



Information and Communication Technology: A Panacea to Library Community Networking in Nigeria

Akpokurerie, O. Azino
Assistant Chief Librarian
Delta State Polytechnic,
Ogwashi-Uku
zinscar@yahoo.com.

Adeoti, Victoria Olufunke
Kogi State University, Anyigba.
victoriadeoti@yahoo.com.uk

Abstract

Information rule the world, you are either informed or deformed. Hence Library Community Networking (LCN), which serves as a union to all libraries and information centres all over the world via the information and communication technology (ICT), has solved the problem of being in the dark. Therefore as the concept of ICT is capturing the mind of the world the importance of community networking must be realized. In the course of this study, it was revealed that libraries tune their direction of information through networking and since the world is now becoming a global village, dissemination of information rests on libraries, thereby making libraries to be partners in progress with information technologies. This paper was designed to look at how ICT has solved the problem of community networking in libraries, since there were vacuum in networking of libraries before now, this form the bases of the statement of the problem. A self designed questionnaire called Library Community Networking Instrument (LCN) was used in sourcing for information. On this basis, this paper discusses ICT as a problem solver to library services challenge and also enhances librarians' efforts to satisfying every information seeker via electronic media. The paper analyzes responses by librarians and library users. Major findings of the study are presented with recommendations and conclusion.

Keywords: Library Community Networking, ICT, Public Library, Academic Library

1.0 Introduction

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is sweeping through the world irrespective of the developing nature of most countries like Nigeria; and the library as a base for information provision is not left out in meeting with the challenges ahead of its worth. Duncombe and Heeks (1999) see

information and communication technology as an electronic means of capturing, processing, storing and disseminating information. To librarians, these words are like words of daily bread, because they are not new to librarianship profession. Anyokoha (2005) further explained this when he said that: The terms – capture, process, store and

disseminates information are very familiar terms to the library profession. In fact, they are part of librarian's dialect. ICT is often used interchangeably with information technology (IT) which is defined by Drew and Foster (1994) as the group of technologies that is revolutionizing the handling of information and embodies a convergence of interest between electronics, computing and communication.

A critical study of the above shows that librarians tune their direction of information dissemination through networking and since the world has now become a global village, dissemination of information rests on libraries, and hence libraries are regarded as partners in progress with ICT. Library, in this development, is defined as an information centre where various information materials are selected, organized, processed and made available for users to meet with the principle of disseminating information. Since library is known to be a place where users' information needs are met, and with the advent of ICT, it will be out of place to see library in this modern world as just a place where books and non-book materials are kept. Therefore, with the proliferation of various ICT tools, one can boldly say that ICT will connect or link users to libraries from various points. The importance of ICT in librarianship can never be overemphasized, hence, the issues of virtual library is paramount in the modern day library services. This paper will therefore, discuss on how ICT has solved the problem of community networking in libraries.

1.1 Objectives of the study

The following objectives guided the conduct of the study.

1. To determine whether ICT sets a standard for library effectiveness.
2. To ascertain if through ICT, library users can have access to other libraries within the globe.

3. To find out the readiness of libraries to meet up with the challenges of community networking.
4. To determine how many professionals are ICT compliance.
5. To find out the interest of the host community to ICT in the libraries.

1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the researcher in his analyses:

1. Does ICT set a standard for library effectiveness?
2. Through ICT, can library users have access to other libraries within the globe?
3. How ready are libraries in meeting with the challenges of community networking?
4. How many professionals is ICT compliance?
5. What are the interests of the host community to ICT in the libraries?

1.3. Scope of the Study

Most Nigerian libraries are still dragging its feet' in the issue of information communication technologies (ICT's), this could be due to Nigeria syndrome. In view of this, the study will therefore focus on public and academic libraries in Edo and Delta state of Nigeria.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Concept of ICT in Libraries

With the modern day library, it has made it easy for users irrespective of their placement to have access to information from a particular library and information centre. This has made retrieval of information cheap, reliable and convenient for every patron and will no longer be operating in isolation. The information and communication technology is a thing of importance in the life of librarians; this is to bridge up the gap by a way of networking of the library in transforming the age long system of librarianship.

Achebe (2005) stated, “ICT is the type of technology that links the computers to the global telecommunications network to make it possible for users to acquire, process, compare, store and disseminate oral, printed and pictorial information”. Further explanation by Achebe revealed that ICT embraces all the technologies that enable the handling of information and facilitate different forms of communications between man and electronic systems, and among diverse electronic systems such as Radio, T.V, cellular phone, computer networks and satellite systems. Okeyi (1998) in Uzoigwe (2004) asserted that the current trend in information provision in libraries worldwide is through the application of information technologies for the provision and expansion of scope of information available to patrons irrespective of their location. This has the advantage of ensuring effectiveness and efficiency in services provided.

The explanation given by Okeyi revealed that libraries naturally are into the business of information dissemination but the current level of this information services is based on electronic means, so that people at various places without visiting the physical library (traditional library) can have access to materials. Note that library that works with the application of information technologies not only has the best information in the world, but also has advantages of meeting up with the enormous demand for information by users.

2.2 Community Library Networking

In line with this, Odegbami (2002) explained that information and communication technologies (ICTs), in providing wide access to information and new instructional possibilities, are changing library access, the learning and research process, e.g. how we search, discover, teach and learn. ICT in promoting library networking can link up to virtual library, hence Akpokurerie, (2006) explained that

virtual library is a collection of library resources in electronic form which can be accessed and used with great ease with the aid of computer technology for the purpose of promoting learning.

According to Doyle (1999), a network is a series of computer systems that are linked together so that they are able to share computing power or storage facilities. The linking may be between computers in different parts of the country or even in different parts of the world. Therefore, library community networking (LCN) is the interconnectivity of various libraries within a particular area, country or the world, which is popularly referred to as library union. He explains further that local area network (LAN) is a network of computers on one site and wide area network (WAN) is a network where the terminals are remotely separated from each other and telecommunications are used to communicate in between. In his own view, Akintunde (2005) made it clear that the only way to make available library resources in the format of digital age is through ICT. The Information Superhighway called the Internet is the greatest library community network in the history of information technology. Since then, libraries have been in the business of interconnecting the world with the provision of information without much stress. This made the librarians and information technologists to come out with a unique library known as “Virtual library”. This library is to bridge the gap created by the traditional library through the library community network and via ICT.

3.0 Research Methodology

The primary source of data analyzed in this paper was a self-designed questionnaire called library community networking instrument (LCNI). Simple percentage was used in analyzing the LCNI. The questionnaire was designed to collect information from 10 librarians and 10 library

users to have equal responses. 6 libraries were randomly selected from Edo and Delta states. Three (3) libraries were selected from each

state. The questionnaires were administered to 120 respondents from the selected libraries. The analyses and administration of the instruments are shown in table 1.

4.0 Analysis of Data and Discussion

Table 1: Questionnaire Administration and Retrieval

Libraries	Number of Sample	Number of Respondents	% Response
Delta State Library Board	20	20	100.0
Edo State Library Board	20	17	85.0
John Harris Library (UNIBEN)	20	20	100.0
Delta State University Library	20	20	100.0
College of Edu. Library, Agbor	20	20	100.0
A.A.U. Ekpoma.	20	16	80.0
TOTAL	120	113	94.5

Table 1 above shown that out of 120 questionnaire distribution, 113 responded bringing the percentage of responses to 94.5%. This shows an excellent response without bias.

Table 2. Library effectiveness through ICT standard

Normal	Response	Percentage
Yes	102	90.3
No	11	9.7
Total	113	100.0

In table 2, it was revealed that for libraries to have a standard in the provision of information to its cliental, librarians must adopt the use of ICT as a tool, 90.3% respondent were in supports of this standard, while 9.7% were not in support.

Table 3: Users Accessibility to other Libraries within the Globe

Normal	Response	Percentage
Yes	95	84.1
No	18	15.9
Total	113	100.0

From the above table it is clear that ICT has helped to access information from other libraries within and outside the country. This is so because, the responses in the table show that 84.1% agreed that through ICT they have been able to have access to information of their choice. While 15.9% did not agree to it. Perhaps this latter group may not have gotten the knowledge of ICT.

Table 4: Readiness of Libraries to Meet With the Challenges of Community Networking

Normal	Response	Percentage
Yes	79	69.0
No	34	31.0
Total	113	100.0

The information in Table 4 shows that 69.0% of the respondents agreed that libraries in this modern era are ready to meet with the challenges of library community networking. While 31.0%, do not agree to their readiness.

Table 5: Number of Professionals that are ICT Compliance

Normal	Response	Percentage
Yes	61	54.0
No	52	46.0
Total	113	100.0

The above information is fairly interesting that 54% of the professionals are ICT literate. This does not speak well of the librarians in this jet age of information explosion, because without being computer literate professionals may not be able to manipulate the internet and lunch into the virtual library. This 46% is not to under rate the professionals but is to make them sit up in the area of ICT. The librarians themselves must show more interest in the ICT movement and meet the need for librarians who are yet to be literate to bridge up with the challenge.

Table 6: Interest of the Host Community (Parent Body) to ICT in the Libraries.

Normal	Response	Percentage
Yes	111	98.0
No	02	02.0
Total	113	100.0

The result in table 6 sounds very interesting with 98% responding that the parent bodies of these libraries have a great interest in ICT to make their services to be effective. Only 2% refuted their interest, which is a small margin.

5.1 Findings of Study

The findings made in this study are summarized as follows:

The need for ICT in the provision of information in the library is of utmost importance. Once libraries are able to meet with the ICT standard of providing all it takes, library users with public and academic libraries will have lesser stress in research making. The accessibility of current information in this jet age is a welcome idea.

Libraries in Nigeria through the ICT provisions have been able to establish a relationship with libraries and information centers with outside the country. Library clientele can make choice of information in the course of study. There is a great awareness

by libraries in Nigeria on ICT to the extent that the pains of getting required information from outside the country has been reduced. Librarians in Nigeria are yet to be fully committed to ICT training. Some librarians still feel that virtual library is not real. Most heads of the parent bodies of library are interested in the development of their libraries especially the area of ICT compliance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has made it clear that ICT is a thing of great importance that libraries irrespective of their status or level cannot do without it. Therefore, it is imperative that all libraries be equipped with IT infrastructure and all librarians be ICT compliance.

As a matter of urgency and policy librarians who are yet to be ICT compliance need to go for it, or else with the influx of ICT, such persons may be declared redundant.

There is need for all heads of higher institutions and libraries to make finance available, it is not enough for them to be interested on information provision through ICT.

That all staff of these libraries should see the need for library community networking, this is to boast their information collection.

References

- Achebe, N.E.E. (2005). The Status of ICT in Nigeria Public Libraries. *Coal City libraries, Journal of the NLA Enugu State Chapter 2 (1&2)*, 13-30
- Akintunde, S.A (2006)“State of ICTs in Tertiary institutions in Nigeria: Window on the Universities.” *Paper presented at the 44th Annual National Conference and AGM, NLA, Abuja (18-23 June 2006)*
- Akpokurerie, O. A (2006) “Virtual Library – Its reality on the growth of Nigerian Education.”*Paper presented at the 2nd Annual conference, on transforming business and management for the growth and development, organized by school of business Studies, Delta state polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku (11-14 July 2006).*
- Anyakoha, M.W. (2005). Information and communication technology (ICT) in library and information services. *Coal City libraries, Journal of the NLA, Enugu Chapter 2 (1&2)*, 2-12.
- Doyle, S. (1999). *Information Systems for You*. (2nd ed). Italy: Stanley Thones Ltd.
- Duncombe, R and Hecks, R. (1999). *Information, ICT and small Enterprises: Findings from Botswana*. Manchester: University of Manchester; Institute for Development, Policy and Management, Working paper.
- Odegbami, O. (2002). A Blue Print for Implementing Virtual Libraries in Nigeria Universities. *Education today: A Quarterly Journal of the Federal Ministry of Education*. 9 (1), 17-26.
- Uzoigwe, C.U. (2004). Information Technologies in Libraries: The Nigerian Case . *Coal City Libraries, Journal of the NLA, Enugu State Chapter*. 1 (1), 28-41.