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David A. Cabonero
Saint Mary's University of Bayombong, Philippines, bluegemini7777@yahoo.com

Wina B. Dominguez
King's College of the Philippines, winabadival@gmail.com

Judy Ann P. Jandoc
University of the Cordilleras, Philippines, jud44i55@gmail.com

Jeazel S. Tomas
University of the Cordilleras, Philippines, jiizeltomas@gmail.com

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Authors

Mr. David A. Cabonero
Officer-In-Charge, University Learning Resource Center
Saint Mary's University
Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines
Email: bluegemini7777@yahoo.com

Mrs. Wina B. Dominguez
Librarian, King's College of the Philippines
Bambang, Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines
Email: winabadival@gmail.com

Miss Judy Ann P. Jandoc
Librarian, University of the Cordilleras
Baguio City, Benguet, Philippines
Email: jud44i55@gmail.com

Miss Jeazel S. Tomas
Librarian, University of the Cordilleras
Baguio City, Benguet, Philippines
Email: jiizeltomas@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Access is the primary concern of a library thus information retrieval tool like an abstract is as important as the Online Public Access Catalog. Abstracting then plays an important role in improving access to information that is needed by library users. Librarians then perform this task primarily to guide the users in deciding whether an information resource will be consulted or not. The study utilized the descriptive method of research using a survey questionnaire to determine the level of knowledge and practices on the parts and types of abstracts and the challenges on abstracts a document surrogate encountered by library practitioners in selected parts of Northern Luzon, Philippines. The study found out that the library practitioners exhibited a high knowledge and practice on abstracting which can be attributed to their undergraduate studies specifically in the core major subject, indexing and abstracting. However, they enumerated challenges such as: 1) lack of time to carry out their abstracting function; 2) lack of policies and procedures in abstracting; 3) lack of manpower to do the job; 4) lack of motivation to perform the task; and 5) abstract is not a concern of most faculty and students. On the other hand, abstracts continue to be useful to the academic and research community and that library practitioners must find time to create or innovate ways of abstracting important documents useful to their users.

Keywords: abstracting, access to information, document surrogates, information retrieval tools, library research tools, research needs

Introduction

Access is a primary concern of any library and information center. Without access, library users will experience a feeling of disgust or dislike towards the library as well as the librarians. Through information retrieval tools like abstract which is an integral part of library services provides a way to pinpoint the needed information or document. An abstract is a library and information science tool designed to present important ideas, facts, or findings in a document, technical or research paper. It is a brief and accurate representation of the original document to further improve access to information. Librarians perform this task primarily to help the users in selecting information resources, facilitate literature searching, promote current awareness, overcome a language barrier, aid in compiling tools such as indexes, bibliographies, and reviews, and save the time of the library users whether an information resource will be consulted or not (Buenrostro, 2018).

As early as the Alexandrian times, many documents and works were abstracted and this era found the usefulness of abstracts on the part of the readers (Witty, 1973). The purpose of an abstract is to provide the reader with all the essential information, like the nature and purpose of the work, new approach, novel findings, results, and conclusions, to enable the reader to decide whether or not to consult the original document. They are carefully written to convey important information to the reader in a concise but precise manner. However, this requires knowledge of the reader's needs, habits, and desires; ability to identify the key facts in the documents; ability to organize these facts and present them in the order best suited to the reader; and the ability to write the abstract clearly and concisely (Pinto & Lancaster, 1999).

The accuracy of an abstract depends on the knowledge and competency of the abstractor. Accuracy then refers to the extent to which the abstract correctly represents the original text. If errors occur, it could be attributed to the ability of the abstractor, that is, the ability to transcribe correctly. Once the abstract has been printed and distributed, it would

be impossible to determine whether errors are attributed to the abstractor or printing press. The readability of an abstract can be determined by the ability of the abstractor to convey clearly, concisely, and unambiguously the content of the article (Pinto & Lancaster, 1999).

A complete abstract is composed of three parts, namely: 1) the bibliographic reference is the lead-in tool that directs the readers to the original document wherein there are various formats to follow which likely depends on the publisher's standards; 2) the abstract proper which consists of the objectives of the study, methodology, findings, conclusions, and recommendations; and 3) the signature to give credit, responsibility, and authority to the abstractor.   The provision of descriptors is an optional portion wherein the abstractor assigned keywords or index terms to describe the topic of the document (Buenrostro, 2018).

Literature Cited

Abstracting is the act of preparing a concise but accurate representation of the original document aimed to present its main ideas or findings.   It is one of the various functions of librarians and one of the most useful services of the library.   Its main essence is to give a concise description of a particular document for quick reference and easy retrieval (Akinwumi, 2010).   According to Buenrostro (2018), abstracts facilitate selection, guides the reader in deciding whether an item will be consulted or not, and gives valuable information on the contents of the document that prevent the customer from getting articles that have no relevance to his needs.

The abstract proper as described in many books have major parts depending on the type of abstract and the abstracting entity.   The informative abstract summarizes the substance of the document including the results or specific data.   This abstract is useful for scientific researches and experimental investigations as it contains actual data and main ideas.   It acts as a surrogate for the work itself because it presents and explains all the

important results in the paper.   The reader may not retrieve the original document since informative abstracts already contain the essential points on the objectives of the study, methodology, findings, and conclusions; and it is usually written in no more than 300 words in length.   On the other hand, indicative abstracts are a short and simple description of what the document giving only the essential information.   This indicates the type of information found in the work without judgment, evaluation, and results or conclusions of the research. It only provides keywords found in the text and may include the purpose, methods, and scope of the research.   Thus, it gives the only outline of the work, rather than a summary which is usually very short containing 100 words or less (Buenrostro, 2018).

An indicative-informative abstract is a combination of both types of abstracts.   The important parts are written informatively, and other not-so-important parts are written indicatively.   Some of the aspects which can be presented indicatively are the structure, content, and some specific types of information; while informative part of the abstracts depends on the interests of the reader and the abstractor to determine these topics and expands them (Saggion & Lapalme, 2006).

The critical abstract is distinct in the sense that the article is being critiqued or evaluated by the abstractor.   It is usually done by the experts of the subject because he has sufficient knowledge and can give quality judgment.   This provides the limitations of the study's validity, reliability, or completeness; compares with various documents on the same topic; and the positive and constructive comments of the abstractor.

Few related studies were conducted on the level of knowledge and practices of library professionals on abstracting.   In the article by Tate and Wood (1968), they stated that there was a time in the early 1900s when abstracting and indexing efforts were mainly carried out by librarians.   However, A&I services went on the picture because of the rapid development and publishing of documents, especially in the scientific and technical journal

publications. Thus, librarians have no time to read and libraries lack the manpower to perform the task, and so abstracting became a function of the secondary publication profession or the so-called A&I services. Traditionally, various types of abstracts are categorized in different ways such as by the method it is written, its uses, or the people who created the abstracts. However, this study dwelled on the types of abstracts based on the way they are written namely: indicative, informative, indicative-informative, and critical abstracts.

In an interview with some librarians, they mentioned that they no longer perform abstracting, even if they know how to carry out confidently the task. Moreover, they reasoned out that abstracting is not a priority because they lack the manpower to do the task. Also, there is a demand for library professionals and practitioners in the country. Thus, the study aimed to determine the level of knowledge, practices, and challenges on abstracting encountered by the library practitioners in Nueva Vizcaya, Baguio City, and Benguet in Northern Luzon, Philippines. Specifically, it sought to answer the following: 1) What is the level of knowledge and practices of librarians on abstracting?; and 2) What are the challenges encountered by librarians in performing abstracting?

Methodology

The study utilized the descriptive method of research to determine the level of knowledge, practices, and the challenges on abstracting encountered by library practitioners in selected parts of Northern Luzon, Philippines. It made use of a survey questionnaire composed of four parts, namely: 1) profile of the respondents; 2) the level of knowledge of library practitioners on abstracting; 3) the level of abstracting practices; and 4) the challenges encountered in performing abstracting in the library. Data were gathered from 40 library practitioners from Nueva Vizcaya, Baguio City, and Benguet through the use of a researcher-made questionnaire. Descriptive statistics like frequency count, rank, mean and

standard deviation were used to describe the data gathered in the second semester of the academic year 2018-2019.   Data downloaded from Google Forms were tallied, classified, and tabulated for analysis and interpretation.   Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Female	34	85
Male	6	15
Years of Practice		
1-5	31	77.5
6-10	4	10
11-15	1	2.5
16-20	1	2.5
21-25	1	2.5
26 and above	2	5
Type of Library		
Academic	27	67.5
School	9	22.5
Public	1	2.5
Special	3	7.5
Total	40	100

Results and Discussions

Level of Knowledge on Abstracting of Library Practitioners

     Knowledge of Parts of Abstracts. An abstract is typically descriptive in nature wherein it describes the background, problems, methodology, findings, and conclusions in a document.   In research, it is a summary of the article, thesis, conference proceeding, or technical paper intended to aid the reader ascertain its use in the study being conducted. It helps users determine the content and quality of the information (Farmer, 2014, p.58-59).

Table 2: Level of Knowledge on the Parts of Abstracts

Parts of Abstracts	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
1. Identifying purpose	3.28	0.68	High Knowledge
2. Determining the problem statement	3.34	0.59	High Knowledge
3. Recognizing the methodology	3.20	0.65	High Knowledge
4. Distinguishing the results and findings	3.25	0.67	High Knowledge
5. Knowing the implications	3.03	0.62	High Knowledge
6. Discerning the conclusions	3.18	0.68	High Knowledge
7. Ascertaining the recommendations	3.15	0.70	High Knowledge
Mean Average	3.21	0.61	High Knowledge

Legend: 3.5 – 4.0 Very High Knowledge;   2.5 – 3.49   High Knowledge;   1.5 – 2.49   Low Knowledge;   1.0 – 1.49   Very Low Knowledge

The overall level of knowledge of library practitioners on the different parts of abstracts is "high" as shown in Table 2.   It is interesting also to note that item on determining the problem statement of abstracts has the highest mean, followed by identifying the purpose of abstracts.   This means that they are equipped with working knowledge regardless of what library schools they graduated from where they learned the basics of abstracting.   Library schools in the Philippines prepared their students in abstracting because it is one of the core major subjects in the Librarians Licensure Examination.   This finding agreed with the idea of Cleveland & Cleveland (2001) that abstractors must: 1) identify the purpose and the problem statement of the document; 2) recognize the methodology; and 3) distinguish the results and findings.   The library practitioners as the mediator between the collection information and the users should be an expert on the different parts of abstracts to carry out quality library services.

Knowledge of the Types of Abstracts.   Abstracts vary in some respects, and so they may be categorized differently and maybe in the form of informative that is intended to give sufficient information as a replacement for the original, or indicative that is giving just enough information for a reader to decide whether the item is of interest (Bawden & Robinson, 2012, p.122-123).

Table 3. Level of Knowledge on Types of Abstracts

Types of Abstracts	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
1. Indicative abstract	3.08	0.83	High Knowledge
2. Informative abstract	3.13	0.72	High Knowledge
3. Indicative-Informative abstract	3.03	0.80	High Knowledge
4. Critical abstract	2.65	0.95	High Knowledge
Mean Average	2.97	0.78	High Knowledge

Legend: 3.5 – 4.0 Very High Knowledge;   2.5 – 3.49 High Knowledge;   1.5 – 2.49   Low Knowledge;   1.0 – 1.49 Very Low Knowledge

Table 3 revealed that the level of knowledge of library practitioners on the different types of abstracts is "high".   Informative abstract has the highest meanwhile critical abstract has the lowest.   This suggests that they are used to such types of materials in the library which is part of the library and information science curriculum in the Philippines.   It also implies that informative abstracts are usually used by the academic and research community which is needed to provide information for their research project.   Seemingly, informative abstracts are very important to researchers for it provides a summary of completed research.   This is because abstracts provide concise descriptions of published items suitable for inclusion in printed indexing services or in scholarly journals along with the articles to which they relate.   The finding corroborates the study of Lanzuela et al (2018) that the library and information science graduates had high academic performance in abstracting, thus they have high knowledge in abstracting.

Knowledge of the Types of Document Surrogates.   Document surrogates also refer to as "abstracts," "summaries," or some other term, have proved extremely useful in a wide variety of information processing applications for many years.   The increasing application of computers to text processing has not reduced their value and one has no reason to suppose that their value diminishes as more critical or sophisticated operations, including those of knowledge discovery, are applied to the text (Pinto & Lancaster, 1999).

Table 4. Level of Knowledge on Types of Document Surrogates

Types of Document Surrogates	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
1. Summary	3.15	0.70	High Knowledge
2. Extract	2.98	0.77	High Knowledge
3. Annotation	2.90	0.71	High Knowledge
4. Terse literature	2.50	0.68	High Knowledge
5. Abridgement	2.68	0.73	High Knowledge
6. Synopsis	2.78	0.77	High Knowledge
Mean Average	2.83	0.67	High Knowledge

Legend: 3.5 – 4.0 Very High Knowledge;   2.5 – 3.49 High Knowledge;   1.5 – 2.49 Low Knowledge;   1.0 – 1.49 Very Low Knowledge

As revealed on the table, the library practitioners generally have a high level of knowledge on types of document surrogates.   Of the six types of document surrogates specified in this study, it is noteworthy to mention that "summary" has the highest meanwhile "synopsis" has the lowest mean.   The librarians are very much knowledgeable with former but not much on the latter.   This implies that they have the technical know-how on abstracting regardless of library schools they earned their bachelor's degree in library and information science be it in the old or new curriculum.   According to Bawden and Robinson (2012, p.122), abstracts "have been used as a means of keeping up with the scientific, medical, and professional literature".   This must be the reason why abstracting is an interesting task of library practitioners for it nurtures technical knowledge in presenting the main ideas or findings of a research paper.

Summary on the Level of Knowledge on Abstracting. Abstracting information is considered a basic competency in today's knowledge society. It is not an easy task and requires a specific learning process.   The necessary competencies and skills are identified such as analyzing in detail the various stages and processes involved in writing an abstract (Pinto, Doucet & Fernandez-Ramos (2008).   The qualities of a good abstract include well-developed paragraphs that are unified, coherent, concise, and able to stand alone.   It presents the article, paper, or report's purpose, methodology, results, and conclusions in that order.

Table 5. Summary on the Level of Knowledge on Abstracting

Level of Knowledge on Abstracting	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
Parts of Abstracts	3.21	0.61	High Knowledge
Types of Abstracts	2.97	0.78	High Knowledge
Types of Document Surrogates	2.83	0.67	High Knowledge
Mean Average	3.00	0.67	High Knowledge

Legend: 3.5 – 4.0 Very High Knowledge;   2.5 – 3.49 High Knowledge;   1.5 – 2.49 Low Knowledge;   1.0 – 1.49 Very Low Knowledge

Overall, the level of knowledge of library practitioners on abstracting is "high".   This implies that they possessed the competencies, skills, and ability to perform abstracting regardless of schools they earned their bachelor's degree in library and information science or the curriculum.   Among the three domains of abstracts, the library practitioners are more knowledgeable on the parts rather than the types of abstracts nor the types of document surrogates.

Level of Practice on Abstracting by Library Practitioners

Performing the Different the Parts of Abstracting.   "Library practice explicitly and library values implicitly have undergone a significant metamorphosis over the history of libraries and librarians" (Koehler, 2015, p. 17).   The writing of abstracts is regarded as an area of interest to information science wherein some publishers are requiring statements of implications for practice in the abstracts of research articles (Bawden & Robinson, 2012).

Table 6. Level of Practice on the Different Parts of Abstracts

Parts of Abstract	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
1. Identifying purpose	2.80	0.97	High Practice
2. Determining the problem statement	2.78	0.95	High Practice
3. Recognizing the methodology	2.83	0.93	High Practice
4. Distinguishing the results and findings	2.78	0.95	High Practice
5. Knowing the implications	2.80	0.97	High Practice
6. Discerning the conclusions	2.78	0.95	High Practice
7. Ascertaining the recommendations	2.68	0.89	High Practice
Mean Average	2.78	0.92	High Practice

Legend: 3.5 – 4.0 Very High Practice   2.5 – 3.49 High Practice;   1.5 – 2.49 Low Practice;   1.0 – 1.49 Very Low Practice

All activities in making an abstract were found to be a "high practice". It is noteworthy to mention that "*recognizing the methodology*" has the highest mean while *ascertaining the recommendations* has the lowest. This suggests that the library practitioners have high regard on the different parts of abstracts for it allows readers who may be interested in a longer work to quickly decide whether it is worth their time to read; and also abstracts contain keywords and phrases that allow for easy searching of information. However, the practice of writing the parts depends largely on the journal publisher's structure of abstracting research articles. It is also is attributed to the varying disciplines and the different roles of journals in professional societies and cultural differences in perceptions regarding the role of abstracts (Šauperl, Jamar, Němečková, Veselá & Dobrovolny, 2013).

Majority of the respondents are young who are in the category of the millennial group. This may imply that because most of them are considered a new breed of librarians wherein the lessons taught from their bachelor's degrees are still strongly in effect and that shows the high knowledge on abstracting.

Practicing Different Types of Abstracts. An abstract is a self-contained, short, and powerful statement that describes a larger work. It is "a brief but accurate representation of the contents of a document" (Lancaster, 2003 as cited in Bawden & Robinson, 2012, p.121). Components vary according to discipline. An abstract of social science or scientific work may contain the scope, purpose, results, and contents of the work. For an abstract of a humanities work, it may contain the thesis, background, and conclusion of the larger work. However, an abstract is not a review, nor does it evaluate the work being abstracted. While it contains keywords found in the larger work, the abstract is an original document rather than an excerpted passage.

Table 7. Level of Practice on the different Types of Abstracts

Types of Abstracts	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
1. Indicative abstract	2.68	0.97	High Practice
2. Informative abstract	2.80	0.88	High Practice
3. Indicative-Informative abstract	2.55	0.85	High Practice
4. Critical abstract	2.33	0.94	Low Practice
Average	2.59	0.87	High Practice

Legend: 3.5 – 4.0 Very High Practice   2.5 – 3.49 High Practice;   1.5 – 2.49 Low Practice;   1.0 – 1.49 Very Low Practice

When asked about their level of practice on the types of abstracts, the library practitioners were highly practicing informative abstracts, followed by indicative abstract and indicative-informative abstract.   This confirmed the result on their level of knowledge with the same order of ranking.   It was noted that critical abstract showed a different result having the lowest mean which was interpreted as low practice.   Overall, the practice of library practitioners on the types of abstracts is high.

Executing the Different Types of Document Surrogates.   According to Borko and Bernier (1975), without surrogates, such as abstracts, search through the accumulated literature would be impossible.   They mentioned the following uses of abstract: 1) promotes current awareness keep up with the literature of one's field of specialization; 2) saves time in reading; 3) facilitate selections; 4) helps overcome the language barrier; 5) facilitates literature searches; 6) improves indexing efficiency; and 7) aids in the preparation of reviews.

Table 8. Level of Practice on Different Types of Document Surrogates

Types of Document Surrogates	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
1. Summary	2.88	0.94	High Practice
2. Extract	2.63	0.93	High Practice
3. Annotation	2.50	0.88	High Practice
4. Terse literature	2.18	0.71	Low Practice
5. Abridgement	2.30	0.79	Low Practice
6. Synopsis	2.53	0.99	High Practice
Average	2.50	0.83	High Practice

Legend: 3.5 – 4.0 Very High Practice   2.5 – 3.49 High Practice;   1.5 – 2.49 Low Practice;   1.0 – 1.49 Very Low Practice

Library practitioners revealed that their practice on document surrogates is remarkably is "high".   Looking deeper, the summary, extract, synopsis, and annotation was rated as "high practice" while abridgement and terse literature were found to be "low practice".   This shows that summary, extract, synopsis, and annotation are the common document surrogates a librarian usually do, unlike the on abridgement, and terse literature.

Summary of the Level of Practice on Abstracting. The history of abstracting dated back to antiquity, abstracting practices are placed under the scrutiny of scientific methods but remains as an art than a science.   Researchers are more interested in the content analysis of documents or articles wherein it is scattered throughout varied information resources and formats.   The crafted information from abstracts is needed in the making of the theoretical and conceptual framework, relevant literature and studies, and support to research findings.

Table 9. Summary on the Level of Practice on Abstracting

Level of Practice on Abstracting	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
Parts of Abstracts	2.78	0.92	High Practice
Types of Abstracts	2.59	0.87	High Practice
Types of Document Surrogates	2.50	0.83	High Practice
Overall	2.62	0.87	High Practice

Legend: 3.5 – 4.0 Very High Practice   2.5 – 3.49 High Practice;   1.5 – 2.49 Low Practice;   1.0 – 1.49 Very Low Practice

Table 9 revealed that the overall level of practice of librarians on abstracting is high. The pattern on the level of knowledge of library practitioners has the same pattern on the level of practice, that is, parts of abstracts, types of abstracts, and types of document surrogates.   The high practice of librarians on the parts and types of abstracts is apparent because of their knowledge accumulated from their college years in the study of librarianship where indexing and abstracting is one of the major areas or subjects of this

field.   Connected to this subject are the document surrogates.   As to the practice of abstracting, the library practitioners are regarded as highly performing on both abstracts and document surrogates.   This implies that abstracting is still relevant to the practice of librarianship even in the time of changing information technology.   However, Pinto (2003), disagreed with this because she stated that information technology reduces the effectiveness of traditional abstracts.

Challenges in Abstracting

Undeniably, there are challenges in the practice of abstracting. Library practitioners are not exempted from experiencing such challenges in performing their tasks.   They may have a deeper knowledge and understanding of the concepts, principles, and theories of abstracting but some limitations will impede them to perform the task.

Table 10. The Challenges of Library Practitioners in Abstracting

Challenges encountered in abstracting	Frequency	%	Rank
1. No time to read the whole document	29	72.5	1.5
2. The production cost of the abstract is expensive	8	20	9
3. Lack of manpower to perform the task	26	65	3
4. Lack of devices/ equipment used for abstracting	13	32.5	7.5
5. Lack of policies and procedures in doing abstract	29	72.5	1.5
6. Inability to make different types of abstracts	13	32.5	7.5
7. Inability to make different types of document surrogates	17	42.5	6
8. Unable to identify the parts of abstracts	4	10	10
9. Lack of motivation to perform the task	25	62.5	4
10. Not needed by the faculty and students	24	60	5
Others: "Not included in my current library assignment"	1	2.5	11

The top five challenges are: 1) no time to read the whole document; 2) lack of policies and procedures in doing abstract; 3) lack of manpower to perform the task of abstracting; 4) lack of motivation to perform the task; and 5) not needed by faculty and students.   Seemingly, the abstracting as a task is both on the professional and personal issues and concerns of library practitioners.   Thus, there is still room for improvements in

the knowledge and practice of abstracting; and library practitioners need to be proactive to address the challenges posed in the findings.

Because of emerging technologies, the structure, form, and content of documents are affected which reduces the usefulness of traditional abstracts (Pinto, 2003). For this reason, some are considering abstracts as not needed anymore. Ironically, this is also a reason to advance abstracting more for the discovery of knowledge, broadening of information, and documentation of the intellectual property.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The library practitioners exhibited high knowledge and practice on abstracting which can be attributed from their undergraduate studies specifically in the course subject, indexing, and abstracting. However, library practitioners enumerated their personal and professional issues and concerns on abstracting function such as: 1) no time to carry out the abstracting task; 2) lack of policies and procedures in abstracting; 3) no manpower to do the job; 4) lack motivation; and 5) abstract is needed by faculty and students.

It cannot be denied that abstracts continue to proliferate in the field of library and information science. The very reason is to provide the reader with all the essential information such as the nature and purpose of the work, new approach, novel findings, results and conclusions to enable them to decide whether or not to consult the original document, and to include as part of their related literature and studies. The ultimate purpose if they are carefully written is to transmit important information to the reader in a concise but precise manner. To be able to do this, it requires knowledge on the parts and types of abstract and document surrogates, ability to identify the key facts in the documents, skill to organize these facts and present them in the order best suited to the reader, and the capability to write the abstract clearly and concisely.

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