Regularity of Publication and Quality of Library and Information Science Journals

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Abstract

Purpose: This study investigated the influence of regularity of publication on quality of Library and Information Science (LIS) journals in South East and South- South Zones of Nigeria.

Design: The survey research design was used because the investigation involves studying a group of items by collecting and analyzing data from a few people considered to be representative of the entire group. Questionnaire instrument was used to elicit response from the target audience. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. The hypotheses were tested, using t- test and Multiple Regression Analysis. The item mean of the independent variable gives us the idea on the level of choice of the respondents.

Findings: The findings showed that Regularity of Publication has significant influence on Quality of Library and Information Science Journals in South East and South-South Zones of Nigeria. On the basis of these findings, it was concluded that regularity of publication should be the watch word of LIS journal publishers, in view of the observed significant influence. It was recommended among others that LIS journals should be widely distributed, to create awareness and attract contributors, which will in turn help in sustaining the journals. Research Limitation/Implications: This study provided empirical knowledge on the current status of publication indices and quality of Library and Information Science journals. The findings would be of benefit to the university librarians in Nigeria and librarians in other types of libraries; policy makers, or sponsoring institutions, publishers and vendors.

Originality/Value: The outcome of this study will enable sponsoring institutions and publishers provide more funds to increase regularity and frequency of publications of Library and Information Science (LIS) journals.

Keywords: Influence, Regularity, Publications, Quality assurance, Library Science, Journals, Scholarly communications, South East, Nigeria

Paper type: Empirical research

Introduction

The ability to communicate extensively is one unique quality of man. This quality is aided by the ability to read and write, so that knowledge acquired by one generation is passed to subsequent generations through publishing. Publishing is the activity that involves the selection, preparation, and distribution of written and visual matter. It is the production and dissemination of information and the ability of making information available for public view (Ifejika & Ifejika, 2003). Traditionally, the term refers to the distribution of printed works, such as journals and books. With the advent of digital information systems and the Internet, the scope of publishing has expanded to include the production of electronic resources, such as the electronic versions of books and periodicals, as well as websites.

Publishing is a team work which is said to be complete when a manuscript has been transformed into a book and this process involves proper planning and management. To carry out a particular publishing project, the following processes are involved: conception, writing, typesetting, illustrating, printing, binding, marketing, promotion, publicity, warehousing and distribution (Okwilagwe, 2001). Each stage demands different personnel and varied skills, all of which must be effectively harnessed to manufacture a product which will satisfy the customer's need at a profit.

Hoyle, (2007) states that quality assurance (QA) in its broadest sense is defined as any action taken to prevent quality problems from will be fulfilled. In practice this means devising systems for carrying out tasks which directly affect product quality. Journal publishing is a way of exchanging knowledge among people of the same profession. Research findings are disseminated to colleagues through articles published in journals. Unlike books, journals are considered to provide current information emanating from research findings and that is why it must be published regularly. A journal is a periodical issued by a society, institution or any private initiative and containing news, proceedings, transactions and reports of work carried out in a particular field. It should be published regularly if it is to report transactions, reports and proceedings of events in the field. Although a journal is expected to be published at least twice a year, many journals were published once a year, with some often combining the issues.

Statement of the Problem

In order to provide more publishing outlets for the teaming Nigerian University academics, many individuals and associations have sponsored journals in different disciplines. Unfortunately, in spite of many library and information science journals in Nigeria, evidence shows that the challenges facing the publishing of these journals are numerous. Among them are sustainability, visibility, management, research, open access, electronic access. For example, the results from a recent study carried out by Mabawonku and Aina (2005) on LIS journals in West Africa found that lack of sustainability, poor or restricted visibility, irregularity and poor distribution are major challenges facing West African LIS journals.

Preliminary observation by these researchers reveals that some LIS journals have one shortcoming or the other with regard to publishing indices. Many of them are characterized by high mortality rate, lateness and lack of periodicity in publishing, lack of international visibility, and limited distribution of journals.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were stated as follows:

occurring. Or as part of quality management focused on providing that quality requirements

1. To determine the influence of regularity of publication on the quality of LIS journals.
2. To determine the influence of physical format of the publication on the quality of LIS journals.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in the fact that it has provided empirical knowledge on the current status of publication indices and quality of Library and Information Science journals. The findings would be of benefit to the university librarians in Nigeria and elsewhere, Librarians in other types of libraries, policy makers, or sponsoring institutions, publishers and vendors. With the knowledge acquired from this study the librarians would be awakened to their important position of creating markets for the publications and also of guiding the publisher on the publication needs. For the policy makers and sponsoring bodies, this study will make them formulate favourable policies, and provide more funds to increase the size and regularity of the publications

Regularity of Publication and Quality of Journals

A journal is a periodical issued by a society, institution or any private initiative and containing news proceedings, transactions and reports of work carried out in a particular field. It should be published regularly if it is to report transaction, reports and proceedings of events in the field. Although a journal is expected to be published at least twice a year, many journals were published once a year, with some often combining the issues. Studies by (Alemna ,1998, Mabawouku&Aina, 2005), have shown that journals published in Africa are not regular. This could affect the rating of the journals, considering that all the top rated overseas journals are published regularly and on schedule.

Many scholarly journals published in Europe and USA are sustainable because the journals are well managed through the receipt of manuscript from authors which are speedily subjected to peer reviewing process and are published on Schedule. The case of Africa is pathetic (Azubike,1980), Ifidon,(1994), and Aina (1994), have painted the gloomy picture

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of scholarly journals in Africa. Azubuike, (1980) confirmed by saying that:

> *Mortality rates have increased with proliferation of journals for instance, while it took 10 years for 66 percent of the journals started in or before 1970 to cease publication, it took only five for the same proportion to cease for those started on or before 1975, and up to 15 percent of journals published in or before 1980 did not publish for more than one year.pp.23*

The problem is very serious in that many journals started in 1980 alone when considered indicated that 50 percent of them do not show evidence that they are still being published. In another study, Ifidon (1994) stated that:

> *The life span of Nigerian journals varies from one journal to another. In general the average life expectancy is about two years during this period only one or two issues are published. Those that stay active find it difficult to maintain their frequency of publication. At best two issues are published together well after the publication date. Pp2*

A decade after Ifidon's study, the situation is still a far cry from the ideal. The features of library and information science (LIS) journals in Nigeria can be described as follows; high mortality rate, lateness and lack of periodicity in publishing, lack of international visibility, limited distribution of journals (Aina, 1994; Apeji, 1990 and Azubuike 1990). The situation was not different as captured by Aina & Mabawonku (1996). In their study of African LIS Journals, they found out that most scholarly journals published in Africa are beset with a lot of problems, such as short life span, irregularity in appearance of journals as many of these journals sometimes come out 2-3 years behind schedule. The major problem of Nigerian journals is that they are not sustainable. This is attributed to the poor management of scholarly journals in Nigeria. Journals are published several years behind schedule and the authors are denied visibility in the scholarly community because the journals in which they publish their research findings are unknown to the international scholarly community. A large number of journals do not circulate beyond the localities in which they were published. The best indicator for measuring the impact of a journal is the impact factor which is defined as "the frequency of citations to number of articles published two years earlier." To measure the impact factor to journals in 2005 one will find the number of citations to the articles, published by the journals in 2003 and 2004. According to Azubike in Aina (2005) even at the best of times when Nigeria journals were of high quality none of Nigerian journals was listed among the 52 third world journals adjudged to be of high impact in science citation index in 1973.

The problems noted could affect the rating of journals published in Nigeria. However, it should be noted that the delay in publishing is often due to lack of funds, lack of contributors and some time printer's delay and not only the negligence of the editors. The analysis of 30 LIS journals studied by Aina, (2005) found that the majority of the journals were published twice a year, while this is satisfactory, the desired frequency should be quarterly. Only one of the sampled journals was published monthly; however a substantial number of the journals were published annually. Obviously, such journals cannot serve as scholarly journals since scholarly journals are expected to report the latest developments in a discipline. A situation in which a journal is published annually is unacceptable and proprietors of such journals will need to increase the frequency of appearance.

Research Method

The survey research design was used because the investigation involves studying a group of items by collecting and analyzing data from a few people considered to be representative of the entire group. Questionnaire instrument was used to elicit response from the target audience. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The hypotheses were tested, using t- test and Multiple Regression Analysis. The item mean of the independent variable gives us the idea on the level of choice of the respondents.

Research Question

What is the influence of regularity of publication on quality of library and information science journals?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of influence of regularity on quality

Variable	$\overline{X}$	SD	$\overline{X}$ (Item Mean)

Variable	$\overline{X}$	SD	$\overline{X}$ (Item Mean)
Regularity	18.84	4.38	4.71
Quality	56.71	5.19	

N = 273

The item of 4.71 indicated that the respondents were very satisfied that regularity of publication do influence the quality output of library and information science journals since the item mean of 4.71 is above the upper limit of undecided of 3.5.

What is the influence of physical format of publication on quality of LIS journals?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of influence of physical format of publication on quality of LIS journals

Variable	$\overline{X}$	SD	$\overline{X}$ (Item Mean)
Format	17.69	4.81	4.42
Quality	56.71	5.69	

N = 273

Hypothesis

Regularity of publication has no significant influence on quality of library and information science journals.

Related t-test was used to test the null hypothesis and summary data shows in table 1

Since the computed t of 8.28 (without the negative sign) was greater than the critical t of 1.96 at df of 271 and 0.5 level of significant; the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore regularity of publication significantly influence the quality of LIS journals output.

The negative sign indicated that the mean for quality output was greater than that of regularity

Ho2: Physical format of the publication has no significant influence on quality of LIS journals.

Table 3 mean and standard deviation of Influence of regularity of publication on quality of LIS journals

Variable	$\overline{X}$	SD	tcal	tcri
Regularity	18.84	4.38	-8.28*	1.96
Quality	56.71	5.19		

N = 273   * significant P>.05, df = 271

Table 4: Influence of physical format of the publication on quality of LIS journals

Variable	$\overline{X}$	SD	tcal	tcri
Regularity	18.84	4.38	-7.16*	1.96
Quality	56.71	5.19		

N = 273   * significant P>.05, df = 271

Regularity of Publication and Quality of Library and Information Science Journals

The result of testing hypothesis one revealed a positive significant influence on quality of library and information science journals. This means that regularity of publication is significantly related to quality of library and information science

Hypothesis

Regularity of publication has no significant influence on quality of library and information science journals.

Related t-test was used to test the null hypothesis and summary data shows in table 1

Discussion or Findings

The result of testing hypothesis one revealed a positive significant influence on quality of library and information science journals. This means that regularity of publication is significantly related to quality of library and

information science journals. This finding when compared to the findings of Mabawonku (2005) on 16 journals titles published in Nigeria revealed that, if the number of journals published in Nigeria were reduced to four the fewer surviving journals might be better funded and published more regularly.

The analysis of 30 LIS journals studied by (Aina, 2005) found that the majority of the journals were published twice a year, while this is satisfactory, the desired frequency should be quarterly. Only one of the sampled journals was published monthly; however a substantial number of the journals were published annually. Obviously, such journals cannot serve as scholarly journals since scholarly journals are expected to report the latest developments in a discipline. This confirms the service quality models which highlight the main requirements for delivering the expected quality. Paraseraman,(1985) believes that the quality of the journal should be "perceived quality" rather than "objective quality. This means that quality is dependent on customers' perception of what they expect from a service and what they believe they have received. A situation in which a journal is published annually is unacceptable and proprietors of such journals need to increase the frequency of appearance.

Conclusions

On the basis of the research findings, the following conclusion were drawn that: Regularity of publication has significant influence on quality of library and information science journals in the South - South and South Eastern Zones of Nigeria. Journals contain current information emanating from research findings; therefore, publishing the findings regularly makes the journal relevant.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings and conclusions of this study.

1. Library and Information Science Journal Publishers should ensure that the journals produced are widely distributed which will sustain the journal.
2. LIS journals should be made more visible, through wide distribution, online access and indexing to create awareness and attract contributors from all states of the nation and beyond.

3. Editors should communicate contributors educating them on their pit falls and necessary areas of improvement.

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