

## Empowering Librarians For Emerging Technologies Through Capacity Building

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### **Abstract**

*With the emerging technologies, library automation has become a major feature of the library in this digital age which library operations and services are managed through computerization and networking. It has become a challenge for the librarians to shift from the traditional role to present reality of information and communication technology tools, this necessity for training and development of the librarians through capacity building. A well-trained librarian would make better and economic use of hardware and software facilities which would go a long way to aid the full scale automation of library. Hence, this paper focused on library automation trend and the training needs of library professional to meet the challenge of today's libraries and the need to enhance the proficiency of library professional in Nigeria. The paper concludes and recommends that tertiary education trust fund allocation for library should be mobilized for library automation and subsequent provision of adequate budgetary allocation for training and development of librarians, orienting library professionals on the need for library automation training and retraining of all the staff that are involved in the working of the library.*

**Keywords:** Automation, ICT, librarians, training library personnel.

## **Introduction**

History of library indicates that libraries started off as storehouses, where books were more preserved than utilized and librarians as the custodians of the books and their interaction with users were minimal, as a custodian the librarian did not encourage the use of books as the users are expected to use the library on their own. At most, if a user asked for a book, then the service that would be offered by the librarian was to pass on the book and leave the user alone. From the ancient times to present, it is evidently clear that these trends in services were tremendously changing due to information technology (Mayega, 2008). Since the 1980 each new step in library automation has changed library services. Library automation is a generic term often used in discussing the use of computers and related equipment to help libraries handle and manage the physical materials that comprise library collections. For philosophical and semantic reasons some prefer to use “library mechanization” or data processing in libraries, all these terms refer essentially to the same activities. Since no universal definition of library automation seems to exist a functional explanation appropriate to this work is “the use of electronic data processing equipment and supporting technology to assist in acquiring processing, storing and maintaining the collection and in making the collection available to users by circulation, reference services, inter library loan and telecommunication. Technological assistance has been most effective in creating and maintaining the many records including the bibliographic apparatus (catalogs), necessary for proper control of the collection and for providing service to library users (Shera, 1976).

According to Ram (2018), library automation is used to refer “the extensive use of mechanical electronic or microelectronic equipments to perform the functions and activities associated with the libraries, such as acquisition, serial control, cataloguing and circulation and also to library and information services and networking”. Computers are used in libraries to assist in a number of library routines necessary for efficient day-to-day functioning what is called housekeeping activities. They are used for formatting and generation of indexes. The computers are of great significance with the advancement of telecommunication and reprography technologies in the library automation, when computers are interconnected by some of the modern communication vehicles, one can have information over vast distances in no time. The computers are being increasingly used in library and information services for information processing and repackaging of information and on improving products and services of library and information centres. They offer a versatile tool for organization and retrieval of information (Ram, 2018).

In hindsight we can see a number of trends among them: access from multiple locations, making more resources available, making information available in raw forms and diminishment in the role of intermediaries. All these trends have been enabled by technological developments in the area of networking, file storage, and more graphic user interface. Today, there has been a shift in the role of libraries from the clearing house of products and a service centre for printed publications towards becoming an intermediary for traditional materials and for networked service based on digital information resources. Information resources come in various format-printed, audio, video multimedia and electronic. These resources may or may not be owned by the library. Some of these resources may be free and available to users directly, others are available only through libraries that have acquired them. Libraries are expected to add value to the products and services. Adding value to information is part of the core and expertise of libraries. Value is added to information by facilitating access through indexing and bibliographic, description, and through the creation of systems, which make information more logically organized and easier to find. Librarians themselves add value to the collection by helping users navigate the universe of information through content development institutions, search services and interface assistance (Mayega, 2008).

### Capacity building via training

In library and information science, capacity building is defined by Ifidon and Ifidon (2007):

The enhancement of the factors that make for user satisfaction, the realization of the library's parent organization's functions and the achievement of the library's objectives. These factors include generous financial support from all possible sources; skilled, knowledgeable and competent staff; bibliographic and electronic information resources; physical facilities such as space requirements, furniture and equipment; and technical expertise.

In other words, library capacity building involves activities which strengthen the knowledge, abilities, and behaviour of individuals (library staff and users) and improve institutional structures and processes such that the library can effectively and efficiently meet its mission and goals in a sustainable way. Thus, it is more than just training of library professionals and support staff: rather, it includes human resources development in general, the process of equipping individuals with understanding skills and access to information, knowledge and training that enables them to perform effectively; provision of informational materials, that equip librarians to render the required service; library development and the elaboration of management structures. It is important to re-emphasise that capacity building is not just education and training or technology transfer although they are tools that can be used to develop capacity; it is not about experts imparting knowledge to others; rather it is based on the concept of everyone learning together and this can be with input from people who have special expertise; and it is not a process where an organization external to the process can determine the final outcome. For the librarian to perform effectively and efficiently it means he requires a lot of training and development programme in library automation. Ajidahun (2007) noted that training is needed for managerial and non-managerial staff of any profession though they are very essential for non-managerial staff that constitutes a large portion of the total employment in an academic library. Goldsmith (2007) observed that training for both staff and users is an important part of the library mission, thus training in the area of digitization remains core for the 21st-century librarian.

Training is one imperative activity in every organization that no manager or administrator should ignore. The importance of training the employees of an organization hinges on the incontrovertible fact that no organization can reckon optimal productivity in the absence of well trained employees. It is evident that training has relationship with efficiency hence it is crystal clear that a situation where the other factors of production are adequately provided but the human resources lack the requisite capabilities and competences, the overall productivity of the organization will definitely suffer a set-back. Training has been defined by various scholars. Ogunna (1991) has quoted Jucius (1971) as defining training as a "process by which the aptitudes, skills and abilities of employees to perform specific jobs are increased". Training imbues the employee with the right knowledge and morale to carry out his functions. Sharma et al (2011) notes that:

A definition more in consonance with notions prevalent about the training in the sphere of public administration would be that it is a conscious effort made to improve or increase an employee's skill, powers or intelligence and to develop his attitudes and schemes of values in desired direction.

The foregoing definition makes it glaring that beside enabling an employee to gain an increased skill and knowledge of how to perform his responsibilities in an organization, training also enables the employee to develop attitudes and values that are in tandem with that of the organization.

Avasthi and Maheshwari (2004) have averred in Njoku (2009) that training “is a well articulated effort to provide for an increased competence in the public services by imparting professional knowledge, broader vision and correct patterns of behaviour, habits and attitudes. It is or should be a continuous process in response to a continuously felt need”. These scholars went further in their own definition to bring to the limelight the fact that training is not done once and for all should be a repetitive activity in relation to the felt needs of the organization. The implication is that a personnel of an organization should be trained and re-trained as need arises. As new technologies and innovations emerge in a work place the personnel should be trained to meet up with the challenges posed by such development.

According to McFarland (1968) quoted in Ojo (1998) “Training is the term used to describe the process through which organization build the skills and abilities of non-managerial employees”. Ojo’s definition paints a picture of the category of personnel that training is meant for. The implication of the assertion is that training is not meant for the managerial cadre. Glaringly training is meant for the enhancement of abilities to perform specific tasks and the management function is not circumscribed into specifics hence they require development instead of training. In line with this differentiation, Ojo (1998) explains that “development on the other hand includes the process by which managers and executives acquire not only skills and competence in their present jobs but also capacity for future managerial tasks of increasing difficulty and scope” Ojo (1998) further notes that “to sharpen the distinction between the two terms, some experts refer to training as “employee training” and development as ‘management development’ or ‘executive development’. Whatsoever the semantic differences are, it must be highlighted that enhancement of the capabilities of organizational, personnel is of utmost importance. Ajakemo and Aroh (2005) outlines the six principal areas public servants are required to be trained as follows:

- a. Behavioural and human relations training
- b. Technical and professional training
- c. Professional training
- d. Supervisory training
- e. Executive and managerial training
- f. Training of administrators.

Besides, it is important to point out that training is different from education. Education is more wholistic than training which is usually specific and tailored to a particular purpose. Beach (1975) quoted in Njoku (2009) succinctly states that “while education is wider in scope and is concerned with the total development of the individual, training is narrower in scope and is concerned with the development of specific skills for definite purposes. Education is predominantly formal in nature and generally done in schools, colleges and universities while training occurs in work organization and is vocationally oriented possessing a more immediate utilitarian purpose”. Without mincing words, it must be pointed out that conception of education as an activity that takes place only within the educational institution amounts to a narrow conception, as education can be formal or informal Obviously, Beach by limiting education as an activity within an educational institution waves aside informal education which is however foremost in moulding the mind and personality of persons. Consequently the conception of education by Ticker seems to be a necessary compliment. Ticker clarifies in Sharma et al (2011) that “Training must be distinguished from education; its scope is narrower and more specific than that of education which includes the complete upbringing of the individual from childhood, the formation of character, of habits and manners of mental and physical aptitude”.

Training is the process by which employees acquire capabilities to aid in the achievement of organizational goals (Mathis and Jackson, 2004), hence the need for training and development activity to help in achieving the full automation of academic libraries in Nigeria. According to McClelland (2002), training and development is essential not only to increase productivity but also to motivate and inspire workers by letting them know how important their jobs are and giving them all the information they need to perform those jobs of which librarian and library staff are not exempted. The training and staff development programme can be acquired through capability building, and development programme:

### **Staff development**

The objects of library staff development programmes are to:

1. Enable the staff to make a more effective contribution to the library's total effort in its service mission;
2. Make the individual look for satisfaction that goes beyond economic; i.e for self-pride, self-respect and achievement;
3. Prepare the staff for the challenge of complex modern technology which requires an integration of activities and persons of diverse and specialized competence;
4. Enable the library workers to develop a life of their own outside the library;
5. Make the staff receptive to change and innovation rather than resistant to them;
6. Create a climate where the dignity of employees as human beings, not just as factors contributing to the library's efficiently, is respected; and
7. Prepare the individual for a new, different and higher responsibility.

From the above aims, it is obvious that staff development has been used in its broadest sense to include:

#### **i) Induction course**

Induction course is also known as orientation. It is the foremost course or training given to a new employee to acquaint him with the responsibilities of his office, organizational values and norms as well as relationships in the organization. This initial training helps to get the new employee integrated into the organization and allays the fears that accompanies taking up a new task. Beach (1980) points out in Ojo (1998:205) that induction is "the guided adjustment of the employee to the organization and his work environment". Induction course enables the new employee to develop the right work attitude. This training helps him to appreciate that his will and goals should be subordinated to that of the organization. Thus induction training while helping the new employee to take off well also helps the organization to enjoy harmony and maintain organizational stability. Considering the fact that most new entrants into the public service lack the basic knowledge of the duties of the office and norms and values of the public service, induction should be mandatory. But in Nigerian public service, it is evident that most employees take off without passing through this foremost training. The resultant effect is that most public servants learn their jobs through the rule of the thumb which is, the hard way -trial and error.

#### **ii) On the job training**

This is a type of training whereby employees learn the job by being allowed to perform the tasks under the supervision and/or guidance of experienced personnel. Sylvia and Meyer (2002) noted that "In on the job training (OJT), the worker interacts with the supervisor or with experienced and competent peers while actually performing the tasks associated with the job". Through on the job training, the inexperienced employee is trained and exposed to the knowledge and techniques of carrying out his duty. In this kind of training, the trainee learns the job with the actual tools and equipment he would use in discharge of the responsibilities of his office. On the job training is a common method of training organizational employees.

Ojo (1998) posits that two types of on the job training are apprenticeship training and internship. Ezeani (2006) however sees apprenticeship not as a variant of on the job training but as a distinct type of training. Ojo (1998) explains succinctly that:

Apprenticeship training which dates back to the craft guild system of the middle ages is the most predominant type of on the job training. It is a variation of on-the-job training which is used in jobs that require relatively long periods of training and specific levels of skills such as welding, carpentry, plumbing and auto mechanics... internship also known as clerkship, pupilage or assistantship depending on the professional training involved is designed to provide practical realistic experience under supervision for professional or semi-professional employees.

iii) **In-service training**

In-service training is one of the ways through which public servants enhance their capabilities to perform their jobs. While on in-service training, the employee receives his full emolument and also has his course fees paid by his employer. The Public Service Rules (2006) in 100225 states that “officers shall be granted inservice training for a period not exceeding two years with normal emoluments, allowances and course fees. The period of study shall count towards gratuity and pension”. It must be pointed out that courses for which civil servants are granted in- service training must be contained in the training proposals of the ministry/extra ministerial office. Where the course/programme an employee wishes to embark on is not contained in the training proposal of the ministry/extra ministerial office but the office feels that though the training is not contained on its training proposal, that it will help the employee to be more efficient and fulfilled in his job, the office may approve study leave without pay for the employee. Under this arrangement, the employee embarks on the study at his own cost and neither salaries nor course fee will be paid to him during the period of the study.

iv) **Conferences, workshops and seminars**

Conferences, workshops and seminars constitute another major way through which public servants are trained. Conferences are usually interactive/participatory hence the trainees share ideas on the subject matter. Ogunna (1999:239) quotes Beach (1975) as defining a conference as “a small group meeting conducted according to an organized plan in which the leader seeks to develop knowledge and understanding by obtaining a considerable amount of oral participation from the trainees or students”, more so, workshops and seminars are usually organized for public servants to expose them to relevant developments in their jobs. In these workshops and seminars the employees are trained and/or guided on the very issue by resource persons.

v) **Organized visits**

Visits to other library systems offer staff members opportunities to observe operations in other libraries, to exchange ideas and to realize that library problems can be solved in more ways than one. The good features of the libraries visited could be suggested for trial in one’s own library.

vi) **Short courses**

Any course – whether a one-week or a three-month course – in a special skill can be effective in developing a staff. These short courses are normally not restricted to librarianship: courses in management, automation and public relations are illustrative examples of courses outside librarianship which are valuable to librarians.

**Reason for training in the service**

There are diverse reasons for training employees in the public service and indeed in all organizations. The reasons include:

1. To make the employee more effective in the discharge of his responsibilities thereby increasing productivity.
2. To boost the morale of the employee and also engender in him appreciation of the requisite work attitudes and values in the organization. This culminates in increase in job satisfaction and reduces the rate of personnel turnover.
3. To shape the mind of a public servant to perceive himself as a servant instead of a master.
4. To enable a new employee undertake his tasks with more: courage and mastery thereby reducing to the minimal level operational errors, accidents and damages. This brings low the cost arising from the wastes and maintenance of equipment.
5. To adapt the workforce to changing methods and techniques of their job in a fast changing world.
6. To prepare an employee to undertake a higher duty and responsibility.
7. To rekindle a team spirit among the employees.

The benefits of training library professionals for library automation cannot be either rated or overemphasized especially in advanced technology age where librarians' roles have changed from traditional sources of information to technology. A large self-improvement training facilities can be accessed online with the training personnel involvement. Confirming the above statement, Mayo (2001) states that these innovations have made possible a wide range of class-related activities in the cybercafé and it is now possible to get training anyway and anytime. Similarly, Anozie (2009), and Ugwu and Ekere (2010) enumerate some of the benefits of training library professionals as follows:

- ❖ Training help library staff to learn their job quickly and effectively thereby reducing the cost involved in learning.
- ❖ It helps librarians to update themselves in the fields of specialization thereby improving work performance.
- ❖ It serves as a tool used in developing the full potentials or effectiveness of staff in an organization.
- ❖ Training result in a skilled workforce.
- ❖ Attitude to work by library staff can be changed through training.

**Problems that affect librarian's capacity building development**

Despite the benefits of training of librarians for the task of the emerging technologies; the following problems affect the smooth running of staff capacity building plan.

- There is no adequate budgetary provision for library development, this affect staff development as training and development cost are high and the institution most time are reluctant to adequately train its staff.
- Lack of sponsorship from individuals and corporate bodies.
- Some staff perceives training more as a mechanism for their career advancement rather as a mean of imbibing knowledge for improving work attitudes, skills and behavioral patterns in the institution.
- In public institution training is often seem as a privilege to be granted to the favorites of the management while those that are not in the good books of the management are denied training even when they obviously need training in order to perform optimally.

## Conclusion

For libraries in Nigeria to live up to the expectation of the 21st-century libraries, there is need for full implementation of library automation as this will encompass online connectivity via the Internet amongst other things and library professionals need to be trained efficiently in skills. Only through this will academic libraries be able to provide effective and functional services and thereby maintaining their edge as leading libraries in the country.

## Recommendations

The paper recommend as follows:

1. Librarians should mobilize Tertiary Education Trust Fund allocation for the library to fund automation projects and subsequent provision of adequate budgetary allocation for training and development of librarians.
2. A committee should be set up to plan, implement and maintain the improvement of library automation. A year-wise development plan for library automation and service must be added into the library automation plan. The committee must keep in mind the expenditure for library automation and also for further maintenance and development cost for a successful automation process.
3. Librarians should survey different automated libraries to exchange experiences before selecting the software for their library. Choice of the library software must be carefully considered with emphasis on the flexibility and ability to meet present as well as future library needs.
4. Library management should ensure maintenance culture. The equipment should be consistently sustained by adequately providing for Internet subscription and maintenance of the facilities and equipment.
5. Orienting library professionals on the need for library automation training and librarians changing role. There must be a drastic attitudinal change in the way librarians leave the entire library automation project in the hands of computer experts.
6. Librarians should brace up to fill the gap in computer application and use which presently constitutes a boundary between them and system analysts.
7. Training and retraining of all the staff that are involved in the automation service provision chain. Likewise, to overcome the low comfort level of technologies, there is a need to embark on result-oriented training practices for library professionals.

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