INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AS TOOL FOR UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Stephen U. OBOCHI [1], Lynda U. OBOCHI[2] & Cosmas C. NWAFOR [3]
Advanced Space Technology Applications Laboratory Uyo, Center for Basic Space Science, UNN. Enugu State University of Science and Technology[1,2,3]
stephenobochi@yahoo.com[1], lyndaobochi9292@gmail.com[2], nwaforcosmas@gmail.com[3].

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to discuss information management as a tool for university libraries development in Nigeria, roles and itschallenges. Information management helps to access, utilize, control and coordinate the information assets or resources available in an institution (academic libraries).

Design/Methodology/Approach: An explanatory approach through extensive review of related literatures was adopted for this study. Discussion on the roles and challenges of information management in academic libraries in Nigeria was elaborated.

Findings: This paper discussed the roles or importance of information management in academic libraries which are controlling creation of records (repository or archival work), reducing operating costs, adopting new technologies, improving productivity and efficiency, protecting proprietary information and preserving cooperate memory and appropriate decision while their challenges are inadequate funds, inadequate of basic education and ICT skills, unaccommodating space and inadequate infrastructure/resources, power failure and maintenance of ICT tools / facilities.

Practical Implication: Due to Information explosion, Information management has brought about the integration of ICT facilities in managing information resources in academic libraries in order to handle bulk information resources.

Originality/Value: It is recommended that there should bea profound solution in tackling the challenges facing information management in academic libraries for efficiency and accuracy in handling vast information assets or resources.

Keywords: Information Management, Academic Libraries, Information, I.C.T etc.

Paper Type: Conceptual Paper

Introduction

Information is considered essential to human-national development and growth, likewise library. This growth has lead to the shift from printed information to ICT base or digital information format as it becomes gate way to global information networks. According to Opaleke and Babafemi (2013), the new information age and the exponential growth in communication technologies have presented new opportunities for libraries to become gateway to the global information networks. What is information; - according to Ifukor (2011), is any message or news either read (printed or non printed), viewed or told verbally which adds to our awareness or understanding of some topics, problems or events.

Information management has to deal with a way an institution access, utilize, control and coordinates the information assets which are all the various records and information resources available in an institution. Information assets are library professionals, printed and non-printed resources handled by the institution. Library professionals are the most valuable information asset in libraries. Library patrons, clients or users expect from Library and Information Scientist /Professionals to help in accessing and retrieving the relevant information or information resources at the correct time and managing the information appropriately. These professionals who carry out the information management

responsibilities require specific knowledge, skills and attributes related to managing information, library services, archiving, data management, content management, information access and retrieval in the context of digital information product and services.

Information is a strategic resource and has become important in this growing society. University libraries have invested a significant amount of their library financial plan in purchasing information resources. This valuable information resources need to be managed effectively and efficiently in libraries so as to provide library and information services sustainably in the university terrain (Rifaudeen M. M. 2015). What is university library? - University library is anacademic library owned and funded by its parent institution, which supports learning, teaching and researchprogrammes in the institution where it is located. Academic libraries are at the forefront of providing information resources to its communities which comprises of students, lectures, researchers and people outside academic environment through the collection and acquisition of information resources, for storage, retrieval, managing, accessing and dissemination to its client in order to support their teaching, learning and research needs (Obochi, 2017). Information explosion has brought about the integration of ICT facilities in managing information resource in the university or academic libraries in order to handle bulk information resources.

It is not only acquiring valuable resources in the university library terrain but on how to organize them either manually (shelving) or using ICT facilities for easy retrieval and dissemination of it to the target group. When this is acknowledged, information management comes into play.

Choo (1998) defines "information management as a cycle of processes that support the organization's learning activities: identifying information needs, acquiring information, organizing and storing information, developing information products and services, distributing information, and using information.

The member of academic library staffs have to be competent in modern information communication and technology (ICT) and information management skills in order to master the cycle process of information management that supports terms of ever changing information seeking behavior and of the predicted and changing needs of the library patrons in order to serve over a long period of time.

There is a big demand for information management experts for the workload ahead even in this digital information era. University libraries face enormous challenges in managing information and have to tackles the challenges by managing the libraries effectively for tomorrow and transformation of the libraries to a sustainable future. Information Management skills play an important role in managing libraries for a sustainable future and development. Integration approach of information management with other managerial and ICT skills helps in making libraries, a sustainable future and development.

The academic Library professionals who work in the university libraries that are digitalized are required to have knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to create, store, analyze, organize, retrieve, and disseminate print and digital information. The new digital information environment requires university librarians to acquire new skills like web 2.0 technologies, internet, and ICT and information management skills to manage a vast amount of digital information and sustain the digital information and services over a long period of time. Academic library professionals of this information age must realize the importance of the new knowledge skills and update them for making the library sustainable and managing the flow of information effectively.

Information Management (IM) can be used in a library to value the institution's intangible assets in order to best leverage knowledge inwards and outwards (Choo, 2002). The internal information can be integrated in the daily library work of life in order to contribute to institutional learning. It can be used in order to expand learning throughout facilitation of information sharing and knowledge creation

through an integrated approach to Information Management (Mirijamdotter and Somerville, 2014b). In a wider view, Information Management can help information-intensiveestablishments, such as university libraries, manage their information and realize its potential in a way that the intended end-users know it exists, can understand it, as well as access and apply it. When information is managed effectively, it facilitates collaboration among staff, and advances organization learning and decision making based on that information (Mirijamdotter and Somerville, 2014a). Information Management can also lead to improvements in the way staff use the captured information, when facilitated by enabling institutional systems, to engage in knowledge activities (Somerville and Chatzipanagiotou, 2015; Elsevier, 2015; Mirijamdotter and Somerville, 2014). Information Management integrates people, processes, technology and content. It starts with the collection and management of both physical and electronic information of organizations, and the dissemination of this information to the interested clients by using digital technologies and information systems. It includes all systems and processes within institutions that are used or can be used for the creation and use of corporate information with the aim of developing or operating the organization more efficiently (Chatzipanagiotou, 2016; Business Dictionary, 2015; Gartner, 2013).

Information management aims at improving the effectiveness of university library by managing information as a resource-providing access to relevant information in a timely and cost-effective manner. Good information management enables academic libraries to have meaningful, reliable and usable information when needed and providing mechanism for ensuring accountability and managing risk.

Librarians or information managers must identify the user community and their information requirement, engage qualified staff to man the management information systems, train the information professionals, automate the library and adopt proper information management strategies to improve the efficiency of information in tertiary education in Nigeria.

Information management emphasizes on the provision and distribution of the right information to the appropriate users who differ in age, gender, occupation, location, etc. It concerns the circle of organizational activities namely the acquisition of information from one or more sources, the custodianship and the distribution of that information to those who need it and its ultimate disposition, archiving or deletion. Wilson (2002) alsodefines information management as the task of managing the relationship between objectives, management processes and information needed in the development of an information strategy. If the information resources are not properly organized and managed, it may lead to loss or damage of data which will in turn deny the society of vital information and data needed for development. Information management entails the treatment of information or message in order to ensure easy handling and that theright users receive and understand the content. It also involves appropriate targeting, packaging and dissemination of information or information resources. Information management is the act of planning, budgeting, controlling andexploitation of information resources. Langemo (1982) describe information management in the context of organization as involving a wide capability of creating, maintaining, retrieving, and immediately making available the right information in the right place at the right time in the hands of the right user at the lowest cost in the best medium for use in decision making. From the foregoing, we can deduce that information management deals with proper and timely creation, organization, coordination and dissemination of information to the benefit of the user.

The factors that have greatly influenced the information management are: information explosion, proliferation of documents and extensive use of information handling technologies. At leastthe information management system should meet at least two requirements:

- to bring the information being looked for, and

- to bring the required information fast (it has to be a time saving device).

Information Management and Its Role inthe University Libraries

Information management allows an institution or establishment to achieve various goals. It improves compliance, reduces risk and controls access to vital information.

The importance of information management in the university libraries:

1. **Controls creation of records (repository or archival work):**An effective information management system can help an institution to controls the creation and growth of records. With a defined strategy for creating and recording information, the academic libraries can produce less printed andnon printed records resources.This leads to reduction of time for retrieving records and costs of managing information resources. To encourage this,information management professionals in the libraries should set creation of records control to improve productivity and efficiency.

2. **Reduces operating costs**: Libraries needs an efficient information management system to reduce the cost of information resources orrecords keeping (which is repository or archival work). Data collection, information storage and sharing are capital-intensive activities, especially for large libraries. Information management prioritizes the most important records, reducing expenses throughout the information lifecycle.

3. **Adopts new technologies:** Information management provides the capability to adopt newer and more efficient technologies for managing information. It can be automation, enterprise solutions, artificial intelligence or any technological product or service that will help the university libraries derive more benefits from its information.

4. **Improves productivity and efficiency**: A great information management system can improve how information professionals in the libraries store and retrieve information required during their daily activities. It can also make it easier to disseminate information to diverse patrons or recipients via multiple channels, allowing teams to collaborate and communicate easily across time zones and locations. An effective information management system can help academic librariesextract actionable insights from its records to guide decision-making.

5. **Protects proprietary information and preserves corporate memory:** Institutionneeds a process to safeguard their vital information from competitors and unauthorized access. Information management provides a system for protecting proprietary information from intruders, system failures and natural disasters. It helps protect the confidentiality and integrity of vital information assets, allowing the owner to derive maximum benefits from their trade secrets. Information management also helps university libraries create are liable institutional memory it can use for planning and making important strategic decisions.

6. **Appropriate decision making:** Information Management helps in an efficiency decision making in academic libraries. Good information management is multifarious. The volume of information generated is challenging, librarians/information managers should collaborate with their colleagues in other information centre's and ICT staff to define how information should be created, managed and used and reused in academic libraries for effective solving the problems facing academic libraries (Nwachukwu A.G. and Helen O. U. (2016).

Challenges associated with the Management of Information Resources in University Libraries in Nigeria.

Management of information resources especially in university libraries is faced with numerous challenges in Nigeria.

1. **Inadequate of funds:** This is a deadly factor that can affect management of information resources. Popoola (2013) stated that inadequate funds have affected staffing, accommodation, expansion and the execution of such operations as creation, organization, preservation and conservation as well as library services. In addition, funds for facilities are some of the problems facing many Nigerian university libraries due to the high cost of acquiring them. This pose a problem to the institutions in the area of managing information since there is no or little facilities. Mayes (2007) stated that, The National Library of Nigeria lacks funds to preserve its information resources with modern preservation methods.

2. **Inadequate of Basic Education and ICT Skills:** This pose problem to information management or record keeping since many university library staff who ought to be using ICT facilities are not computer literate and, therefore, fail to maximally enjoy the benefits offered by ICT in record keeping and management. This has lead to shortage of expertise that can handle the installation, operation and maintenance of ICT facilities. Also, many of the university library staff have conservative attitudes and still maintain their old ways of doing things and resist change.

3. **Unaccommodating Space and Inadequate Infrastructures/Resources:** The non-existence of basic and adequate physical facilities such as accommodation space for computers with internet connectivity, electric generators and adequate furniture pose great problems in the usage of ICT for record keeping and managing information resources in university libraries.

4. **Power Failure:** Oshodin and Idehen (2007), in his articles Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a Tool for Health Education Curriculum Implementation in Nigeria identify interruption of ICT facilities by electricity and computers network failure during record keeping while managing information.

5. **Maintenance of ICT tools or facilities:** Maintenance of ICT tools for effective handling of information resource is a serious challenge because these facilities at one point or the other breaks down due to inadequate maintenance, therefore, there is need for competent academic library staff or professionals to handle maintenance to avoid unnecessary breakdown.

Recommendations:

There are different ways which can be adopted in order to solve problems or challenges affecting information management in academic libraries in Nigeria.

- Funds have become issues in settling the problems arising in public, private and academic libraries. Funds are important in executing a crucial projects in an organization especially academic libraries, this will help in acquiring necessary facilities in projecting the image of the libraries to the taste of the library professionals and the client or patrons at large.

- The parenting institution of the academic libraries should inject or increase library allowances or retained university funds into the system of academic libraries.

- Adequate basic education and ICT skills should be encouraged in order to have the requisite man power in handling the information resources to the core.

- Accommodative space and adequate resources and infrastructure should be put into consideration such as purchase of computer system, flash, disk, memory card etc for storing and retrieving information. Internet connectivity (WIFI) should also be

functional so that information managers would be able to download important resources online and be able to save important information or messages online (E-mail).

- Academic libraries should adopt proper maintenance culture by repairing the ICT tools or facilities when they are faulty and handle them well for effective information management.

- Constant power supply should not be neglected as it gives room for excellent, accurate and neat (information management). On the other hand, power failure interrupts the efficiency of information management.

Conclusion

Information management skills play an important role in managing library and information resources effectively and ensuring that the services discharged while managing academic resources continue to meet the present and anticipated needs of the patron all the time. Efficient information management helps library and information centre's to cope with challenges because it guarantees the capacity to produce information that is timely, accurate, and reliable. It is therefore the basis of an institutional performance in Nigeria.

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