

DIGITAL LITERACY AND JOB PERFORMANCE OF 21ST CENTURY LIBRARY STAFF IN IMO STATE

Eliezer, Chukwunyere Agim (CLN, MLIS, Phd in view)

Polytechnic Librarian

Sure Foundation Polytechnic, Ukanafun, Akwa Ibom State

Email: agimeliezer@gmail.com

08036070425

Enuma, Maureen Azolo

Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State

Email: azomaur@gmail.com

Abstract

The research examined digital literacy and job performance of 21st century library staff in Imo State. Five research questions guided the study. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised all library staff in university libraries in Imo State. Sample of the study comprised 40 library staff drawn from Imo State University and Federal University of Technology Owerri using random sampling technique. Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. Data collected was analyzed using simple percentages and frequency counts. The study found that digital literacy possessed by the 21st century library staff that can enhance job performance are electronic mailing, mobile phone usage, PDAs, Internet surfing, computer operations, social networking among others. The study also found that library staff acquire digital literacy skills through trial and error, support from colleague, self-study using user guide, training offered by management, formal education, attending seminars and workshop, and IT programmes. Digital literacy has improved job performance of the 21st century library staff through increased speedy purchase of online information resources, establishment and maintenance of online catalogue database, improved virtual reference services, and enhanced Internet search activities for users. Constraints to the acquisition of digital literacy by 21st century library staff in their job performance include poor attitude of staff in updating themselves with digital literacy skills, lack of interest by the library management by not sending their library staff to upgrade their digital skills, limited opportunities offered for training opportunities, poor ICT infrastructure, technophobia, and so on. The study recommended that library staff should be sensitized and provided training on digital literacy so as to improve their job output. Furthermore, government should provide academic libraries with sufficient funds for ICT infrastructure and training facilities for their staff.

Keywords: *Digital Literacy, University Library, Job Performance, Library Staff, Imo State Nigeria*

Introduction

Academic libraries exist to support the teaching, learning and research needs of their institution. They perform these functions in order to achieve national development (Agim, 2019).

All the teaching, learning and research that goes on in the university revolve around the library collection (Anyaeibu, 2016). According to Krolak (2005) these libraries assist its users in finding, using and interpreting appropriate information that open up opportunities for lifelong learning, literacy enhancement, informed citizenship, recreation, creative imagination, individual research, critical thinking, and ultimately, empowerment in an increasingly complex world. These feats are achieved by the academic libraries through technological advancement.

The 21st century is an era of technological advancement which necessitate the use of information and communication technology (ICT) facilities in every aspect of human life.

Today information seekers use digital devices such as cell phones, MP3 players, digital cameras, and computers, among others in everyday life. Computers are used in virtually every aspect of human life. They are used in banking, mass media, publishing, communicating and they bring about quality in music, photography, marketing, film making and so on. Years back, Martin (2006) opined that the world of the 21st century is digitally infused: an e-world, a world permeated by the effects and products of electronic technology. These technological advancements have changed both the product and services of the academic library.

Thus, academic libraries all over the world are faced with the evolving technological advancement, globalization, and digitization of information. According to Itsekor and James (2012) these have led to library automation, digital and virtual libraries, virtual conference, web-cast, pod-cast, community and online learning, Web 2.0 and Library 2.0. It has set forth a revolution not only in how we store and transmit recorded knowledge, historical records, and a host of other kinds of communication but also how we seek and gain access to these materials (Itsekor & James, 2012). With these innovations, library staff in performing their task will require a working knowledge of computers and Internet skills which make them digital literates to function effectively in the provision of information resources to their users.

Digital literacy according to Bawden (2008), is the set of attitudes, understanding and skills to handle and communicate information and knowledge effectively, in a variety of media and formats. It is also a person's ability to perform tasks effectively in a digital environment. Digital literacy includes the ability to read and interpret media, to reproduce data and images through digital manipulation, and to evaluate and apply new knowledge gained from digital environments (Itsekor & James, 2012). Digital literacy introduces library staff to the intricacies of computing, explains the components of a computer and explores the basics of the operating system. With abilities in digital literacy, the 21st century library staff is now expected to increase their efficiency in service delivery and performance

Job performance is simply the ability of an employee to perform effectively according to job requirement aimed at the attainment of the organization's goals and objective. Performance is defined as how well an individual fulfill the requirements of his job (Liu & White, 2011). It can also be seen from the perspective of how well objectives of a particular task are met. A better perspective of job performance is one which involve both the behavior and job output. For the measurement of job performance in this study, the "Role-Based Performance Scale" by Theresa M. Welbourne (1997) was adopted. In this theory, job performance has four dimensions which are: quantity of work output; quality of work output; accuracy of work; and customer service provided. In the modern library parlance, job performance is rated based on 21st century user expectation.

In view of the foregoing, it is evident that job performance of the 21st century library staff requires digital literacy which connotes a working knowledge of computers and the Internet to enhance job performance. Similarly, as wireless technology improves, more library tasks requires proficiency with cell phones and PDAs (sometimes combined into smart phones) (Itsekor & James, 2012). This has made the 21st century library staff to source for avenues to enhance their use and adaptation of these technological advancements which has improved their digital literacy. The focus of this study was to examine digital literacy and job performance of 21st century library staff in Imo State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The influx of information, globalization and the use of digital technology has made the world a global village where access and use of digital technology has become common place. The 21st century library staff is expected to integrate digital and computer skills in their provision of information resources and services. Expectedly, their acquisition of digital literacy is a *sine quo non* to effective job performance. Advances in the application of technology through digital literacy can improve service delivery of the 21st century library staff. In developed countries, universities are continuously updating their curriculum for digital literacy in their bid to keep pace with accelerating technological developments. This often includes training library staff in their use of computers and a wide range of digital gadgets to offer effective service delivery to users.

Regrettably, sufficient access and use of the digital resources by library staff in developing countries such as Nigeria seems poor as a result of poor ICT policies in the country. More so, digital literacy and competencies in the use of computer and ICT solutions also appear to be very low amongst many library staff. The use of digital educational softwares, digital gadgets and resources to provide services, teach library curriculum, and course materials is not available to library staff to enhance their job performance. Consequently, many library staff appear not to have the requisite digital skill to operate the computer, access their email or interact on the Internet or use technological gadgets to provide services. Similarly, many libraries in Nigeria are not automated and this affects the service delivery and performance of the library staff. This study was conducted to address these issues.

Objectives of the Study

The overall aim of this study was to examine digital literacy and job performance of 21st century library staff in Imo state. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identity the digital literacy skills possessed by the 21st century library staff that can enhance job performance in academic libraries in Imo State, Nigeria.
2. Find out how 21st century library staff acquire digital literacy skills to enhance job performance in academic libraries in Imo State, Nigeria.
3. Determine how digital literacy has improved job performance of the 21st century library staff in academic libraries in Imo State, Nigeria.
4. Find out constraints to the acquisition and use of digital literacy by 21st century library staff for enhanced job performance in academic libraries in Imo State, Nigeria

Research Questions:

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What digital literacy skills are possessed by the 21st century library staff for enhanced job performance in academic libraries in Imo State, Nigeria?
2. How do 21st century library staff acquire digital literacy skills for enhanced job performance in academic libraries in Imo State, Nigeria?
3. How has digital literacy improved job performance of the 21st century library staff in academic libraries in Imo State, Nigeria?
4. What constraints militate against the acquisition and use of digital literacy by 21st century library staff for enhanced job performance in academic libraries in Imo State, Nigeria?

Review of Related Literature

Digital literacy

The term ‘digital literacy’ is used to describe the ability to harness the potential of digital tools. According to IFLA (2014), to be digitally literate is to have the ability to use technology to its fullest effect - efficiently, effectively and ethically – to meet information needs in personal, civic and professional lives. Bawden (2008) define digital literacy as the set of attitudes, understanding and skills to handle and communicate information and knowledge effectively, in a variety of media and formats. Digital literacy as a term includes basic technical skills, such as the ability to operate a computer and perform tasks such as word processing, form-filling, searching, e-banking and use of government services (Kenton & Blummer, 2010). It can also encompass knowledge of how the Internet works, and especially the way in which data (including personal data) travels and may be used. This implies, in particular, an awareness of cyber security issues and risks to privacy and of the tools and practices which can help users stay safe online (Kenton & Blummer, 2010). Digital literacy is the knowledge, skills, and behaviours used in a broad range of digital devices such as smartphones, tablets, laptops and desktop PCs, all of which are seen as network rather than computing devices. Digital literacy initially focused on digital skills and stand-alone computers, but the focus has moved from stand-alone to network devices. Digital literacy skill is a more contemporary term but is limited to practical abilities in using digital devices such as laptops and smartphones (Emiri, 2015).

Bell and Shank (2008) stated that digital literacy is the ability to use digital technology, communication tools or networks to locate, evaluate, use and create information. Digital literacy implies an ability to use technology creatively, stretching from blogging or editing Wikipedia to designing websites or writing code, as well as creative expressions through multimedia tools such as podcasts and videos. Such uses can lead both to personal fulfilment, professional and entrepreneurship opportunities (Combes, 2016). Furthermore, digital literacy incorporates less technical elements, such as legal and ethical knowledge and global citizenship. It implies compliance with the same standards of behaviour online as offline, respect for the human rights of others, and the necessary openness to move beyond national and language boundaries, cultural and religious differences. It also requires media and information literacy skills (IFLA Recommendations on Media and Information Literacy, 2011).

Digital literacy is also seen as the knowledge, the attitudes, and the sum of the skills needed to know when and what information is needed; where and how to obtain that information; how to evaluate it critically and organize it once it is found; and how to use it in an ethical way. The concept extends beyond communication and information technologies to encompass learning, critical thinking, and interpretative skills across and beyond professional and educational boundaries (IFLA Recommendations on Media and Information Literacy, 2011). It is clear that digital literacy overlaps with other areas of competence, notably media and information literacy. It also covers skills that some will be able to develop autonomously, but where others will need help. It depends extensively on the prior existence of basic literacy skills. Finally, digital literacy is a lifelong learning process. As technology changes, digital literacy skills of 21st century library staff need to keep updating their knowledge.

Job Performance

Job performance is a concept commonly used in industrial and organizational psychology. It refers to how people perform their job. Job performance is the ability to carry out statutory functions which are based on the field of specialization or areas of development as well as an organization's objectives. According to Villamova, Austin and Borman (2005) job performance is defined as that aspect of work behaviour domain that is of relevance to the job and organization success. Ojo (2009) define job performance as an extent to which the day-

to-day work is being carried out. Hose (2012) simply defined it as the way employees perform their work. Also, job performance has been defined as the total expected value to the organization of the discrete behavioral episodes that an individual performs over a stipulated period of time. Job performance is therefore, an important criterion that relate to organizational outcomes and success.

Far back in 1997, Borman and Motowidlow identified two types of job performance: Task performance and Contextual performance. Task performance involves activities that are carried out to serve and maintain the technical part of an organization such as supervising and planning. Task performance also describes an individual's execution of the core duties that might be formally listed in his or her job description. Koopmans (2011) developed indicators of task performance which include; completing job tasks, work quantity, work quality, job skills, job knowledge, keeping knowledge up to-date, working accurately and neatly, planning and organizing, administration, decision making, solving problems, oral and written communication, monitoring and controlling resources. While contextual performance refers to spontaneous behaviors through which a worker supports and enhances the workplace environment. These might include the ability to see what needs to be done even when it is not explicitly part of one's formal job description, as well as transmission of positive attitudes to and among managers, colleagues and patrons. Besides, Koopmans (2011) developed indicators of contextual performance which include; extra tasks, effort, initiative, enthusiasm, attention to duty, resourcefulness, industriousness, persistence, motivation, dedication, proactivity, creativity, cooperating with and helping, politeness, effective communication, interpersonal relations and organizational commitment

Thus, jobs performed in the library include acquisition, cataloguing and classification of materials, provision of reference services, charging and discharging of materials to users and so on. Job performance in library situation is geared towards meeting not only the users' information needs but also a basis or a criterion for promoting staff.

Digital Literacy and Job Performance of 21st Century Library Staff

Digital literacy of 21st century library staff has been found to improve on the task of library service delivery. Users' needs are ever changing and the mandate of the library will be to provide them with current and satisfied services that will enhance repeated usage of the library. The support for digital literacy will be to provide the library staff with capacity building programmes that will improve their use of computer and Internet solutions to perform maximally towards the achievement of the library's objectives. In order to support the development of digital literacy for library staff, academic libraries must provide learning opportunities for their staff to acquire digital literacy skills. These digital literacy skills will enable them to stay up-to-date with fast-changing external technological environments as well as constantly evolving digital landscape of their own working contexts. These requirements create greater demands on the depth and breadth of technical knowledge and skills required by library staff (Thompson 2009, p. 3).

The American Library Association Office for Information Technology Policy (2013) has recommended the development of digital literacy competencies of staff as a priority for local libraries and as part of their wider mission. Currently, there is lack of understanding of what professional development and workplace learning required of academic library staff in order to engage users in computerized library services. Library services such as online education, online reference services and Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) require digital literacy competencies by library staff to enable them perform and fit into these dynamic technological changes. This dynamic new world requires new comprehension and communication skills, as

well as new codes of conduct, to ensure that these powerful media and technologies are used responsibly and ethically in the tertiary institution.

Okiy (2010) quoting Covi and Cragin, opined that Nigerian tertiary institutions have increasingly demanded and preferred access to electronic sources delivery and networked information from their respective libraries. This is why librarians must endeavour to equip themselves with digital literacy and technological skills that will be useful for them to perform their jobs. According to Oyewusi and Oyeboade cited in Emiri (2015), the primary purpose of university libraries is to support teaching, learning, and research in ways consistent with, and supportive of, the institution's mission and goals. In addition, library resources and services should be sufficient in quality, depth, diversity, and currency to support the institution's curriculum. As a result of this, university library is often considered the most important resource centre of the parent institution with her mandate of providing print and digital resources to its users. Therefore, for the 21st century library staff to meet with this mandate, they must possess adequate digital literacy skills at an appropriate level to support the intellectual, cultural, and technical needs of her literate digital users

Literate digital users are poised to use computers system to acquire solutions for their online needs. This is because, information sources and resources are increasingly available online, and library staff with digital literacy skills will want to utilize computers, databases or Internet towards providing such online needs of her users. If the library staff lack the digital literacy to operate in this environment, a serious void is created which affect their job performance. Where they are not able to solve their users need, it will affect users' patronage.

To perform maximally, the 21st century library staff can utilize digital literacy skills ranging from use of cell phones, MP3 players, digital cameras, and computers towards effective service delivery. Digital literacy helps library staff to communicate and keep pace with the demands of their users in the digital environment. The 21st century library staff is expected to have the basic literacies which Eshet-Alkalai cited in Emiri (2015) outlined as follows:

1. Photo-visual literacy - ability to read and deduce information from visuals.
2. Reproduction literacy - ability to use digital technology to create a new piece of work or combine existing pieces of work together to make it your own.
3. Branching literacy - ability to successfully navigate in the non-linear medium of digital space.
4. Information literacy - ability to search, locate, assess and critically evaluate information found on the web.
5. Socio-emotional literacy - the social and emotional aspects of being present online, whether it may be through socializing, and collaborating, or simply consuming content.

The job performance of the 21st century library staff will be evidenced if they are able to apply their digital literacy in providing essential digital services through the use of computers and other ICT devices to provide digital/electronic resources such as Compact Disc Read Only Memory (CD-ROM), Internet, Online Public Access Catalogues (OPAC), electronic books, electronic journals and electronic index.

However, there are also cases when due to inadequate skilled manpower in libraries, some library staff that had their libraries automated and acquired digital resources were unable to manage their resources due to their lack of digital literacy. These systems even if automated, cannot be utilized with such poor digital literate staff. Afebende and Uyanah (2008) however argued that despite the initial hick-ups and turns in this delight, many Nigerian university libraries have taken up the challenges of developing and promoting the use of electronic

resources in their libraries. Surely this will be achieved if they also develop training programmes for their library staff on digital literacy.

When library staff are empowered through training on digital literacy, they will acquire the needed skills to perform their duty. When motivated, they perform better and ultimately, it will lead to job satisfaction.

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all library staff in university libraries in Imo state. The sample of this study was 40 library staff drawn from Imo State University and Federal University of Technology Owerri using random sampling technique. The questionnaire was the research instrument used for data collection. Data collected was analyzed using simple percentages and frequency counts

Results

Research Question 1

What digital literacy skills are possessed by the 21st century library staff for enhanced job performance in academic libraries in Imo State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Percentage rating on digital literacy possessed by the 21st century library staff that can enhance job performance

S/NO	Digital literacy possessed by library staff	Frequency	%	Decision
1	Electronic mailing	55	92	Agree
2	Electronic conferencing	10	17	Disagree
3	Mobile phones usage	53	88	Agree
4	PDA's	50	83	Agree
5	Computer accessories navigation	24	40	Disagree
6	Internet surfing	46	77	Agree
7	Computer operations	32	53	Agree
8	Social networking	45	75	Agree
9	Media projecting	18	30	Disagree
10	Electronic bulletin board	28	47	Disagree
11	Research using Microsoft packages	41	68	Agree
12	Blogging on the website	35	58	Agree

Table 1 indicate that digital literacy possessed by the 21st century library staff that can enhance job performance are electronic mailing, mobile phones usage, PDA's, internet surfing, computer operations, social networking, research using Microsoft packages, and blogging on the website. The respondents lack digital literacy on electronic conferencing, computer accessories navigation, media projecting, and electronic bulletin board

Research Question 2

How do 21st century library staff acquire digital literacy skills for enhanced job performance in academic libraries in Imo State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Percentage rating on how 21st century library staff acquire their digital literacy skills towards job performance

S/NO	Acquisition of digital literacy skills	Frequency	%	Decision
1	Trial and error	55	92	Agree
2	Colleague's support	40	67	Agree
3	Self-study using user guide	53	88	Agree

4	Training offered by management	38	63	Agree
5	Formal education	54	90	Agree
6	Attending seminars and workshop	46	77	Agree
7	IT programmes	32	53	Agree

Result in Table 2 shows that the 21st century library staff acquire their digital literacy skills through trial and error, colleague's support, self-study using user guide, training offered by management, formal education, attending seminars and workshop, and IT programmes. Acquisition of digital literacy through trial and error received the highest rating. Whereas acquisition of digital literacy via IT programme was on the border line (53%).

Research Question 3

How has digital literacy improved job performance of the 21st century library staff in academic libraries in Imo State, Nigeria?

Table 3: Percentage ratings on how digital literacy has improved job performance of the 21st century library staff

S/No	Digital literacy and job performance of library staff	Frequency	%	Decision
1	It has increased the speedy purchase of online information resources	45	75	Agree
2	It has facilitated the establishment and maintenance of online catalogue database	42	70	Agree
3	It has enhanced methods used for online cataloguing	52	87	Agree
4	It has increased my resource sharing abilities with other staff and librarians	38	63	Agree
5	It has improved the way I provide virtual reference services	54	90	Agree
6	It has made my online serials management processes to be effective	46	77	Agree
7	It has enhanced my capacity in storing and retrieval of online data	32	53	Agree
8	It has improved my CD-ROM searching services	55	92	Agree
9	It has promoted my efficiency in general online services to users	40	67	Agree
10	It has enhanced my Internet search activities for users	53	88	Agree
11	It has improved my general ICT proficiency in providing services to users	38	63	Agree
12	It has improved my task in using the automated system to the traditional library system	54	90	Agree
13	My use of Microsoft packages is very effectively for my work	46	77	Agree
14	My work with the computer makes my job very faster	32	53	Agree
15	My digital literacy makes my job much quicker and reliable	50	83	Agree
16	My digital literacy abilities make my task to users much easily accessible	36	60	Agree
17	My library work is more effective and efficient with my use of digital literacy skills on the present automated system	51	85	Agree
18	I am now vast with using the computer to perform various library tasks	39	65	Agree

19	I learn every day on the job with my digital literacy abilities and I have progressed in my service delivery techniques	55	92	Agree
20	Digital literacy has improved my job performance in handling sensitive online issues	45	75	Agree

The result of the analysis in Table 3 shows that the entire 20 items listed were positively rated indicating that these items positively influence the job performance of the 21st century academic library staff in Imo State, Nigeria.

Research Question 4

What constraints militate against the acquisition and use of digital literacy by 21st century library staff for enhanced job performance in academic libraries in Imo State, Nigeria?

Table 4: Percentage ratings on constraints to the acquisition and use of digital literacy by 21st century library staff in towards their job performance

S/NO	Constraints to the acquisition and use of digital literacy skills	Frequency	%	Decision
1	Poor attitude of staff in updating themselves with skills in digital literacy	56	93	Agree
2	Lack of interest by the management in sending their library staff to upgrade their digital skills	41	68	Agree
3	Limited opportunities offered for training opportunities	50	83	Agree
4	Lack of professional recognition	40	67	Agree
5	Poor ICT Infrastructure	51	85	Agree
6	Financial incapability of the library staff for personal sponsorship	42	70	Agree
7	Technophobia	36	60	Agree
8	High cost of digital skill training	55	92	Agree
9	Lack of digital resources	43	72	Agree
10	Poor access to digital facilities	53	88	Agree
11	Lack of conducive environment	35	58	Agree
12	Poor internet network	55	92	Agree
13	Poor electricity supply	45	75	Agree
14	Lack of funding to train library staff	32	53	Agree
15	Inadequate financial support to the library	55	92	Agree
16	Poor maintenance culture of available digital resources	40	67	Agree

The result of the analysis in Table 4 show that constraints to the acquisition of digital literacy by 21st century library staff for enhanced job performance are poor attitude of staff in updating themselves with skills in digital literacy, lack of interest by the library management in sending their library staff to upgrade their digital skills, limited opportunities offered for training opportunities, lack of professional recognition Others include poor ICT infrastructure, financial incapability of the library staff for personal sponsorship for digital literacy, technophobia, high cost of digital skill training, lack of digital resources, poor access to digital facilities, lack of conducive environment, poor Internet access, poor electricity supply, lack of funding to train library staff, poor funding, as well as poor maintenance culture of available digital resources.

Conclusion

The role of the 21st century library staff has continued to evolve with the adoption of Information and Communication Technology into the profession of librarianship and their service delivery. Consequently, library staff need to play active role in this evolving scenario. This can only be possible through the proper acquisition and utilization of vital digital

literacy skills in information communication technology which has been discovered to enhance job performance. The acquisition of digital literacy has influenced how the 21st century library staff use these new technological platforms to effectively perform their task in meeting the information needs and services of their clientele. Digital literacy is thus a *sine quo non* to effective service delivery as well as job satisfaction of the 21st century library staff in academic libraries in Imo State Nigeria.

The demand of the IT driven library services is enormous hence the need for constant training and retraining of library staff in order to meet the need of their users.

Regrettably, some library staff have very low digital literacy in some areas. This may be as a result of their personal effort to acquire these skills through informal means like through colleagues, trial and error and sometimes through assistance from friends. Since library staff are asset to libraries, sponsoring and providing them with training on digital literacy will enhance their productivity and job performance. The level of skills in digital literacy and their expertise usage in the library will determine to a large extent how effectively they are able to perform their jobs and carry out routine jobs in the library. When libraries are automated and functioning, the 21st century library staff will be able to apply these digital literacy skills in the services of the library which will bring about user satisfaction; hence motivating the library staff to be more effective in the performance of their mandate.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study:

1. Library staff should be sensitized and provided training on digital literacy so as to improve their job output
2. There should be adequate provision of digital facilities in the library to encourage library staff to use them both for their personal need and meeting the needs of their users.
3. To align with global best practices, academic libraries in Imo State should deploy approved library management software and packages for efficient and effective services to their patrons.
4. Adequate funding in all academic libraries is non-negotiable. Similarly, these libraries should look inwards on how to generate funds internally.
5. Employment of library staff in academic libraries should give serious consideration to digital literacy skills.
6. Provision of steady power supply and robust Internet access in these libraries should be given priority to enhance the job performance of library staff in academic libraries in Imo State.

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