EMPOWERING INFORMATION SERVICE DELIVERY: THE ROLES OF WOMEN LIBRARIANS IN PROMOTING ACADEMIC LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT IN TARABA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated the empowering information service deliver, the roles of women librarians in promoting library development in Taraba State, Nigeria. This study was guided by the following research objectives: to determine the roles played by women librarians for effective information service delivery in academic libraries in Taraba State, to determine the level of services available for the women librarian in delivering the role in academic libraries studied Taraba State and to identify the challenges faced by women librarians in academic Libraries in Taraba State. The study focused on the following tertiary institutions namely; Federal University Wukari, Taraba State University Jalingo, Kwararafa University Wukari, College of Education Zing, College of Health Takum, College of Health and Midwifery Jalingo, State Polytechnic Suntai and Federal Polytechnic Bali. This study employed the use of descriptive research design. The study population consisted of 45 women librarians in academic libraries in Taraba State, Nigeria. Census techniques were used for this study. In this study, since the total number of women librarians was not large, the total enumeration sampling technique was adopted to gather the data. The findings of the study revealed that women librarians played key roles that contribute largely to library services for the benefits of the users and community service. The finding also established that women librarians organize various advocacy programmes for community services in order to promote information literacy. The study shows that challenges hindering the expected role of women librarians include lack of poor skills and competencies, inadequate knowledge of computer and office tools. The study concluded that the role of woman librarians in tertiary institutions cannot be underestimated. This is because women librarians' information service delivery has become vital in modern era in line with the global equality goal in the educational system. It recommended that there is the need for the government to train or develop the woman librarians on the dynamic of information service delivery in electronic library system, in order to cope with the information demands.

Keywords: Women Librarians, Library Development, Library Service, Academic Libraries

Introduction

Globally, the 21st century has witnessed a drastic and remarkable change in the field of librarianship. This is because the 21st century is characterized by information and digital revolutions and innovations.

The information and digital revolution is connecting cyber, virtual and physical space with advancement in digital technology which has made communication, collaboration, information flow and work easier. It has also impacted on the roles played by the library operators in order to serve the library patrons better for the overall achievement of the library goals.

The women librarians is part of the human resources that make up the workforce of the academic community. This justifies the height of their relevance in the role of providing fundamental development, services, facilities and resources in all formats for teaching and research in the institutions.

It is on this note that Odi-Owei (2018) established that excellence in research is one of the marks of a library as an institution. Women played prominence role in information service delivery in research which implies excellence in library service provision.

The services of the academic depend on meeting the educational needs of the clientele just-in-time through electronic information handling and delivery. This informs the need for a well- established digital library.

Thus, Women librarians have to be equipped with the right knowledge, skill and competence. These are necessary to create and facilitate the new knowledge; by providing effective service delivery that will enhance electronic access to digital information sources. This is aimed at satisfying the patrons' need which in turn leads to societal improvement and development.

Singh (2015) identified that a number of useful services provided in academic libraries in the digital age to include; providing quality learning space, creating metadata, offering virtual reference services, teaching information literacy, choosing resources and managing resources licenses, collecting and digitizing archival materials and maintaining digital repositories.

He further stated that academic libraries are no longer limited to printed services such as collection development, cataloguing and classification, circulation and reference services, Current Awareness Service (CAS), Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), and bibliographic services.

As much as women librarians play vital roles in ensuring that the society enjoys knowledge and information- hybrid based libraries through the various services offered, they are not left with some setbacks.

These challenges range from the issue of inadequate training and capacity building, poor skills and competencies to manage effective information service provision, unwillingness of some female librarians in engaging themselves in personal development programmes, lack of time and inadequate provision of technological facilities and infrastructures amongst others.

The limitations highlighted above and many more are deterrent to the role of the women librarians in enhancing service delivery to library users in the ever-changing environment.

However, to overcome the identified inhibitors that have characterized the women librarian, the researchers seek to determine the possible ways these challenges could be mitigated and their negative impacts reduced to a barest minimum, hence this study.

Literature Review

The Roles of Women Librarians in the Provision of Information Service Delivery

The development in information technology has changed the work of the women librarians. There are innovative ways in which both print and digital resources can be stored, accessed, retrieved and disseminated.

The way and manner the women creates bibliographic databases, the digital catalogues and the use of barcodes to store books in digital format are archived as part of the success story of the role of the digital women librarians in this digital era.

Gaál et al. (2015) in their research maintained that the internet makes it possible for individuals to connect, collaborate and share knowledge, information, document, photo, video, etc. continuously with anyone in the world.

The ability to efficiently find, select available information to meet the need of the patrons in the electronic world requires adequate knowledge and understanding of computer and internet, in order to tap into the huge wealth of arrays of information opportunities stored in it.

In line with this, Haider (2016) states that today, students are tech-savvy, but they don't know how to find required information and they need instruction and guidance. That today's librarian is a digital guide, educating patrons about the use of digital library services and generalized digital literacy, providing virtual service to users, often through library websites.

The study of Chidi-Kalu et al. (2018) reveal that women librarians in their role should educate their patrons in such a way that they will know when they need information, identify the kind of information that will address their particular problem, find their needed information resources, evaluate the information resources, organize the information and use the information effectively in addressing their problems. Other roles of the Women librarians include the following:

i. Provision of online reference services for research and educational purposes
ii. Supports in information storage, organization and preservation and retrieval in all formats for posterity and dissemination to the user.
iii. Interacts and collaborates with users for knowledge creation, organization and management in the pursuit of excellence in service.

Information Service Delivery and Woman Librarians

Information service delivery played a key role in the preservation and access to knowledge and information as the main mandate of academic libraries alongside supporting the mission of their parent institutions.

This is because effective and efficient Information service delivery is at the forefront of supporting and providing information services to respective communities which comprises of the users.

Information service delivery provided by women librarians in handling information and library operations and information handling is what positioned and give women librarians the credit of making meaningful impact in the profession in Nigeria and the advanced world.

According to Ifidon in Chidi-Kalu et al. (2018), building a successful service requires a profile of the library and information science professional to suit the global information service needs.

One reason is that most women librarians still carries the same level of dexterity and patience she displayed in the traditional to the digital era in library development and service delivery.

No wonder scholars like Burrington (1987) and Singh (2019) argued that women

form the backbone of library and information services. More so, it is necessary that women librarians acquires skills and knowledge for continuous self-improvement, training and retraining; be vigorously active to avoid being perceived as information and technologically obsolete in this era.

The findings of the study conducted by Sawyerr-George et al. (2017) revealed that training women librarians play an important role for effective service delivery in their different libraries.

The study further revealed that for female librarians to achieve a feat in their role in ICT empowerment, it is necessary for them to be trained to be innovative and creative so that they can embrace new trends in librarianship with the use of ICT to satisfy their users (Sawyerr- George et al. 2018).

Somvir (2010), identified the 21st century skills to include information literacy skills, media literacy skills, information and communication skills, critical thinking etc. associated with the librarian's profession.

He further stated that by utilizing social competences such as empathy, persuasion, leadership and cooperation, a librarian can provide better service to the society. In line with this, Idiegbeyan-Ose, and Ilo (2013) emphasized that the modern librarian must know how to use the new sources of information skillfully.

Challenges of Information Service Delivery by Women Librarians

Literature review reveals numerous challenges confronting women librarians in the delivery of information services which have led to a wide gap in the way information is delivered.

However, in the context of this study, the major challenges identified are as follows:

i. **Insufficient facilities and equipment:** A well-established library is essential in any academic institution for the provision of standard information resources and services (Singh, 2015). With the advent of computer and ICT the nature of library operations changed, latest technologies are needed for effective provision of service delivery to satisfy the diverse information need of today's user. These technologies are lacking in most academic libraries in Nigeria due to poor budgetary allocation. This has posed a challenge to most Women librarians.

ii. **Insufficient technological skill or literacy:** Insufficient knowledge and skill on the application and use of the computer and related Information Technology (IT) pose a challenge for women librarian. Fontaine (2000) stated that there are psychological as well as educational and economic barriers among women due to a general perception of technology as a male domain. It is embarrassing and abuse to professional ethics to note that some librarians currently cannot operate a computer, or search for information on the internet. It is revealed that ICT skills among librarians in Nigeria is very low (Binta, 2013;Ademodi and Adepoju, 2009).

iii. **Inadequate funding** – Funding has been a major setback in any organization, associated with the acquisition and provision of up-to-date technological software and hardware by the institutions. Singh (2019) have reported problems of fund. Even service fee for the maintenance of software license and internet connectivity which are essential for carrying out the role is all capital intensive by nature which are beyond their budgetary allocation. Uzoigwe (2004) observed that sufficient fund is not allocated to library development and where it is allocated, it is not on regular basis and not as at when due.

These affect library development and service delivery.

Statement of the Problem

Women librarians' play key roles to advance information service delivery in modern library service delivery. Many women librarians in developed countries have taken advantage provided by libraries to promote information literacy through advocacy programmes for the benefit of effective information service delivery.

However, in developing countries, many women librarians still find it difficult to provide effective information service delivery due to poor skills and knowledge of handling library services, inability to provide required technology tools and up-to-date knowledge in digital resource handling and poor technical know-how of facilities and ICT tools in the library to foster service delivery to users.

Several studies conducted indicate that women librarians require new skills, techniques using the right technological facilities to achieve effective service delivery to the library users with changing information needs (Singh, 2015; Odi-Owei, 2018).

It has been observed that most women librarians are still struggling with these new skills in some institutional libraries in Nigeria and Taraba State in particular. The preparedness of the women librarians to embrace the change that comes with the availability and use of technological gadgets or tools is a problem.

These varying factors pose great challenges to the effective handling of information and service delivery to users by the women librarians. Therefore, the focus of this paper is to explore the desire to investigate the role of women librarians in the development of library for service delivery in Nigeria: a case study of academic libraries in Taraba State, Nigeria

Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to investigate empowering information service delivery, the roles of women librarians in promoting academic library development in Taraba State, Nigeria. To achieve the above aim, the following specific objectives were pursued to:

1. Determine the roles played by women librarians for effective service delivery in academic libraries in Taraba State
2. Determine the level of service delivery by women librarians in academic libraries studied in Taraba State
3. Identify the challenges faced by women librarians in academic Libraries in Taraba State

Methodology

This study was guided by descriptive research design. The study population consisted 45 of women librarians in academic libraries in Taraba State, Nigeria. In this study, since the total number of women librarians was not large, the census method would be used to gather the data.

The population units of the study consisted of 45 women librarians across academic libraries in Taraba State. This study integrated quantitative methods approaches which allow richer and better result for every unit of the population that was studied.

Therefore, forty five copies of structured questionnaires were distributed to the study population. Of the 45 copies of the questionnaire administered, 38 copies were returned. Data analysis was done using frequency count and simple percentages. Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) software was used as tool for data analysis in the study.

Findings and Results

This section is concerned with data presentation, analysis, interpretation and discussion of findings. The results are presented and analyzed based on the research questions by the researcher's.

Research Objective 1: To determine the roles played by women librarians for effective service delivery in academic libraries in Taraba State. To address this objective the researcher identified roles played by women librarians for effective service delivery in academic libraries in Taraba State. The respondents were given statements the roles played by women librarian for effective service delivery in academic libraries and they were to answer by stating their level of agreement with them using a scale: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) =3, Disagree (D)=2 and , Strongly Disagree (SD)= 1 respectively. Table 2 shows the statements that the respondents were presented with and how they responded

Objective 1: The roles played by women librarians for effective service delivery in academic libraries

Table 1: The roles played by women librarians for effective service delivery in academic libraries

	The roles played by women librarians for effective service delivery in academic libraries	**SA**	**A**	**D**	**SD**
1	Provides reference services to user	11 28.9%	25 65.7%	2 5.2%	0 0%
2	provides support for library advocacy programme	13 24.2%	20 52,5%	3 7.8	2 5.2%
3	Provides Internet Service to User's	10 26.3%	28 73.6%	0 0%	0 0%
4	Provides Information Literacy	22 57.8%	13 24.2%	2 5.2%	1 2.6%
5	Provides Corporate Social Responsibility to User's	11 28.9%	11 28.9%	15 22.0%	1 2.6%
6	Provides selective dissemination of information service to user's	11 28.9%	23 60,5%	3 7.8	1 2.6%
7	provides virtual reference service	15 22.0%	26 68.4%	1 2.6%	1 2.6%

Source: Field (2024)

The findings revealed that 36 (94.7%) of the respondent indicated that they provide reference service to user, while 2(5.2%) had divergent view.

Similarly, the finding also showed that 33 (86.8%) of the respondents revealed that they provide support for library advocacy programme, while 5 (13.1%) had contrary opinion. n the aspect of the providing internet service to user's, 38 (100%) of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement while none of the respondent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The finding also showed that over 36 (94.7%) of the respondents supported that they provides services on information literacy, corporate social responsibility to user's, selective dissemination of information service to user's as well as virtual reference services. the implication of this findings is that female librarians played a key roles that contributes largely to library services for the benefits of the users and community service.

Objective 2: Determine the level of service delivery by women librarians in academic libraries studied in Taraba State

Table 2: Determine the level of service delivery by women librarians in academic libraries studied in Taraba State

S/N	Determine the level of service delivery by women librarians in academic libraries studied in Taraba State	SA	A	D	SD
8	Provide electronic access to digital information sources for research to clientele	15 22.0%	20 52,5%	3 7.8%	0 0%
9.	Create awareness of availability of stored knowledge repository through social media, exhibition and library orientation.	12 31.5%	26 68.4%	0 0%	0 0%
10.	Educate clientele on the use of internet and ICT	17 44.7%	20 52,5%	1 2.6%	0 0%
11.	Helps to identify library user information need and proffer quick solution to their needs.	28 73.6%	10 26.3%	0 0%	0 0%
12.	Utilize ICT for proper services to users	12 31.5%	25 65.7%	1 2.6%	0 0%
13.	Promote information literacy through advocacy programmes for community services.	10 26.3%	17 44.7%	9 23.6%	2 5.2%

Source: *Field Survey (2024)*

Analysis from the study revealed that 35 (92.1%) of the respondents provide electronic access to digital information sources for research to clientele, while 3 (7.8%) disagreed with the statement. Similarly, 38 (100%) of the respondents strongly agreed or Agreed that they create awareness of available knowledge repository through social media, exhibition and library orientation, while none of the respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement.

On the aspect of helps to identify library user information need and proffer quick solution to their needs, 38 (100%) of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, while no respondent opposed to the statement.

The finding also showed that 27 (71.0%) of the respondents maintained that they promote information literacy through advocacy programmes for community services, while 11 (28.9%) had divergent view. The finding of the study implies that female librarian organizes various advocacy programmes for community services in order to promote information literacy.

Objective 3: Challenges of the Woman Librarian in Library Development and Services

Table 3: Challenges of the Woman Librarian in Library Development and Services

S/N	Challenges of the Woman Librarian in Library Development and Services	SA	A	D	SD
14.	Inconsistency in system breakdown and inadequate maintenance.	28 73.6%	10 26.3%	0 0%	0 0%
15	Lack of standard well –equipped e-library	8 21.0%	25 65.7%	4 10.5%	1 2.6%
16	Inadequate time for self-development programme due to work pressure in the library.	30 78.9%	8 21.0%	0 0%	0 0%
17	Lack of personal office computer affects work speed.	15 22.0%	16 42.1%	5 13.1%	2 5.2%
18	Inability to provide required technology tools and up-to-date knowledge in digital resource handling.	17 44.7%	20 52,5%	1 2.6%	0 0%
19	Unreliable power supply in the library affects internet connectivity which in turn affects online service delivery to patrons.	13 24.2%	25 65.7%	0 0%	0 0%
20	Inadequate funding sponsorship for national and international professional training.	11 28.9%	18 47.3%	8 21.0%	1 2.6%
21	Inadequate facilities and ICT tools in the library to foster service delivery to users	15 22.0%	20 52,5%	3 7.8	0 0%

Source: *Field Survey (2024)*

The finding revealed that majority of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they were facing challenges that ranges from inconsistency in system breakdown and inadequate maintenance, lack of standard well – equipped e-library, inadequate time for self-development programme due to work pressure in the library, lack of personal office computer affects work speed, inability to provide required technology tools and up-to-date knowledge in digital resource handling, unreliable power supply in the library affects internet connectivity which in turn affects online service delivery to patrons, inadequate funding sponsorship for national and international professional training and inadequate facilities and ICT tools in the library to foster service delivery to users.

Discussion of Findings

Objective one of the study was to determine the roles played by women librarians for effective service delivery in academic libraries in Taraba State.

The study found that women librarians provide reference service to user. The study also revealed that women librarians provide internet service to users. the study maintained that women librarians provides services on information literacy, corporate social responsibility to user's, selective dissemination of information service to user's as well as virtual reference services.

The finding is in line with a study by Sawyerr-George et al. (2017) who affirmed that women librarians play an important role for effective service delivery in their different libraries. The study also corroborates with the study by Gaál et al. (2015), who justified that the role of the female librarian cannot be overemphasized especially in the digital era where internet makes it possible for individuals to connect, collaborate and share knowledge, information, document, photo, video, etc.

The second objective is to determine the level of service delivery by women librarians in academic libraries studied in Taraba State. The study found academic librarians provide electronic access to digital information sources for research to clientele, create awareness of available knowledge repository through social media, exhibition and library orientation, helps

to identify library user information need and proffer quick solution to their needs and promote information literacy through advocacy programmes for community service. The findings are in line with study conducted by Ifidon in Chidi-Kalu et al. (2018) who argued that women librarians assist in closing gaps in building a success profile of the library and information science professional to suit the global market.

The third objectives are to identify the challenges faced by women librarians in academic Libraries in Taraba State. The study found that inconsistency in system breakdown and inadequate maintenance, lack of standard well – equipped e-library, inadequate time for self-development programme due to work pressure in the library, lack of personal office computer affects work speed, inability to provide required technology tools and up-to-date knowledge in digital resource handling, unreliable power supply in the library affects internet connectivity which in turn affects online service delivery to patrons, inadequate funding sponsorship for national and international professional training and inadequate facilities and ICT tools in the library to foster service delivery to users.

The finding of this study is in line with study conducted by Ramesha and Kumbar (2004), who opined that poor infrastructure facilities, inconsistency in policy statement, weak financial support, poor training and poor knowledge were prominent among women librarians in developing countries especially in Africa and in particular Nigeria.

Conclusion

The roles of woman librarians in academic libraries have witnessed a remarkable change in library service provision. As a result, the role of Woman librarians has gained tremendous recognition. Unfortunately, the finding implies that poor knowledge of the Information Technology and other modern facilities were still prominent among the respondents to provide efficient and effective functioning of library development and services.

This is because women librarians' information service delivery has become vital in modern era in line with the global equality goal in the educational system. Women librarians are also growing developments and strategies in library services.

The impact of the role of Woman librarian was demonstrated in the following ways: delivering of advisory service to users, providing clienteles effective learning space, library advocacy and community service; provision of internet service; encourage information literacy programme; provision of corporate social responsibility and virtual reference service. They also assist to educate library users in identifying information problem. The vast majority of library users in tertiary institutions rely on the resourcefulness and dynamism of the female librarian.

Recommendations

The study recommends based on the findings as follows:

1. There is the need for women librarians to be provided with more challenging roles for effective service delivery in line with challenging brought by the profession in the 21st century

2. There is the need for the government to train or develop the woman librarians on the dynamics of information service delivery in electronic library system, in order to cope with the information demands

3. There is also need to overhaul the challenges faced by woman librarian in tertiary institutions of learning. This would help managers of such institutions library and relevant stakeholders to design programmed that would motivate their contribution and promote female participation in library services.

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