



### Competitive Intelligence: A Tool for Effective Job Performance in an Open and Distance Learning Academic Library

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#### *Abstract*

*This paper discusses Competitive Intelligence (CI) as a tool for effective job performance in an open and distance learning institution's library. It explained the application of CI to the services rendered in an open and distance learning institution's academic library. The paper also discusses services provided by the open and distance learning academic libraries and how competitive intelligence could be applied to these services by the librarians for them to meet up with current trends in the profession. The paper concluded by beckoning on librarians to use information sources mostly the non-traditional ones such as competitive intelligence that would help librarians working in an open and distance learning academic libraries have an edge above their counter parts in other academic libraries who are their competitors and same time make the library users develop interest in their services and also meet their needs.*

**Key words:** *Job performance, Competitive intelligence, Librarians, Academic library, Open & Distance Learning*

#### **1.1 Introduction**

Libraries are repositories of knowledge and information. The willingness of the library and information professionals to proactively accept the evolving changes into new knowledge is helping library and information science profession to remain significant and useful in the fast changing society (Majid and Khoo, 2009) competitive intelligence can help to enhance the driving innovation and creativity in the library and information science profession.

With the continually developing innovations and creative services the libraries tend to keep up with the fast changing society.

Libraries are responsible in providing access to information for the library users often times making use of information and communication technology (ICT) in achieving that aim with the library users expecting speed and comprehensiveness in the information provided by the librarians. Hence, there is an urgent need for the introduction of competitive intelligence into an open and distance learning academic library so as to improve on the services rendered to their users.

Kahanner in Miller (2013) defined competitive intelligence as a systematic and ethical program for gathering and managing

information that can affect a company's plans, decisions and operations, it enables organizations of all sizes to make informed decisions concerning achieving their goal and objectives. Gross (2000) postulates that competitive intelligence within an organization serves as a catalyst in the decision making process. The major keys to a successful utilization of competitive intelligence are the analysis and synthesis of information. Though before these two major keys can take effect, there must be a reliable source of information. She further stated that competitive intelligence activity must be a legal one. Information ought to come from a reliable source and must be verified and validated as to its veracity (Gross, 2000).

Job performance according to Yaya (2014) is the work activities carried out by the worker towards the achievement of the organizational goals. It is an act of a staff fulfilling his/ her obligation to the organizations. Vroom (1964) cited in Yaya (2007) observes the performance of a person on a job is considered a function of two different variables. One of these refers to the ability or intelligence of the individual to perform the job while the second refers to his /her motivation to use this intelligence in actual performance of the job. The product of both intelligence and motivation is the performance.

Open and distance learning academic libraries are libraries which specializes in serving the information needs of distance education students, faculty and staff. It ensures adequate access to library resources for those who enroll in and teach distance education course. The Association of college and Research Libraries (ACRL) recognizing that distance education offerings were growing in post-secondary educational institutions published “*Guide lines for Distance Learning Libraries in 2000*”. The guidelines asserted that members of the distance learning community are entitled to

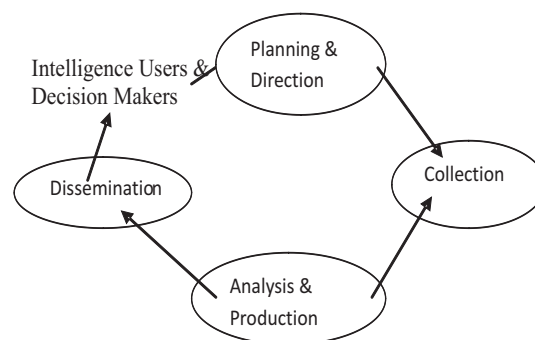
library resources equivalent to those provided for students and faculty in conventional university settings. The main objective of any academic libraries whether a library of conventional university or a library of an open and distance learning university is to provide necessary information to students , lecturers as well as researchers in aid of learning, teaching and research purposes. It is the duty of academic libraries to ensure that these objectives are realized by providing educational and information needs of the open and distance learning community. Functions of an open and distance learning academic library includes but not the least:

- i. Acquisition of knowledge
- ii. Organization of knowledge
- iii. Preservation of knowledge for easy access
- iv. Dissemination of knowledge.

A librarian could use competitive intelligence as an essential tool which would be used in carrying out the above mentioned functions effectively and meeting the information needs of the library users. It is based on this backdrop that this paper discusses the competitive intelligence of librarians' job performance in an open and distance learning academic library.

## 2.1 Review of Related Literature

## 2.2 Concept of Competitive Intelligence



The competitive intelligence cycle of Nikolas & Evangelia, (2012:4)

Each component of the competitive intelligence cycle as adapted from Nikolas and Evangelia (2012) are briefly explained as follows:

*i. Planning and Direction:* the first stage of the intelligence cycle. According to Nikolas and Evangelia (2012) requires the identification of the key intelligence tools and the willpower the competitive intelligence practitioner should take in completing the analysis. In open and distance learning academic library set up, the library resources are to be planned in line with the programme that are offered by the universities.

*ii. Collection:* this phase involves the gathering of raw information. Required intelligence would be generated from the raw information. This information could be gotten from competitors' periodicals, newspapers, internet web site. This phase requires that all information is gathered ethically and legally. For effective job performance, the publishers' catalogues or list could be dispatched to the faculty members, researchers and students as the case maybe asking them to select relevant materials for their subject areas.

*iii. Analysis and Production:* this phase is the most challenging because it requires high skills. It should be noted that some raw information sent to the library may not be accurate, the librarian using competitive intelligence skills would analyze all the requests by using for instance National Bibliography of Nigeria (NBN) to check the list sent in by faculty members before procuring the books into the library.

*iv. Dissemination:* this is the last stage of the intelligence cycle. The competitive intelligence practitioner delivers the results of the analysis to the decision makers. The main objective of any academic library is to provide information to all information seekers and also to support the academic requirements of the universities. The university librarian would collate and analyze the selected titles of the books before acquiring the materials and

outing them up on the shelves for easy accessibility by the library users.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Due to the use of innovation and creativity ways to meet diverse information needs of library users, the librarians in the open and distance learning libraries need to up their game. The library needs to react immediately to the changes happening in their external environment since work environment is becoming complex and competitive.

It is very important to give to let students, lecturers and researchers have access to updated, accurate, reliable information for them to make timely and informed decisions. There is need to involve the use of non- traditional library services such as competitive intelligence to the already existing traditional library such as reference, circulation services of the library. Librarians need to identify, collect, analyze raw information of its competitors and use the processed data to make their library users to renew their interest in the library.

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