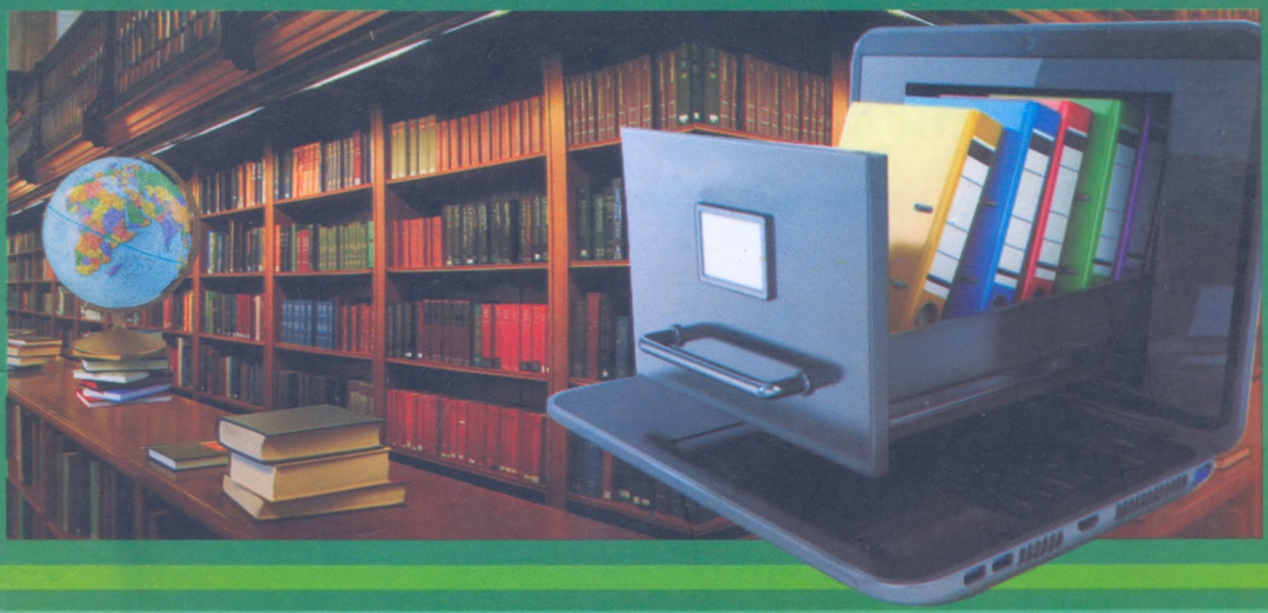
GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES IN CONTEMPORARY ERA



COMPENDIUM OF PAPERS PRESENTED AT THE 1ST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AND HOME COMING OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA.

25TH – 30TH JUNE, 2017

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Compendium of Papers Presented at the 1st International Conference and Home coming of the Department of Library and Information Science University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

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DATE: 25TH – 30TH JUNE, 2017

Venue: Princess Alexandria Auditorium
University of Nigeria, Nsukka

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Ethical Principles and Theoretical Approaches: Imperatives for Attaining Best Library Services in Nigeria

By
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Abstract

The paper examines the effect of librarians changing environments and how it can be influenced by the application of ethical principles and theories to attain effective and efficient service delivery. This is necessitated to attune librarians to contemporary issues affecting decision making and the persisting ridiculing of the profession by inconsistent and unjustified actions. The paper admits that librarian's working environment will continue to change, and that best practices are relative (situational, the environment induced and the client determine), but very attainable. It is recommended that librarians maintain their supervisory and facilitation roles to ease accessibility, retrieval and storing of information resources to satisfy and conform to clients changing information needs and behaviours. It addition, encourages librarians to engage themselves in self-learning, attending numerous capacity building trainings on ethical concerns to enhance sound judgments, awareness of ethical dimensions and the changing client knowledge quest.

Keywords: Dilemma, environment, library, principle, ethics, Nigeria

Introduction

The 21st Century has revolutionized individuals, daily transactions, environment, and application of technologies (academics, business, economy, etc). The commodity of exchange is information; simply put, this emphasized that information is now an economic commodity that influences other commodities and describes their composition so much so that the strength and weakness of a firm is adjudged by having and lacking requisite information for decision making. This exceptional characteristic of information has also increased pressure on professionals, especially librarians, archivist, database managers, documentalist and publishers whose responsibilities of harnessing, organization, storing and making information accessible is fast expanding beyond the aforementioned.

Additionally, they are required to also educate, sensitize, facilitate, guide and support the right use of information resources. These tasks clearly shows that librarians will face a lot of challenges, and not immune to errors would affect the ways they discharge their responsibilities; some they can control, others far beyond them. For instance, in the quest to moderate use and access to information resources and services care must be taken so as not to infringe on rights and privileges of others, trust, privacy and respect of opinion (Jassin and Schecter, 1998; Fishman and Gima, 2000; Moahi, 2002).

Other areas of concerns is the explosion of information whose carriers, sources, resources and formats are too numerous to easily track. The issues of very intelligent clients, discrete, outpouring, technological savvy and very swift clients makes librarians grasping for breath as they try to catch up with these categories as well as corresponding technologies. Clearly these affect the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery and coordinating capability of the environment and interrelating contemporary factors. Today, research in library and information science has shifted from technical aspects to issues of intellectual property, user privacy and serving the socially excluded (Sturges, 2009). Conceptually, ethics is defined as "...a study of the principles of right and wrong that ought to guide human conduct". It is a major branch of philosophy, covering the analysis and employment of concepts such as right, wrong, good, evil and responsibility (Zwass, 2012).

Numerous authors proposes the application of moral, legal and professional guidance as measures to address the problems hindering best practices, worry is that, what is accepted as best practice in one environment may not be so in another, it is clear that ethical principles and ethical theories are alternatives to understudy as well as apply to remedy these deficiencies caused by possibly the multiplicity of emerging consequences from clients and technology as well as resolving the old issues of transparency, censorship and confidentiality which are now taking new forms as the world focus is on the quest to attain the universal services which premises on access to information by all (Garoogian, 1991; Hauptman, 1991; Aina, 2002; Omoba and Omoba, 2009). Describing this important leap, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) (2012) asserts that librarianship is now more of an ethical activity with value-rich approach to professionalism and working with information.

Library best practices aimed at improving communication, inclusion of stakeholders in

decision making, offering the opportunity to expression and plurality to enhance good library-client relationship and interaction but not sacrificing the essence of the library objectives. Numerous studies share the necessity for reporting issues centered on ethical experiences, thereby urging sharing peculiarities and resolutions (Fuchs, 2011, IFLA, 2012). Earlier study by McGraw (2004) revealed that ethics are context specific, that is, what may be of ethical concern in one society may not be in others. The urge to be familiar with the environment was better described in the words of Matingwina (2015) that "no librarian can give what is illusive" because as library and information science professionals of the 21st century awareness of the growing complexity in legal and ethical issues and values manifested through the relationship between professional duties and society is sacrosanct. IFLA (2012) affirmation this earlier by clearly stating that librarians have a social responsibility to ensure that services delivered are as such in the interest of social, cultural and economic well-being. The discourse is no doubt multi-facet therefore the scope is restricted to the role of librarianship versus the embedding of technologies to effectively and efficiently delivery services.

Librarianship versus Embedding Technologies

Emerging technologies bring new challenges for today's librarians and affects information transfer, teaching, research and learning. The Internet and availability of computers and digitizing equipment provide ready access to great reservoirs of information and knowledge so much so that it is best described as "enabling travelling great distances, quickly with no trail" (Yang, Tzuo, Higgins and Tan, 2012). This could be traumatizing librarians who lag behind, especially as naturally they are teachers and bridge builders to access, organize, store and retrieval of information and ensuring that gaps blamed for the wrong use of information are corrected. This implies that educational roles played by librarians as they facilitate and support others in their information quest have unveiled and streamline the challenges caused by ignorance of not just the physical environment but also the virtual and intellectual environments where information resources reside.

Despite the nature of literary laws, librarians are always working hard to interpret and guide through the storm by interpreting the laws that are confusing, ambiguous and unclear to library clients. The tasks to educate different clients with diversified interest and information needs almost simultaneously with different backgrounds and exposure will no doubt continue to affect the capabilities of librarians' effectiveness and efficiencies in the

work environment. They are by this susceptible to mistakes. The call to embed librarianship with technologies must start with curriculum of library schools which are the foundation and essential building blocks of librarianship that must be attuned to the use of corresponding technologies, become familiar and function effectively and efficiently within the technological environments.

Factors Influencing Librarians' Dilemmas

The quest to satisfy information needs of patrons within short time has instilled in librarians the sense of social responsibility and by so doing made them vulnerable to challenges (Daudu and Kasa, 2014). The significance of the librarian's dilemma is characterized by dispositions of client's information needs and constants changing nature of information sources. Both factors significantly affect effective dissemination of information as well. No single or groups of factors can exhaustively elaborate what solely influences librarians' dilemma because it is not very discrete from the responsibilities they performed. These challenges made Du Mont (1991) to propose a model with four stages to elaborate the multi-dimensional consequences influences of librarian dilemmas. The model illustrates the extent librarian's underwent to satisfy social responsibilities. Stage one presents librarians as being responsible for the library's collection development; stage two dwells on adding responsibility for employees; stage three presents librarians as being responsible to users' needs and stage four expands responsibilities to society generally. These stages represent relativity and levels of involvement which when well- coordinated may attain what could be termed best practices. Best practice from the inferences of numerous submissions and particularly by the fore mentioned author could be defined as the extent or to whom a librarian belief he is responsible. Typically, all the stages carry an increasing level of discretion.

Tasks for librarians according to Trevino (1986) is either follow self-chosen ethical principles regardless of majority opinions or upholding values and rights that have been well articulated and documented to attain a common good. Pearce and Robinson (1989) posited that the values held by an individual, group or societies are the basic components of an ethical system; the systems are affected by uncertainty, a constant and facts of the complex components required for organizational life's dynamism as is experienced in libraries today. They concluded that ethical standards are not universally accepted but rather they are the end product of discretionary decision made at the expense of behaviours, lives and well-

being of others.

The application of standard (ethics) in librarianship is for moral standards and to clarify its obligations, ensuring that all patrons and the information resources are accorded the desired concern. For instance, statistical data collected for five years in a special library (2006 – 2010) showed patronage to rise during examination and mid-semesters assignments in an agricultural faculty (Anonymous, 2011). At that peak period, the librarians' attention is highly engaged, the large turn up of customers and inquiries takes a toll on them, thereafter affecting them psychologically, frustrating and leading to failure to adhere to library ethics. Routines affected include inability of the librarians themselves to access and retrieve information resources demanded which are either miss shelved or hidden by clients, poor supervisory roles caused by high traffic, inconsistencies to appropriately charging and discharging resources because of volumes and security laxities.

Du Mont (1991) argued that, the ethical dimension of librarianship represents a generalized concerned for the improvement of quality of library service and professional conduct, therefore, ethical behaviour in librarianship does not mean that one should take no action or avoid certain actions as an idea to keep out of trouble. Because it is contradictory by subjectivity, and therefore, the notion of ethics suggests that librarians take actions that are socially just and to the best of his/her capabilities. This means that they cannot choose not to choose, to play it safe with services and collections but always exercise ethical judgment in their duties by demonstrating the highest standards of ethical decisions that could inspire confidence and respect in the information arena.

The Dynamics of ICT Use and its Effects on Library Best Practices

The use of ICT for acquisition, processing, storage and retrieval of information has tremendously transformed and affected space, time and modes of information transmission (Graves and Wulff, 1990; Mahajan and Chakravarty, 2007). Currently, ICT has been able to generate enormous information resources, clients are most desirous and difficult to satisfy, they also very anxious and confuse. Other areas that ICT influences library role of disseminating information include facilitating distance education, access to patented and non-patented resources and removing geographical barriers and physical presence within the walls of a library to be served. Significantly, hosting of information has becomes virtually very cheap, sometimes indiscriminately done without trace, greatly

negating the efforts to overcome literary theft and other crimes. The dynamics of ICT use have the good, the bad and ugly sides on the performance of librarians.

Worrisome are the disparities among librarians and the ICTs experts perceptions on resolving the vulnerability of patented resources, the librarians are insisting on free access but the ICT experts are on censorship and encrypting the resources. The submissions by librarians enshrine and weighted on the scale of satisfying information needs whereas those of the ICT experts are on safeguarding the resources from unauthorized access, librarians sees the continuing of man on building from previous works and dully acknowledgment as against the expert whose emphasis is on novelty.

The constant change of information and communication technology gadgets is welcomed. But, it is significant that librarians work with caution not to be incapacitated by the changes and chasing shadows (neither here nor there) when it comes to competence. They must remain resolute in resonating their quest for support and facilitating access to satisfy information needs either as digital citizens or immigrants. Prensky (2001) referred "digital natives" to those born into the high-tech digital ages and surrounded by computers, internet, online social network, cell phones, and video games. They think and process information differently compared with "digital immigrants", who learn to use and cope with the advances of technology in the midst of their career (Prensky, 2001; Yang et al., 2012). The dynamics affects librarians the most especially that most of the library services still exist and operate in the traditional corridors and still speak an outdated language (that of the pre-digital age) (Prensky, 2001; Yang et al., 2012). The generation gap between "digital native" and "digital immigrant" can be manifested in roles of teachers and students interaction, subsequent engagement in teaching and learning and whether the needs of "digital natives" can be met by "digital immigrants" (Yang et al., 2012).

Modeling ICT skills in the preparatory program of librarianship is no longer by choice but compulsory by design. According to Schofield (1995) integrating technology in teaching and learning has positive influences on students' motivation, attitudes, achievement, and peer interactions. Failure to doing so may result in technology anxiety. Therefore, to promote the use of technology in curriculum and instruction, library schools must model the appropriate use of technology in content instruction. So that it sync with Confucius' famous saying, "I hear and I forgot, I see and I remember, I do and I understand" (Yang et al., 2012).

This no doubt could attune librarianship to higher order thinking and adapt to any environment. According to Biggs (2003) become capable of viewing, having ability to compare, explain, contrast, analyse, apply, theorize, generalize, hypothesize and reflect on what is solution and implication on social responsibility.

Application of the Principles and Ethical Theories to Achieve Library Best Practices

Knowledge of ethical principles and corresponding theories aimed at providing leveraging position, positive outcome and well-articulated judgment to resolve dilemmas in the discharge of library services. There are numerous principles and ethical theories on information, but among, the popular principles comprise of Beneficence, least harm, respect for autonomy and Justice. Corresponding theories that are popular include Deontology, Utilitarianism, Rights, Casuist and Virtue. Both principles and theories hinges on peculiar ethical concerns and scope, corresponding strength and weaknesses. Importantly is that they influence ethical analysis because of the different views they share to arrive at decisions. Particularly, the points they share are predictive of an outcome in order to reach an ethically correct and acceptable decision.

The application of principles and ethical theories must be aimed to achieve a common goal which is embodied in the ethical principles which each theory tries to achieve. For instance, the principle of beneficence stipulates that ethical theories should strive to achieve the greatest amount of good that benefit most of the people. This principle guides ethical theory to do what is good. The priority to do good makes an ethical perspective and possible solution to an ethical dilemma acceptable (Penslar, 1995; Ridley, 1998). The least harm deals with situations in which neither choice is beneficial but, a person should choose to do the least harm possible and to do harm to the fewest people.

The principle on respect for autonomy states that people should be allowed to reign over themselves, to be able to make decisions that apply to their lives. The principles insist that ethical theory should allow people have control over their lives because they are responsible and completely understand their chosen type of lifestyle. The ethical principle is an extension of principle of beneficence because a person who is independent usually prefers to have control over his life experience in order to obtain the lifestyle that he enjoys (Ridley, 1998). Justice ethical principle states that actions must be prescribe in such a manner that are fair to those involved. It must however be consistent unless extenuating

circumstances justifiable exist. This means that cases with extenuating circumstances must contain a significant and vital difference from similar cases that justify the inconsistent logical basis that supports the decisions (Ridley, 1998).

Ethical theories emphasize different aspects of ethical dilemma and lead to the most ethically correct resolution according to the guidelines within the ethical theory itself (Rainbow, 2002). People usually base their individual choice of ethical theory upon their life experiences (Penslar, 1995; Ridley, 1998). For instance deontology theory states that people should adhere to their obligations and duties when analyzing an ethical dilemma. Deontologist always keep promises and follow the law and rely on the law when analyzing ethical dilemma; they produce very consistent decisions as it is based on the assigned duties. It flaws is that there is no rationale or logical basis for deciding and individual's duties (Penslar, 1995; Ridley, 1998).

Utilitariansim ethical theory is founded on the ability to predict the consequences of an action; therefore, the choice that produced the greatest benefits is the choice that is ethically correct. This theorist can compare similar predicted solutions and use a point system to determine which choice is most beneficial. It is however, very uncertain because it can lead to unexpected results and cannot predict intangible gains. The right ethical theory insists that the rights set forth by a society are protected and given the highest priority because large or ruling population endorses them. It application is relative and decided upon what society's goals and ethical priorities are. The Casuist ethical theory is one that compared a current ethical dilemma with examples of similar ethical dilemmas and their outcomes. The objective of this theory is to determine the severity of the situation and to create the best possible solution according to others experiences. Its drawback is that when there is no set of similar examples could hinder the effectiveness of applying this ethical theory (Ridley, 1998, Rainbow, 2002). The virtue ethical theory judges the character of a client rather than actions causing the deviation from the client's normal behavior. It takes into account client's morals, reputation and motivation when rating an unusual and irregular behavior considered unethical. It flaws is that it does not take into consideration a person's change in moral character.

The implications of both the principles and ethical theories is that they bring significant characteristics to the decision making process, individually are not exhaustive because

each falls short with complex flaws and failing (Penslar, 1995; Ridley, 1998; Rainbow, 2002). They are better used in combination to obtain the most ethically correct answer possible for each scenario. This shows that since best practices are product of behaviour, a framework that emphasize on behavioural tendencies could be used to explain the application of the principles and ethical theories in a dynamic environment like the library which craves for best practices. The Hellriegel and Slocum (1992) proposed four dimension ethical framework to guide librarians' intentions to attain best practices. It selection among many is informed of the fact that the proposed framework has proven that behaviour influenced individual perception, organizational view, societal definitions and legal interpretations.

a) **Individual perception: -** Despite prevailing societal, legal and organizational interpretations of what are ethical, individuals have their own values and sense of what is right and wrong. All these factors mould ethical behaviour. Education and sensitization of librarians on the adverse effect of ill behavior on their job could be emphasized so that they act according to goals and objectives of the profession.

b) **Organisational views: -** Libraries belongs to a parent body, they must work within the confine of the mandate of the organization, therefore, librarians must adhere to what the organization accepted as ethical or unethical through directives - memos, policy statements, speeches, publications, and most importantly, actions and codes of ethics.

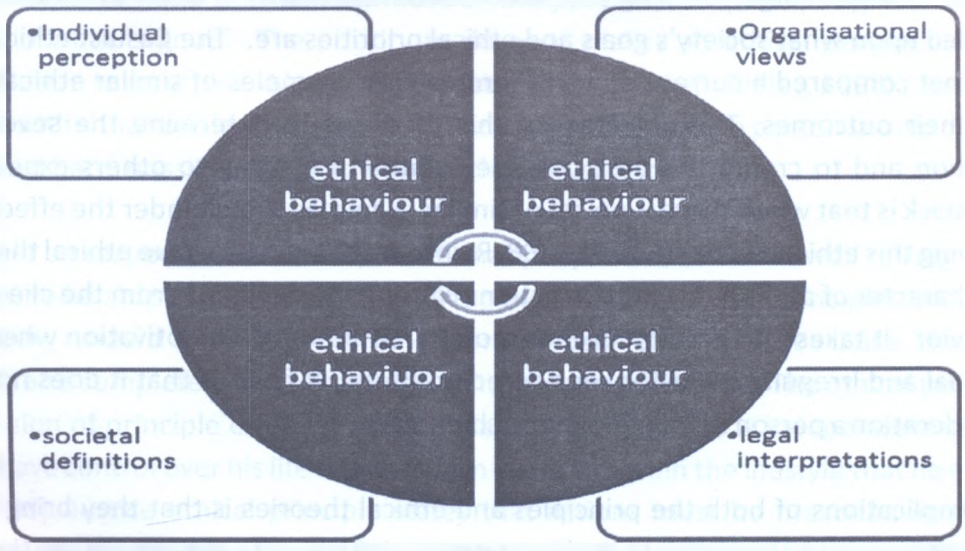


Fig. 1: Factors influencing ethical behavior (Hellriegel and Slocum, 1992)

c) Societal definitions: - What the society considers ethical should also be sustained by the librarians so as not to contravene the society in which the behaviour occurs. What a society interprets as ethical frequently ends up being expressed through court decisions and the passage of law within that society which the library must also support.

d) Legal interpretations: -According to the natural law theory, there is a symbiotic relationship between law and ethics. Law happens to reflect or intends to reflect morality, which is an important ethical dimension. In some systems, the lack of morality of the individual can also be a sufficient cause for punishment, or can be an element for the grading of the punishment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is very evident that the librarian's working environment shall constantly change and present new challenges that influences best practices and subsequent dilemmas confronting effective and efficient service delivery. The librarian cannot afford to be isolated, keying into the understanding and application of principles and ethical theories appropriately would salvage the system from despair.

Recommendations

On the basis of the above submissions, the following recommendations are therefore made:

(i) Library dilemmas will exist and come between librarians as they discharge the responsibilities of information provision, they are however to act, recognize and support in ways that it will not affect the information chain adversely.

(ii) The social responsibilities of librarians to information seekers requires that they should be conversant with the principles and ethical theories so that their applications could be done in such a way that it should achieve the objective of the library. It is recommended that trainings, workshop and conferences on ethical concerns should be prioritize.

(iii) Best practices are innovativeness of librarians within their working environments and disposition, they must be seen to act, consult and dialogue between and among other professionals, educating clients on the policy, ethics and conducts approved by the profession, society and parent institution housing the library.

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