Full Length Research Article

GLOBALIZATION AND INFORMATION SERVICE DELIVERY IN NIGERIAN LIBRARIES: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

[1]Mercy D. Ebong and [2]*Nwachukwu, V. N.

[1]University Library, University of Uyo, Uyo
[2]Department of Library and Information Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to examine the opportunities opened to Nigerian libraries in the current information age as related to the concept of globalization. The paper highlights reasons for current changes in library practices and stresses some areas of importance that can propel Nigerian librarians and libraries into being useful in this global information services' revolution, while taking a look at the few challenges which traditional library settings have in the global information society. The article tries to examine and predicts the future library and information training requirements for librarians to cope with the challenges of global information society. The article strongly advocates and encourages the acquisition of special skills in more than one technology and suggests that it is desirable for global librarians.

INTRODUCTION

The quest for globalization of information services in Nigeria has been an ongoing process. There has been a rising commitment by Nigerian libraries to strengthen the delivery of information. The advances in Internet and world wide web have laid foundation for globalization in library and information services in Nigeria. This is manifested in the availability of electronic information resources, which are accessible by means of digital technologies. A library is societal mechanism designed essentially for the provision of information and services. As a social institution, its existence is for the collection, preservation and transmission of human intellectual experience and culture. According to Faris (1991), libraries are organizational mechanism designed to link groups of students, lecturers and scientists worldwide that are committed to sharing information or working together to solve problem and to use the existing resources more effectively. Libraries disseminate information and offer services to users within and outside their domains. They are information banks and service centers. In the new global library environment, the processes required to provide effective information services to the users may be done differently.

Corresponding author: Nwachukwu, V. N.
Department of Library and Information Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

The skills that the librarian needs to do this can be adopted from established practices. The core traditional skills which have been associated with librarians and information professionals are: information handling skills, evaluation skills and concern for customers. These skills cover those routine services as circulation, enquiry work, cataloguing, classification, indexing and user education. These values according to Creth, (1996) are the values that are the foundation of the library practices. Mbakwe (2010) notes that, these values are used for the delivery of library services. With globalization, these values are undergoing substantial change for libraries to justify their existence in global world. For instance, circulation services can be done through electronic document delivery, outsourcing mechanism of the virtual and digital libraries, reference services can also be accomplished through the reference dialogue mode of internet search engines. With globalization, many libraries all over the world have sort out various ways of facilitating the delivery of information services and the university libraries are not exempted from this change (Akintunde, 2003). This article examines the effect of globalization on the delivery of information services in Nigerian university libraries.

What is Globalization?

The term 'globalization' is defined in the Oxford Dictionary of Business (1996) as the 'internalization' of products and

services by large firms. It is an economic phenomenom involving the increasing interacting or integration of natural economic system through the growth in international trade, investment and capital flows. Viewed from general perspective, the notion of globalization is broad and diverse. Amorokpe & Abuye (2011) believed that, globalization encompasses political, economic, socio-cultural and technological dimensions; and its processes are evolving in quite a different way in different countries including the emerging markets. Keily and Marflect (1998) see globalization as a phenomenon involving the interaction and integration of economic, cultures, governmental policies, political movements and even education. The rapid increase in cross-border social, cultural and technological exchange is part of globalization. This means that, globalization refers to a world in which societies, cultures, politics and economies have in some way come closer together to have a world-wide social relationships which are linked together irrespective of distances, cultures and politics. In other word, every human activity is affected in globalization. Dumbiri (2010) opined that, globalization also involves the recent development in telecommunication by providing people the opportunities of communicating easily with others in foreign countries. It is through globalization, that inventions such as: world wide web, electronic mail, global mobile phones, e-libraries, e-commerce, e-banking, e-education and other social contacts are made easy. Obviously, every aspect of human activity is affected by globalization. Amorokpe & Abuye (2011) further stressed that, globalization is propelled by a variety of forces of which improvement of information and communication technology, cross-border mergers, and wave of deregulation were the strongest.

Globalization in library practices

Globalization factors are of a great deal of challenge in every aspect of human activities including library and information services. The advances in Internet and world wide web have laid foundation for globalization in library and information services in Nigeria. This is manifested in the availability of electronic information resources, which are accessible by means of digital technologies. Library user populations have increased tremendously these days, and more digitally dependent young people, whose information needs and information-seeking behaviors have inevitably shifted. Rowlands et al. (2008) discovered in their study on the use of academic library services by the younger generation of users that, there is stubbornly persistent reliance on search engines despite the best efforts of libraries to dissuade their users through information literacy instruction and outreach methods. Almost every search for information observed was conducted electronically at library Website. The authors felt trying to compete with organizations possessing the financial and technical resources of Google and Microsoft to be an exercise in futility, and recommended that libraries seek tighter integration with commercial search engines instead. Relatively, Shih and Allen (2007) examined the changes wrought in academic libraries on user populations by large numbers of digitally-savvy young adults coming of age. They noted the key importance of expanding electronic services for both students and faculty, as their research uncovered that, instructor IT skill was the most significant factor in learner engagement and satisfaction. The researchers strongly urged

librarians to acknowledge the importance of making these changes and take an honest look at their own understanding of the new technology, as the pace and nature of the needed changes necessitate leaders becoming learners themselves. They noted the relatively small presence of the "Net generation" in librarianship as of the time of writing, and recommended an informal and engaging process to help librarians become aware of and interested in the new forms of information technology. Ominiwa (2001) also discovered that, globalization of information services is an asset that involves the adoption of information and communication technologies in libraries which improves and promotes information delivery services. He however, notes that, globalization in library services has to do with the use of information in an extensive manner that is not constrained by time and space; and that, all sort of library transactions can be processed and transmitted electronically. This means that the way librarians perform their services differ unlike the previous traditional system of library practices. Aina (2004) notes that, this age is the age of information which has given libraries in the whole world a new understanding of time, space, distance and knowledge as well as new definition of the world.

The emergence of information and communication technologies in library services has obviously altered the traditional way of communicating, preserving, disseminating, seeking and using of information. These technologies are not limited to only one type of technologies employed in libraries, rather it applies to the various technologies libraries and information managers use to carry out services. Within the concept of Information and communication technology, Achebe (2005) notes that there are many other technologies. To her, information technology refers to different technological approach to information handling. Libraries are no longer storehouses, rather gateway to knowledge, providers of lifelong learning. It has becomes possible for one to instantly access useful information through the latest computer technologies such as internet, and other information resources media.

Information from all over the world is brought to one's desk through information and communication technologies. It is an information empowerment tool for people in solving human problems involving information and communication in most general sense. Jagboro (2006) notes that, Nigerian libraries are now gradually being computerized especially in academic libraries. The development in the power of computer processors and networks have improved information access and bring down the costs of acquiring information. Information revolution has made information more easily accessible and cheap. Allison (2000) asserts that any increase in the technical and human ability to create access, interpret share, exchange and use information will help to enrich the global knowledge base and make knowledge economy available to mankind anywhere, anytime and in any language, and so create what has been referred to as universal democracy. Globalization therefore, is a tremendous revolutionary change in information and communication technologies among nation, leading to the "villagization" of the globe. The change is reflected in libraries only when they have integrated the use of information and communication technologies. This change can improve access to information resources. This improved access function of IT was recognized

by the National Policy on computer Education(1989) which provided opportunities for developing countries on training and skill acquisition support outside their environment(Jordan, 2003). According to Jordan (2003), he lamented on the barriers to adequate training in ICT in developing countries, and suggested that adequate provision for IT literacy programmes and integration of ICTs in library functions and services should be encouraged in libraries.

Why the emerging changes in Library and information services?

The profession of librarianship is all about information services, and information is all round us. Information has become the stable food for readers and users of information. It is directed ceaselessly at millions of users in business, industries, academia and public service institutions. For libraries to attain its goal, a lot services are performed by libraries which translate their functions into library and information services (Ogunsola, 2008). These services include: collection, processing, storage, user education and dissemination of recorded information for the purpose of studying and consultation. Information changes the knowledge state of receiver and data necessary for decision- making (Aiyepeku, 1989). The changing world of information encompasses new sources of information and new information activities, by which librarians are challenged. It is apparent that the primary objective of a librarian is to achieve understanding of the users' information needs and have the ability to interpret the users' needs in order to provide their information preferences. Through that understanding, one can produce alterations in decision behavior in order to create value.

This basic understanding necessitated scholars in library and information science to consider information service as important issue in librarianship. For instance, Lucey (1997) notes that, information has no value in itself. Its value is derived from the value of the change in decision and behavior. For one to ensure that library services have value, it means considering both the user and information problem or decisions being dealt with. Aguolu and Aguolu, (2002) observed that, documentary or recorded information in which libraries are primarily concerned with, seems to be of value especially when it is made available at the right time to right user. Here, they placed special emphasis on availability and timeliness, rather than preservation of materials for its sake. Librarians are no longer book keepers and preservers, rather, they have become providers of access to information and facilitators of information to life -long learners.

Emphases nowadays, are placed on provision of quick access to users' information needs and problems. This motivated International Federation or Library Associations (IFLA 2005) in its submission to the world summit in information society (WSIS) to underline the information readiness issues as pre-conditions for participating in an information society. In particular it identifies universal and free access to library and information services, effective environment for information and communication technologies access, library and information resources availability, skills acquisition for effective searching and retrieval of information as a platform for ICT connectivity, information and record management and

good governance as necessities for attainment of the information society. Understanding the trend in global information services demand adequate skills and training of tomorrow's librarians.

Skill Requirements

The role of a librarian as an information service provider and user educator is prevalent. The range of specialized skills required of tomorrow's librarians is enormous and beyond the scope of this article to predict. Starting from the issue of provision of right information and its access, as well as overseeing issues of accuracy and authenticity requires special skills especially in this information age. The following are indicative inventory of what might be expected:

Interpersonal skills

The present day librarians and information professionals should possess personal and transferrable skills in order to excel in the changing environment. The effective management of networked resources and services will determine if the librarian has gotten management and inter personal skills needed in this global environment. Hastings, & Tennant (1996) rightly says - "it is more important that digital librarians possess particular qualities which are innate rather than specific technical expertise which can be learned". Librarians nowadays should be able to handle information in electronic format by creating web pages in order to promote their services to internal and external customers. They should choose the best automated library systems that will attract and made easy for use by users of their environment.

Communication Skills are necessary

These will include the full range of communication, especially personal interaction with computer and related technology. Librarians should understand have the skills to manage knowledge effectively. It is the duty of a librarian to help users find the information for users, provide the enabling tools with which they should access and use the resources for their individual needs. Creth, (1996) notes that librarians should do this by actively seeking out users in a variety of settings. And by making full use of information and multimedia technology, by offering library instruction in a variety of formats including web based instruction and online tutorials. The ability to manage digital information system encompasses the overall competencies necessary to create, store, analyze, organize, retrieve and disseminate digital information in text, images, sound for libraries.

Competence in Information and Communication Technologies

In a digital environment, there is a shift from the traditional intermediary role between the publisher and the users to the intermediary new role of matching the needs of users to the availability of knowledge contained in information resources, irrespective of where and in what form these resources are available. Thus, requires librarians to acquire new competencies in cyber services. Librarians still need to be responsible for preserving all the paper materials already in the library. The digital publications with physical substrate, such

as CD-ROMS and books on diskettes need to be stored like books. They also need to convert paper to digital formats since less expensive papers do not survive too long.

Skills in Archiving the Digital Stock

With an ever-growing amount of digital publications, electronic archiving, which involves library professionals to grasp the emerging technologies, learn new procedures for selecting and cataloguing resources, and standards for the organization and archiving of data. With the emerging electronic libraries, computers are the most important part of library infrastructure. Librarians should be computer literates and learn to know different computing companies in order to secure hard and software access to virtual information space. The librarians' knowledge in this aspect will intensify as the importance of digital resources increases. To get information from a relational database, one need to have some knowledge of programming. Librarians should learn to provide technical infrastructure and information services using information technologies. Librarians should possess the skills of archiving electronic materials if they are to own it.

Skill in Structuring the Info space

For the librarian to provide effective information services in this global age, he/she must be able to structure the resources gotten from internet because most information posted to the internet are not structured. By so doing this will facilitate information access not only to technical point of view but in particular as it regards contents. Selection of text online through paper evaluation is an indispensable service that will make possible networked scholarly communication. Librarians need to provide the inexperienced information seekers with access points, search engines, portals to enable him navigate into the global information environment. Their contribution of providing links collection and advice means a good deal of market research which must have built along time. Provision of access to electronic resources will depend on financial support that the librarian gets from the parent organization. The status of the library will depend not on the volume and quantity of its physical collection but, on the quality of its services. Thus, suggests that such a library should have access to websites, not just electronic journals but other digital resources and publications.

Librarians should create archives for special collections of e-documents such as research report or working papers. The librarians being at the interface between users and publishers should enhancing reliability of addresses. The librarians working on the semantic words has to extract or insert meta-data in e-documents, abstracts, authors, publication sates, versions, keywords etc. to be computer readable. Publishing is not done by commercial publishers in digital world, therefore librarians should engaged in the storage of digital files of all kinds. Teaching of the students and the faculty members on how to access information in its format, location and how to evaluate what they find should also be included in the librarian's functions. Resource sharing among libraries are made possible since individual libraries can have access to what others have in their libraries due to globalization. Faboyinde (2006), notes that, the problem of insufficient information resources are shelved off due to globalization.

Challenges of Globalization in Information delivery services in Nigeria

It is common knowledge that, globalization is all around us, and the fundamental problem facing Nigerian libraries which invariably affects the quality of information services provided are enormous. Teferra (2004) cited by Anasi (2010), captured vividly the sorry state of most Nigerian libraries. He observed that:

.... librarians for sometimes now have found it increasingly difficult to acquire the necessary skills to make available to their users the full range of electronic publications they require and to which members of the university community might need access.

Similarly, the report on libraries in Nigeria by Ogunrombi (2003) indicated that the book stock of Nigerian university libraries is in a deplorable state such that the libraries can no longer support the academic programmes of their institutions. There is no remarkable improvement in the current state of most academic libraries as many of them are largely stocked with outdated books and journals. However, only academic libraries that are linked up to the world wide web can boast of significant change and unfortunately, many tertiary institutions in Nigeria are yet to be connected to the internet. No doubt the quality of the library services in any academic environment affects the quality of teaching, research and learning and this in turn, determines the quality of the output. Globalizaion implies that libraries will spend more money on computer hardware and software, training of librarians in new technologies especially in the area of texts selection, scanning, verification of the materials to be digitized as well as employment of experts with web technologies, and skills to support and manage them. Copyright holders have to be contracted and rights obtained. Money is needed to translate content into digital form and to access the resources. A powerful server is required, supported by specialized software and personnel. The server must operate all day and new materials should constantly be added.

Even though there is massive improvement in the telecommunication industry over the past few years, however a lot still needs to be done to improve its present state. There is also the problem of maintenance. This view is corroborated by Okoro (2008) who affirmed that great number of people have low maintenance culture. They lack the experience of regular system check to detect fault as timely as possible. The fact that technicians lack this culture, they wait until the equipment breaks down to the level of no repair, which invariably affects the system and halts any progress made in computer application in the execution of jobs. Web technology skills are needed to maintain web servers that host locally digitized materials and other digital resources hosted remotely as well as maintaining proxy access to restricted resources. Aschcroft and Watts (2004) observed that Nigerian libraries have acute shortage of digital systems librarians, information and web technology literate staff in libraries to install and manage technology networks. In a similar view, Onyneke (2007) added that one of the challenges is that of expertise, the constraints of expertise refer to the retraining of library staff so as to improve the ICT competency, lack of a system manager, support staff and ICT experts as well as low level of students

ICT knowledge and skills. This view is similar to that of Okoro (2008) who asserted that many students do not have ICT skills to use the computer and as such, the web librarians should be the interface between digital libraries and the users but this not to be the case as Ani & Esin (2005) pointed out that there is a low level of ICT skills among librarians in Nigeria and most of them lack the requisite skills to function in the virtual environment. The erratic nature of electronic power supply in Nigeria is a major problem as the global library services cannot exist in this situation because web servers that host locally digitized contents and proxy server that provides authentication and remote access to subscribed electronic resources need to be on all day. Adebisi (2009) clarified this position by adding that infrastructural problems such as low bandwidth, poor power supply and constant computer breakdowns could mean non access to internet due to ineffective internet service provider (ISP) or breakdown of equipments.

Distinct users interface of every product is another major challenge as users would have to remember different passwords for different products. The scope of coverage and available archives are often limited. Globalization relies on power and computer networks. Lack of purpose built library buildings. Much provision was not initially made for information technological devices but with the emergence of information technology, renovation of the existing library buildings will need to be done to accommodate its new trends, facilitates and services. Another challenge is the lack of political will in the adoption and proper funding of information and communication technology. Sufficient interest is not demonstrated by the political class to implement the ICT policies and this, results in the lukewarm attitude of the government towards the technological development in the country. There is also a challenge of curricular contents among the nations of the world, this is because the curricular contents are not the same. The poor levels of ICT infrastructures and inadequate networking facilities in some libraries hindered effective provision of information services in the global environment.

Recommendations and Conclusion

For globalization to be effective in the process of information delivery system, the following recommendations should be considered:

1. Government should adopt the appropriate technology for the improvement of information services so that libraries and individuals can compete favorably with those from the developed world.
2. There should be provision of necessary information and communication tools for use by Nigerian schools at various levels of education, in order to acquaint Nigerian educational system with the developed world.
3. Librarians need to acquire more skills not only in one technology, rather knowledge of other technologies will be useful. They should also be resourceful in their profession. This will help to improve their services.
4. Information literate skills should be encouraged among school librarians, and the use of information technologies should be taught at primary schools. All stake holders in education should work towards ensuring that science and

technology education is given a boost in the Nigerian schools and libraries.
5. Acquisition of basic ICT knowledge and skills should be made mandatory for all librarians to enable them cope with globalization.
6. Training and retraining of librarian in technologies should be encouraged. Librarians given their special roles in any library organization, should expect heavy demands from their patrons. Due to such demands, Dumbiri (2010), suggests that, the present day's training of librarians should include the following components:

- An awareness of philosophy and particularly a critical familiarity with scientific method in theory and practice.
- A working knowledge of applied science and technology, both in general and specific application to their environment.

Finally, changes in technology have influenced library operations globally; and have promoted changes in individuals' users needs. Patrons needs and expectations will require them making adjustments in the way they go about resourcing and searching for information. New concepts of library services require new skills. These new skills demands certain level of intellectual insight and wisdom of higher order. Librarians should direct their intellectual and creative abilities towards mastering the emerging technologies since global information delivery system demands this.

REFERENCES

Achebe, N. E. E. 2005. The status of ICT in Nigerian Public Libraries. *Coal City Libraries* 2(1&2); 13-31.

Adesoko, M. O. 2005. Globalization and Development of libraries in Nigeria: The benefits and challenges. *Middle Belt Journal of library and Information science*; 5(2); 45-51.

Aguolu, C. C. & Aguolu, I. E. 2002. Libraries and information management in Nigeria. Maiduguri: EdLinform Services.

Aina, L. O. 2004. Library and Information Science Text for Afriaca. Ibadan: Third world information services limited; 365p.

Akintunde, S. A. 2003. New and emerging tools for library practices in the new millennium. *Lagos Journal of library and information science* 1, 67-72.

Aiyepeko, W. O. 1989. The perception and utilization of information by policy – makers in Nigeria. *National Library of Nigeria*: Academy Press.

Anasi, S. 2010. Digital libraries and higher education in Nigeria in the 21s centur*y*. Proceedings of second professional summit on information science and technolog*y*. 102-115.

Creth, S. D. 1996. The electronic library: Slouching towards the future or creating a new information environment, Follet lecture series. (http://w.w.w.ukoln.ac.uk/services/papers/follet/creth/paper:html).

Dumbiri, R. 2010. Role of the library as an information resource in globalization. *Information Impact;* 1(2), 50.

Faboyinde, E. O. 2006. The state of information and communication technologies in selected libraries in Lagos and Ibadan. *The Information Technolgist*, 5(2) 121-126.

Faris, A.E. 1991. The history of the national agricultural library. *Agricultural Deveopment,* 62, 189-207

IFLA Committee 2005. World Report Series V. S. Seidiline and Stuart Hamilton Report, August.

Jabgoro, K. O. 2006. A study of Internet usage in Nigerian universities. A case study of Obafemi Awolowo Universtity, Ile Ife Nigeria. Available at :http://www.firs.org/issues/issues 66tagboro.htm.

Jordan, E. 2003. Cybrary skills in the tertiary environment in –service education for librarians from developing countries. *Australian library Journal* 52(1). Available at: http:/www, Alia.Org. Au/publishing/alj/52.11 Full textcybrary.skill.html.

Lucey, 1997. Management information system. 8th ed., London: Continuum.

Mbakwe, C. 2010. The university library redefined in an ever-changing and knowledge intensive learning environment. A research paper presented in the proceedings of 2nd professional summit in information science at university of Nigeria, Nsukka..

Ogurombi, S. A. 2003. Quality assurance and book crisis in Nigerian University Libraries. *Gateway Library Journal 6(2), 65-73.*

Okoro, H. C. 2008. Virtual library for students research and study in: N. E. Achebe (ed) Library and information literacy for higher education (Pp. 16 -290 Nigeria. Consultancy section Nigerian Library Association. Enugu State Chapter.

Omorokpe, R. O. and Abuye, G. E. 2011. Future accounting education and training requirements for accountants in emerging markets. *Academic scholarship.*3(1); 109 -121.

Ogunsula, L. A. 2008. Nigerian University libraries and the challenge of globalization, the way forward. *Journal of academic and special libraries* 5(4), 30-40.

Ominwa, M. A. 2001. The computerization of the Kashim Ibrahim Library of Ahmadu Bellow University, Zaria. *Middle Belt Journal of Library & Information Science* 5(1), 15-22.

Oneneke, C. O. 2007. Information and communication. technology in library services in teriary institutions. *Journal of library science. 1(2), 65-73*

Rowlands, R., Nicholas, D., Williams, P., Huntington, P., Fieldhouse, M., Gunter, B., Tenopir, C. 2008. The Google generation: The information behaviour of the researcher of the future. *Aslib Proceedings: New Information Perspectives, 60*(4), 290-310.

Shih, W., & Allen, M. 2007. Working with generation-D: Adopting and adapting to cultural learning and change. *Library Management, 28*(1/2), 89-100.

WSIS 2003. World summit on the Information Society: Draft declaration of principles. Geneva: WSIS Civil Society Working Group. Available at: http://www.wsis-pct-org/prpcom2. declaration.html. Accessed 7 february, 2013.

****