1
Total	138	100

Table 3 shows that 55.1% or 76 respondents are female while the remaining 66 persons representing 44.95% of the sampled population are male. Table 4 below reveals that 71% or 98 respondents are from academic library whereas. Public and school libraries covered the 18.9% and 10.1% of the respondents which is 26 and 14 respondents each. Research library produced no respondent as there is no such library in the State.

**Table 4:** Respondents by types of library

Type	No of respondents	percentage
Academic library	98	71
Public library	26	18.9
Research library	-	-
School library	14	10.1

The table above shows that the respondents were selected from various types of library with the exception of research library which is as a result of her none existence in the State. All the same, the highest number of respondents came from the academic library with 71% (n=98) followed by public library with 18% (n=26) and school library took the rear with 10.1% (n=14) as a result of poor school library development in the State.

**Table 5:** Educational qualifications

Qualifications	No	Percentage
HND	19	13.8
BLIS/BLS/BSc/BA	37	26.8
MLIS/MLS	70	50.7
PHD	12	8.7

The educational qualification shows that MLIS/MLS has the highest respondents with 50.7%, followed by BLIS/BLS/BSc/BA 37% and HND 13.8. Only 12 respondents representing 8.7% are PHD holders.

The demographic data therefore show a well classification of respondents with credible background and in good position to attest to the queries of the questionnaires.

**Research Question 1:****How are librarians and libraries involved in facilitating access to knowledge?****Table 6**

S/No	Items	Highly involved		Fairly involved		Partially involved		Not involved		Mean score	Decision rule
1	Creation of awareness of the importance of information to	65	47.1%	48	34.8%	23	16.7%	2	1.4%	3.28	Accepted

	all sphere of life											
2	Provision of access to information at little or no fee	74	53%	46	36.3%	18	13.0%	8	5.8%	3.46	Accepted	
3	Training and re-training of staff on information provision	48	34.8%	42	32.4%	27	19.6%	1	0.72%	2.70	Accepted	
4	Advocating for policies and practices that strengthens public rights to access information	34	24.6%	59	42.8	35	25.4%	10	7.2%	2.84	Accepted	
5	Involvement in extension services	65	47.1%	48	34.8	23	16.7%	2	1.4%	3.28	Accepted	

**Bench mark=2.5**

Table 6 shows how librarians and libraries in Ebonyi State get involved as drivers of access to knowledge base on a bench mark of above 2.5 mean score in the following ways: Provision of access to information at little or no fee (mean=3.46); Creation of awareness of the importance of information to all sphere of life (mean=3.28); Involvement in extension services (mean=3.28), Advocating for policies and practices that strengthens public rights to access information (2.84) and Training and re-training of staff on information provision (mean=2.70)

### **Research Question 2:**

**What methods do librarians and libraries apply as drivers of access to knowledge?**

**Table 7**

S/ No	Items	SA	%	A	%	DA	%	SD	%	Mean score	Decision rule
1	Acquisition of up-to-date & relevant information resources	70	50.7	64	46.4	4	2.9	-	-	3.48	Accepted



(CAS) & selective dissemination of information (SDI) to users base on profile	48	34.8	57	41.3	18	13	15	10.9	3.00	Accepted
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**Key: SA=Strongly Agreed; A=Agreed; DA=disagreed, SDA= Strongly Disagreed**

Bench mark= 2.5

The data as presented in the above table revealed that there are various methods through which librarians and libraries in Ebonyi State, Nigeria facilitate access to knowledge with the accepted benchmark of over 2.5 mean scores as shown in the options given. The table shows that Maintaining good public relations with the library publics (mean=3.52), acquisition of updated and relevant information resources both in print and electronic formats (mean=3.48) and Carrying out readership promotion campaigns (mean=3.48) are the most employed methods. Other methods used by librarians and libraries in driving access to knowledge as shown by the data are: Provision of infrastructure and technological information facilities (mean=3.38); Organising trainings and workshops on digital and information literacy skills (mean=3.0); Ensuring conducive library environment (mean=3.43) and the least, provision of information software that are usable even by users with special needs (mean=2.70) among other ones.

### Research Question 3:

**What are the factors militating against librarians and libraries as drivers of access to knowledge?**

**Table 8**

S/N0	Items	SA	%	A	%	DA	%	SDA	%
1	Inadequate financial support by establishing authorities	70	50.7	64	46.4	4	2.9	-	-
2	Poor internet connectivity	64	46.4	51	37	10	7.2	3	2.2
3	Inadequate workforce	82	59.4	43	31.2	8	5.8	5	3.6
4	Poor motivation of staff	70	50.7	64	46.4	4	2.9	-	-
5	Poor working environment	51	37	40	29	24	17.4	23	16.7
6	Inadequate skilled manpower	63	45.7	41	30	24	17.4	10	7.2
7	Lack of state-of-the-art infrastructure	82	59.4	51	37	8	5.8	5	3.6

**Key: SA=Strongly Agreed; A=Agreed; DA=disagreed, SDA= Strongly Disagreed**

The above table indicated the factors that are militating against librarians and libraries performing optimally as drivers of access to knowledge. Lack of state-of-the –art infrastructure is ranked highest with 96.4% or 133 respondents affirming to it; it is followed by inadequate workforce with 125 respondents represent 90.6%. Other top militating factors are inadequate financial support by establishing authorities and poor motivation of staff while Poor internet connectivity with 83.4% is rated high, poor working environment with 66% is rated the least factor militating against the role of librarians and libraries as drivers of access to knowledge.

**Research Question 4:**

**What factors can enhance the role of librarians and libraries as drivers of access to knowledge?**

**Table 9**

S/No	items	SA	A	DA	SDA	Mean score	Decision rule
1	Advocate for policies & practices that maintain or strengthen the public right to access information & the librarians/libraries roles in facilitating access to information.	60	78	-	-	3.45	Accepted
		43.5%	56.5%	-	-		
2	Develop & make available educational programmes & information resources to assist the general public to effectively access digital information	70	62	4	2	3.43	Accepted
		50.7%	44.9%	2.9%	1.4%		
3	Monitor & respond to technological and policy challenges to public access to knowledge.	54	78	6	-	3.35	Accepted
		39.1%	56.5%	4.3%	-		



4	Support educational programmes, information resources and consulting services that support librarians in providing effective services that will enhance access to knowledge in an ICT world.	68	66	2	2		
		49.3%	47.8%	1.4%	1.4%	3.45	Accepted
5	Encourage research in all facets of access to knowledge	60	78	-	-		
		43.5%	56.5%	-	-	3.43	Accepted

**Bench Mark=2.50**

Table 9, streamlined various factors that can enhance the role of librarians and libraries as drivers of access to knowledge. The data revealed that the respondents accepted all factors with Advocate for policies & practices that maintain or strengthen the public right to access information & the librarians/libraries roles in facilitating access to information. and Support educational programmes, information resources and consulting services that support librarians in providing effective services that will enhance access to knowledge in an ICT world (mean=3.45) ranking highest, followed by to develop and make available educational programmes and information resources to assist the general public to effectively access digital information and Encourage research in all facets of access to knowledge (mean=3.43). The inference is that all the outlined factors were accepted putting the bench mark of 2.5 into consideration.

### **5.0 Discussion of finding**

The data collected and analyzed as shown in table 6 in response to research question 1, did prove that librarians and libraries have been involved at different levels in driving access to knowledge in Ebonyi State and that this role is not restricted to any particular time of library (see table 4). This involvement has come through the creation of awareness of the importance of information to all sphere of life; provision of access to information at little or no fee; training and re-training of staff on information provision, Advocating for policies and practices that strengthens public rights to access information and through involvement in extension services. The underline factor of all these is that driving access to knowledge will be enhanced using well trained and better equipped staff which will definitely translate to effective service and better information cum

knowledge delivery. This finding no doubt conforms to the views of Smith and Chilocote, (2018) that librarians and libraries have the capacity (both in infra...and creating awareness and advocacy) in creating space for participation in people in national issues including access to knowledge. It therefore behoves librarians and libraries to partner government agencies, host communities, institutions and organisations in order to incorporate new services in an era of information explosion (Obasi, 2015).

The finding in table 7 is in line with the view of ALA (2015) which emphasizes on digital inclusion of communities as part of the roles of the library in empowering social, economic and political development. The essence of it is the integration of wide societal needs as parts of libraries and librarians' roles in curbing unemployment, providing timely and accurate information and inform decision making. This table enumerated various methods employed by librarians and libraries as drivers to access of knowledge which invariably provides the answer to research question 2.

On the factors militating against librarians and libraries as drivers of access to knowledge, the finding as shown in table 8 reveals that inadequate financial support by establishing authorities; poor internet connectivity; inadequate workforce; poor motivation of staff; poor working environment, inadequate skilled manpower and lack of state-of the art infrastructure are impediment to librarians and libraries functioning as driving access to knowledge. The above data therefore provide the answer to research question 3.

Finding in table 9, shows that librarians collectively agreed that advocate for policies & practices that maintain or strengthen the public right to access information and the librarians/libraries roles in facilitating access to information; developing and making available educational programmes and information resources to assist the general public to effectively access digital information; monitor and respond to technological and policy challenges to public access to knowledge; support educational programmes, information resources and consulting services that support librarians in providing effective services that will enhance access to knowledge in an ICT world and encourage research in all facets of access to knowledge. The above suggestions provide answer to research question 4.

## **6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

The library today, is a technologically driven one that uses the principles of traditional library services to organize knowledge and communicate same to clients in the global community. The tools the librarians and libraries use to serve their patrons may change, but their mission remains essentially the same. All the same, the library continues to be the power house, an indispensable

asset to knowledge and above all, a driving access to knowledge of all time. On a general note, librarians and libraries serve a growing number of digital natives who know that information is knowledge and knowledge is power. So to speak, access to information and knowledge are keys to lifelong learning and successful livelihood. It is in view of the above facts that the researcher believe that the continuity of the librarians and libraries as drivers of access to knowledge as well as continuing to be relevant in an era of ICT and information explosion, we must note;

- One reason why library users still seek the face –to – face assistance of librarians is that they understand users’ needs and the difficulties they can encounter in learning new electronic tools. Skilled librarians should always be handy in helping patrons utilize electronic media,
- Librarians need to be polite, friendly and always able to behave in a courteous, patient and tactful manner. They need to give the user their complete attention with proper but not excessive eye contact – during the interaction. To deal with that interaction, even if it consists only of issuing a book, while simultaneously having a conversation with a colleague is extremely poor in terms of customer care.
- Librarians must possess reasonable knowledge of electronic resources and adequate grinding in the techniques of their evaluation and selection. Today more and more information is being stored digitally and disseminated electronically and all types of materials are available on CD-ROM and online. The librarian should have knowledge of electronic sources of information, knowledge of users’ needs. While selecting electronic documents the librarian should obviously refer to the users of the library, both actual and potential, and their needs or demand for reading material, either expressed or anticipated.
- As a learning organization, libraries should provide a strong leadership in knowledge management. Libraries should improve their knowledge management in all of the key areas of library services. To cope with the exponential growth in human knowledge, libraries need to develop their resources, access and sharing strategies from printed to electronic and digital resources.
- Libraries should be developed and maintained an integrated online public access catalogue (OPAC) with both internal and external resources as well as printed and other formats of knowledge. Useful websites and knowledge sources should be regularly searched and selected from the internet and included in OPACs.

- Furthermore, latest information technology should be used in the libraries. Libraries should be developed / modified based on the perfect environment for new media applications. The application of ICT enlarges the scope of knowledge acquisition, raises knowledge acquisition, speed and reduces knowledge acquisition cost. It is impossible to accomplish such important tasks by using man's brain only in the modern society in which the knowledge changes with each passing day.
- The most important resource in the knowledge economy system is the talents who grasp knowledge. The talent competition has become the focus of market competition in the knowledge economy era. In the knowledge economy era, the libraries will attach importance to vocational training and lifelong education of library staff to raise their scientific knowledge level and ability of acquiring and innovative knowledge.
- It is believed that this new responsibilities on the part of the librarians (knowing full well that the effectiveness and functionality of the library depend on the acquired skills of the librarians) call for acquisition of new skills. To this end, there is need for continuing professional development.
- One of the most important ways of achieving this human right, access to knowledge, is for libraries and librarians to become fully engaged in their communities and societies. The activities and actions of libraries and librarians are foundational to the existence of sustainable communities, economic growth and healthy societies. The result of our deeds, actions and services are vital to personal opportunities and well-being. The work of librarians adds value to both individuals and society at large
- Government, organizations, institutions and communities should provide the enabling environment for efficient and effective service delivery by librarians and libraries. The government should provide the needed fund, state of the art infrastructure and enabling policies that will encourage librarians and libraries in carrying out this function.
- Government, organizations, institutions, librarians and libraries should embrace all recommended ways forward as stated in table 9

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