

KNOWLEDGE SHARING PRACTICES AND SERVICE DELIVERY BY PROFESSIONAL LIBRARIANS IN AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, ZARIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the extent to which sharing knowledge helps in improving library services in Ahmadu Bello University Library, Zaria. The survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study consisted of all 204 professional librarians in Ahmadu Bello University Library, Zaria. Total enumeration was used for the study. A self-structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that the respondents strongly agreed that librarians use brainstorming (Mean=4.55, SD=.850) and verbal discussion (Mean=4.54, SD=.850) while sharing knowledge on database search (Mean=4.49, SD=.803). In addition, the study showed that librarians mostly use brainstorming and verbal discussions for knowledge sharing among other knowledge sharing practices, which implied that knowledge sharing practices of librarians were low. Also, the services provided by librarians were e-reference services, database search, online user education and e-reader services among other available library services. The study concluded that knowledge sharing practices helps in service delivery of librarians in the study area. The study recommended that knowledge sharing practices such as mentoring, community of practices, staff meetings and storytelling that were scarcely used to share knowledge should be encouraged in the library.

Keywords: Knowledge sharing practices, Service delivery, Librarians, University Library.

Introduction

Knowledge sharing is an aspect of knowledge management considered as a process of transferring knowledge such as skills, experiences and understanding between individuals, groups and organisations while knowledge sharing practices are diverse personal interactive processes such as discussions, debates and meetings, where one is influenced by other's experiences (Latupapua, 2016). Other knowledge sharing practices include; verbal discussion, seminars/workshops, mentoring, staff meetings, storytelling, community of practice, and so on. Knowledge sharing practices are means where people share what they know. Knowledge sharing practices in organisations is important because it brings about innovation and creativity.

Knowledge sharing is a new concept and has not been fully integrated in libraries. Today, libraries are becoming more conversant with the benefits of knowledge sharing practices and creating avenues to introduce knowledge sharing in the library, citing reference to Mosha, Holmner and Penzhorn (2015) who conducted a study on the librarians of Nelson Mandela University and found that knowledge sharing practices in the library is low. In Malaysia, the case is the same with reference to Chong (2003) whose findings showed that libraries have not fully implemented knowledge sharing except few government bodies who only use face to face interaction to share knowledge.

The contemporary society has developed huge interest in the area of knowledge due to its benefits to the society and organizations. It is all about bringing and getting knowledge, where individuals learn from experiences from each other through the knowledge shared. On the other hand, the library profession has attempted to identify the means by which librarians can promote knowledge sharing practices among librarians through the use of social media. Knowledge sharing in a social media environment is important among librarians because it gives librarians unique ideas on how to serve the patrons better. Knowledge sharing practices brings out the best from librarians because shared understanding is a driving force for the growth of any organisation. The value of knowledge is viewed in two different ways; knowledge creation and knowledge sharing. Once knowledge is created, it can be used by others for different purposes and once knowledge is shared, new knowledge is created (Alavi&Leidner, 2001). Knowledge creation is achieved using social media through the communication process.

Knowledge is important in organisations because it gives organisations its uniqueness and also makes the organisation outsmart its competitors. Knowledge sharing practices, according to Lam (2000), is influenced by the two broad categories of knowledge which are tacit and explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is obtained through experiences and tacit knowledge is difficult to articulate while explicit knowledge is documented knowledge obtained through formal learning. Knowledge sharing is a key concept associated with the conversion of tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge which results in the transfer of knowledge from one individual to another.

Effective knowledge sharing boosts an organisational intellectual capital which is the most important asset of an organisation. MacAdam (1998) noted that knowledge sharing is an essential part of libraries because libraries play a key role in knowledge sharing. Knowledge sharing is achieved in the library when technical and systematic infrastructure is put in place (Seonghee&Boryung, 2008). Harinarayana and Raju (2010) opined that libraries use social media to provide organized resources, arouse user participation and engage in the act of knowledge sharing. Furthermore, librarians can use social media to stimulate users in creating new library services by contributing their knowledge online (Casey &Savastinuk, 2010).

The rate at which knowledge is shared on social media is overwhelming. The use of ICT has made it easy for knowledge to be shared and received by users on social media platform. The library professionals are not left out; one will attest to the fact that even if a library does not create its social media platform, librarians still visit social media sites for their personal interest. Quinn, Anderson and Finkelstein (1996) noted that the challenge to sharing of knowledge by professionals to their peers is insecurity because professionals view their

knowledge as most precious asset in their possession which should be guarded jealously. Knowledge sharing practices in organisations have a positive effect on service delivery by offering new ways of promoting organisational values.

Libraries today are embarking on new ways to enhance service provision to the users and knowledge sharing practices have the potentials of improving library services using information communication technology. Libraries are becoming more relevant by providing electronic library services to support the physical library. Technology has taken over the world of communication and libraries are taking the opportunity to reach out to users in the electronic environment. Meyega (2008) defined service delivery as a process of making information resources available through library facilities and procedures for onsite use, circulation and inter library loans. Service delivery is also a means that defines the interaction between providers and clients, where the provider offers a service that can be information or a task, and the client either finds value or loses value in the service offered (Tetra Images, 2015).

A library is expected to provide accessible services to its users. Librarians are required to provide services to satisfy the information needs of the user community. Libraries provide a broad range of services depending on the type of library. There are services peculiar to all libraries such as reference service, current awareness services lending services, interlibrary loans and document delivery, literature search, selective dissemination of information, outreach services and so on (Aina, 2004). A library also provides services such as the organization of information and analyses of information needs of users. Meyega (2008) categorized library services into user services and technical services. User services include: circulation, bibliographic instructions, government documentation, special collection and reference services while technical services include: acquisition, cataloguing, classification, interlibrary loan, serial systems and document delivery.

Literature has established that the provision of a technology enhanced library services is low in most libraries, citing reference to Akpoiroro and Okon (2015) in a study on students' satisfaction with service delivery in federal universities in South-South, Nigeria, revealed that students satisfaction with library services were low due to inadequate information technology facilities in the institution. Mishra (2008) noted that today's users are anxious in getting handy electronic information resources to meet their needs and the ability to make available speedy and easy retrieval of information resources poses a challenge to library professionals. The traditional library is evolving to the electronic library. The electronic library services are important because it gives libraries the room to attend to users in the global community. Electronic library services commonly used on the Internet and the World Wide Web include; computerized library catalogs, electronic databases, instant messaging services, distance learning services, virtual references and interlibrary loans.

Libraries in this information age offer services in physical and electronic formats. Librarians are extending services beyond the physical walls of a building by shifting from the physical library to the electronic/virtual environment. Libraries in the technology era provide services via the virtual library and also through the Internet. In order for libraries to remain significant towards the provision of quality services; social media is a tool that can assist libraries to meet up with the challenging needs of users in this contemporary society (Meyega, 2008). The

findings of the study conducted by Ikonne, Onuoha and Madukoma (2013) on marketing of information services in the social media framework of communication showed that promoting library services is a means of preparing the library to face the technology transformed world. The study revealed that the use of some social media tools is easy and cost effective. The study concluded that using social media for service delivery will make libraries more interesting in the area of library acquisition, organisation and dissemination of library services.

Statement of the Problem

The potentials of knowledge sharing practices and technology enhanced service delivery in organizations have raised the consciousness of libraries to adopt technology channels to improve library services in order to meet up with the demands of the 21st Century users. Past empirical research has revealed that knowledge sharing practices are not fully integrated in most libraries and knowledge sharing brings about innovation and creativity in organizations. On the other hand, there seems to be low provision of a technology enhanced library services in most libraries' which will improve the service delivery of users in this challenging digital environment. As a result of the importance of knowledge sharing and technology enhanced library services in organizations, there is an increase in the number of libraries that are adopting and implementing knowledge sharing and service delivery advantageously. Despite the awareness of the potency of knowledge sharing and service delivery, it is not certain the extent to which knowledge sharing is used to improve library services in libraries in Nigeria. Therefore, this study investigated knowledge sharing practices and service delivery by professional librarians in Ahmadu Bello University Library.

Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study is to investigate the extent to which professional librarians are using knowledge sharing practices and service delivery in Ahmadu Bello University Library. The specific objectives are to:

1. ascertain the knowledge sharing practices among professional librarians in Ahmadu Bello University Library;
2. ascertain the types of service delivery of professional librarians in Ahmadu Bello University Library.

Research Questions

1. what are the knowledge sharing practices of professional librarians in Ahmadu Bello University Library?
2. what are the types of professional librarians' service delivery in Ahmadu Bello University Library?

Methodology

The survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of this study consisted of all professional librarians in Ahmadu Bello University Library. There are 204 professional librarians in Ahmadu Bello University Library. The sample size for this study was 204 professional librarians in Ahmadu Bello University Library. Considering the manageable population size, all members of the population was used. Therefore, total enumeration was used for the study. The instrument that was adopted for this study was a self-structured questionnaire. The data for this study was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Data Analysis, Results and Discussion of Findings

Research Question One

What are the knowledge sharing practices of professional librarians in Ahmadu Bello University Library?

Table 1 presents information on the knowledge sharing practices of professional librarians such as; brainstorming, verbal discussion, seminars/workshops, mentoring, staff meetings, community of practices and storytelling.

Table 1: Knowledge sharing practices in the library

S/N	I use the following knowledge sharing methods such as....	SD F(%)	D F(%)	N F(%)	A F(%)	SA F(%)	Mea n	SD
1.	Brainstorming	6(2.9)	2(1.0)	6(2.9)	50(24.5)	140(68.6)	4.55	.850
2.	Verbal discussion	6(2.9)	2(1.0)	6(2.9)	52(25.5)	138(67.6)	4.54	.850
3.	Seminars/Workshops	6(2.9)	2(1.0)	28(13.7)	62(30.4)	106(52)	4.27	.943
4.	Mentoring	8(3.9)	18(8.8)	60(29.4)	68(33.3)	50(24.5)	3.66	1.064
5.	Staff meetings	10(4.9)	43(21.1)	42(20.6)	47(23)	62(30.4)	3.53	1.257
6.	Community of practice	32(15.7)	72(35.3)	57(27.9)	27(13.2)	16(7.8)	2.62	1.136
7.	Storytelling	28(13.7)	77(37.7)	68(33.3)	14(6.9)	17(8.3)	2.58	1.077
	I share knowledge on...							
8.	Database search	6(2.9)	0	4(2.0)	72(35.3)	122(59.8)	4.49	.803
9.	Cataloguing /Classification	8(3.9)	0	10(4.9)	87(42.6)	99(48.5)	4.32	.889
10.	Reference services	10(4.9)	0	8(3.9)	85(41.7)	101(49.5)	4.31	.940
11.	User education	6(2.9)	0	22(10.8)	74(36.3)	102(50)	4.30	.885
12.	library marketing through social media	10(4.9)	8(3.9)	12(5.9)	63(30.9)	111(54.4)	4.26	1.067
13.	Current awareness services	6(2.9)	2(1.0)	26(12.7)	80(39.2)	90(44.1)	4.21	.913
14.	Library automation	10(4.9)	1(0.5)	16(7.8)	86(42.2)	91(44.6)	4.21	.972
15.	Reader services	10(4.9)	6(2.9)	14(6.9)	87(42.6)	87(42.6)	4.15	1.018
16.	Acquisition of library materials	6(2.9)	22(10.8)	24(11.8)	84(41.2)	68(33.3)	3.91	1.070
17.	Library policies	8(3.9)	22(10.8)	33(16.2)	94(46.1)	47(23)	3.74	1.054
18.	Selective dissemination of information	10(4.9)	16(7.8)	62(30.4)	68(33.3)	48(23.5)	3.63	1.078
19.	Interlibrary loan services	6(2.9)	75(36.8)	43(21.1)	36(17.6)	44(21.6)	3.18	1.224

Table 1 shows that the respondents strongly agreed that librarians use brainstorming (Mean=4.55, SD=.850) and verbal discussion (Mean=4.54, SD=.850) while sharing knowledge

on database search (Mean=4.49, SD=.803), cataloguing/classification (Mean=4.32, SD=.889), reference services (Mean=4.31, SD=.940), user education (Mean=4.30, SD=.885), library marketing through social media (Mean=4.26, SD=1.067), current awareness services (Mean=4.21, SD=.913), library automation (Mean=4.21, SD=.972) and reader services (Mean=4.15, SD=1.018), followed by librarians who agreed that they use seminars/workshops (Mean=4.27, SD=.943), mentoring (Mean=3.66, SD=1.064) and staff meeting (Mean=3.53, SD=1.257) as knowledge sharing methods.

Research Question Two: What are the types of professional librarians’ service delivery in Ahmadu Bello University Library?

Table 2 presents information on the types of library services available in Ahmadu Bello University Library, which includes; e-reference services, database search, online user education, e- reader services, e-current awareness services, distance learning services, instant messaging services, online interlibrary loans and selective dissemination of information.

Table 2: Types of Library Services

S/N	Types of Library Services	SD F(%)	D F(%)	N F(%)	A F(%)	SA F(%)	Mean	SD
1.	E-reference services	6(2.9)		19(9.3)	76(37.3)	103(50.5)	4.32	.873
2.	Database search	10(4.9)	2(1.0)	10(4.9)	79(38.7)	103(50.5)	4.29	.977
3.	Online user education	8(3.9)	4(2.0)	8(3.9)	115(56.4)	69(33.8)	4.14	.890
4.	E- Reader services	10(4.9)	9(4.4)	20(9.8)	86(42.2)	79(38.7)	4.05	1.051
5.	E-current awareness services	12(5.9)	8(3.9)	29(14.2)	85(41.7)	70(34.3)	3.95	1.084
6.	Selective dissemination of information	16(7.8)	19(9.3)	55(27)	66(32.4)	48(23.5)	3.54	1.176
7.	Instant messaging services	10(4.9)	65(31.9)	57(27.9)	21(10.3)	51(25)	3.19	1.261
8.	Online Interlibrary loans,	16(7.8)	47(23)	62(30.4)	51(25)	28(13.7)	3.14	1.154
9.	Distance learning services	28(13.7)	54(26.5)	44(21.6)	17(8.3)	61(29.9)	3.14	1.443

Table 2 shows the types of library services rendered by professional librarians in Ahmadu Bello University Library. The respondents agreed that professional librarians in Ahmadu Bello University Library provides e-reference services (Mean=4.32, SD=.873), database search (Mean=4.29, SD=.977), online user education (Mean=4.14, SD=.890) and e-reader services (Mean=4.05, SD=1.051) while respondents were neutral on provision of instant messaging services (Mean=3.19, SD=1.261), online interlibrary loans (Mean=3.14, SD=1.154) and distance learning services (Mean=3.14, SD=1.443).

Discussion of Findings

The study examined knowledge sharing practices and service delivery by professional librarians in Ahmadu Bello University Library. The discussion of findings was based on the research questions in the study which were drawn from the objectives of the study.

The findings on knowledge sharing practices of professional librarians in Ahmadu Bello University Library indicated that the respondents strongly agreed that professional librarians use brainstorming and verbal discussion while sharing knowledge on database search, cataloguing/classification, reference services, user education, library marketing through social media, current awareness services, library automation and reader services, followed by librarians who agreed that librarians use seminars/workshops, mentoring and staff meeting as knowledge sharing methods. The result showed that there is a limitation in the use of knowledge sharing practices which necessitates the need for librarians to develop other methods of knowledge sharing such as community of practice and storytelling. The Library as an organization, through knowledge sharing can accelerate the process of knowledge creation and reuse of knowledge through more than the knowledge sharing methods indicated by the sampled librarians so as to move its services forward in this technology advanced age.

The result on the types of service delivery revealed that professional librarians in Ahmadu Bello University Library provides e-reference services, database search, online user education and e-reader services to users, while other respondents were neutral on the libraries' provision of instant messaging services, online interlibrary loans and distance learning services. Similarly, Landis (2010) found that subject guides instructions, acquisition suggestions, catalogue/database searches, chat services, references, discussion, online book clubs and reader advisory can be promoted on social media. On the other hand, Tripathi and Kumar (2010) found that list of new books, library news and events, a list of e-journals, e-resource databases, announcements about workshops and exhibitions, help for catalogue search, research tips, book reviews/discussions and reference services can be promoted on social media.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicated that the respondents strongly agreed that professional librarians use brainstorming and verbal discussion while sharing knowledge on database search, cataloguing/classification, reference services, user education, library marketing through social media, current awareness services, library automation and reader services, followed by librarians who agreed that librarians use seminars/workshops, mentoring and staff meeting as knowledge sharing methods. The result showed that there is a limitation in the use of knowledge sharing practices which necessitates the need for librarians to develop other methods of knowledge sharing such as community of practice and storytelling.

Recommendations

In line with the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Knowledge sharing practices such as mentoring, community of practices, staff meetings and storytelling which were not fully used to share knowledge by librarians should be encouraged in the library.

2. Librarians should be encouraged to promote library services such as: e-current awareness services, selective dissemination of information, instant messaging services and distance learning services which were moderately promoted in the library.

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