Assessing technical services in Abdullahi Muhammed Public Library Zaria, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study was set to assess technical services in Abdullahi Muhammed Public Library (AMPL) Samaru Zaria. Information technology has brought about new innovations touching all aspects of human endeavor, including libraries. The use of these technologies has affected the way libraries select, acquire, catalogue, classify and digitize their information resources. The study therefore aims to examine the type of technical services available in the library, to examine the available technical services that utilize information technology if any, in the library and to suggest ways of improving technical services in the library. A case study method was adopted using interview and observation as instruments for data collection. The population of the study was not large, stood at seven (7) hence, no sampling technique was used. Data collected were analyzed using percentage of responses at 100% response rate. Results reveal that, 88% response was gained for cataloguing original and classification of library materials compared to 0% response for selection, acquisition, digitization processes. On this note, the researcher however observes that, the activities of selection and acquisition were done by another library. Also, computer was not found to be used in any technical service routine including, Master Data Input Form (MDIF) for cataloguing and classification and Online or Offline Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) for information access. 92% response suggested users not utilizing the traditional public catalogue in the library and 75% library staffs showed not been adequate with the manual processes of cataloguing and classification of library materials compared to 25% who were satisfactory. However, vital implications were established.

Key Words: Information Technology, Cataloguing, Classification, Digitization.

INTRODUCTION:

The meaning of technical service in organizations has wide range of understanding, depending what an organization refers technical services to mean. In libraries, it is referred to as the heart of the library regardless of how big or small a library is. However, a library is generally believe to refer to a place where print and non print materials or information resources are kept, organized and preserved for reasons of research, teaching and learning, upon which, such collections most undergo a series of activities collectively known to be technical service. Technical service of a library is consequently seen as activities behind-the- scene comprising of acquisition, classification, cataloguing, digitization and many more. The significance of technical service cannot be limited in the operation of a library system. With the invention of information technology, the usage of computer has become as an indispensable tool in today's work place. Similarly, the application of automation in most of today's library activities has enhanced library work. As organizations become ever more dependent on technology, the value a library may be measured in terms of technological competency.

About AMPL:

Abdullahi Mohammed Public Library (AMPL) was opened on the 5th June, 1963 under the auspices of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and the Northern Regional library Kaduna. It is located at one of the main entrance into the main campus, the North gate. It is administered by Ahmadu Bello University through the department of Library and Information Science. AMPL shares the same basic and broader functions of a public library which is set towards satisfaction of public interest through well defined procedures/objectives. Collections in the library are organized using Dewey Decimal Classification Scheme (DDC) and Library of Congress (LC), using Author/Title catalogue arranged in an alphabetical order in a cabinet for locating books on the shelves. The library has the specific mandate to provide academic (though not an academic library) and general information to Samaru community, the university and other neighboring communities such as Bomo, Shika, Basawa and Jama'a village. It plays an crucial role in the life of the people. The library caters for grown-ups, adolescents, and children in primary and secondary schools, especially those preparing for SSCE "O" and JAMB "A" levels

examinations. It also serves as a laboratory to students from the department of Library and Information Science of the University, for their practical classes on classification.

*Opening Hours:

Mondays – Fridays   8am – 10pm

Saturdays   8am – 6pm

Sundays   Closed

*Units: Technical, Circulation, Reserve, Reference, Serial, and Children unit.

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

An effective technical service is the success of a library's organization. In the 21ˢᵗ century, information technology has brought about new innovations touching all aspects of human endeavor, including libraries. The use of these technologies has affected the way libraries select, acquire, catalogue, classify and digitize their information resources. The role of the technical unit in carrying out these activities cannot be limited to a library's role. Thus, the study attempts to assess technical services in Abdullahi Muhammad Public Library, Samru Nigeria.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS LITERATURES:

Acquisition involves acquiring from all sources and from the most advantageous vendors all materials needed for information services to users. It is known that over 90 percent of the collection in all types of libraries is acquired through purchase. The acquisitions department is therefore run like a business centre involving transactions with several vendors and publishers and accurate records keeping. An ideal online acquisition system, according to Boss and Marcum (1981) would include the following: the ability to search via a variety of access points, the library's own bibliographic file to determine the status (for example, on order but no yet received) of any particular item, the ability of an authorized operator to order additional copies of a title for which a previous order had been placed, the ability to search a file of a bookseller details in a predetermined order of preference, to determine which bookseller would be able to supply a given item immediately or to supply a given item at the lowest price, access to status notes on all titles from all major booksellers to see whether a given title is out of print, not yet published or whatever, the ability for an authorized operator to place an order online directly to the bookseller and to adjust the library's financial files as appropriate, an ordered item if available to be dispatched by the bookseller within 24 hours and the bookseller's inventory status to be adjust, the ability to provide very detailed financial information in a variety of ways, the capability of retrieving potentially useful titles from an external database which could be used for selection purposes within the library, the maintenance of a comprehensive file giving the library complete information of all items on order or in process and to alert the library staff when expected items do not arrive, the ability to deal with all the financial transactions and adjust the files accordingly and the ability to accommodate a variety of materials including monographs, serials, government documents, blanket orders, gift and exchange materials, audio-visual materials, etc. *Selection* in computerized libraries involves printing book selection forms with the computer. The forms are circulated widely among the users for their suggestions alongside printed book lists. In an online library acquisition system, bibliographic databases of major libraries, publishers and booksellers are accessed online for selection of items to be acquired. All selections made are stored in the memory of the local computer. *Cataloguing* according to Teld (1987), an ideal computer-based system would include the following; online access to database of potentially needed bibliographic records, a high percentage of the required records to be already available in the database so that original cataloguing is minimized, a consistently high quality of bibliographic records in the database and a conformity with the latest cataloguing and classification codes, online authority control, ability to do original cataloguing online when necessary and to assist the process with appropriate prompts and ability for the records in the catalogue to be accessed in a variety of ways and in an appropriate physical form. The aims and likely use of a computer-based cataloguing system by the staff and the library user determine what field to be included in the bibliographic record and the amount of details necessary. Ngozi (2003), a Master Data Input Form (MDIF) can be devised from a computer template. It is used for original descriptive cataloguing, subject *cataloguing* and *classification* as well. The cataloguer does less work on the data input form before the data is keyed in to the computer. The Master Data Input Form has spaces for previous title, parallel title, statement of responsibility (author, editor, corporate body, conference/meeting, etc.), edition, publication distribution area (publisher,

publication place, and publication date), ISBN/ISSN, CODEN, price, pagination, etc. For example in Asa H. Gordon Library's holdings are in Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) database and updated with addition of all materials in to the library collection. The cataloguing procedures were: Exporting/Importing OCLC records, setting for voyages cataloguing module and miscellaneous cataloguing procedures. *Digitization on* the other hand is the process by which analog items (that include books, journals, newspaper, etc) are converted into computer readable text consisting of a sequence of 0s and 1s as a surrogate of the original. Academic libraries all over the world are digitizing materials (Mat and Kolej, 2005). Liu (2004) surveyed more than 100 digitization projects in US academic, public and special libraries, and mentioned that the majority of the libraries engaged in digitization projects. Similarly, Rafiq and Ameen (2012) found that, though less than third (30.9%) of the libraries in Pakistan engaged in digitization activities, it also seems encouraging that around one-third of the libraries are currently engaged in such digitization. Bultmann et.el (2006) surveyed the digitization activities in the UK research library and archives sector. The study revealed that two-thirds of 51 respondent institutions were engaged in digitization activities. The highest ranked reason for digitization was to improve access to the collections in a library.

APPROACH:

The research is on a mixed method approach using case study method and statistical method. **Objectives**

1. To examine the type of technical services available in the library under syudy
2. To examine the available technical services that utilize information technology if any, in the library under study
3. To suggest ways of improving technical services in the library under study.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

The end result of technical services is for effective user services. The importance of the study is to the library, in assessing it area of strength and weakness and improving it services for the overall objectives of the library.

METHODS:

A case study method was adopted to evaluate technical services in AMBL. The population of the study was not large, however, the entire library staffs stood at seven (7) and were used as sample. Hence, no sampling technique was used. Interview and observation were considered relevant for the study. Six library staffs were successfully interviewed at response rate 85.7%. Data collected was analyzed using tabulation of percentages.

RESULTS:

1. In an attempt to investigate the types of technical services available in the AMPL, 100% responded cataloguing original and classification of library materials compared to 0% response for selection, acquisition, digitization processes. On this note, the research however observed that, the activities of selection and acquisition were done by the University Library (Sir Kashim Ibrahim Library) of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria.
2. In an effort to find out the use of information technology in technical services in the library, responded were asked 'Do you use Master Data Input Form (MDIF) as a facility for cataloguing and classification?' 0% response was gained. When asked 'Do you use Online or Offline Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) as a facility for information access? Another 0% response was scored. And when asked, if computer was used in any technical service routine by the staff, no single activity was found.
3. In suggesting ways to improving technical services in the library, a question was raised, 'Are patron's making use of the traditional public catalogue?' 92% responded the users not utilizing it. In fact a staff added saying "the cabinet public catalogue as you can see is just a waste of space, nobody use it" when asked if the manual processes of cataloguing and classification of library materials in the library was satisfactory by staff, 75% responded not been satisfactory compared to 25% who were satisfactory.

DISCUSSION:

As the case in AMPL, in Asa H. Gordon Library, Savannah State University, responsibilities of the technical service librarian was to conduct original cataloguing of library materials and the cataloguing department was the unit that also classify. But contrary to AMPL, Asa H. Gordon Library's holdings are in OCLC database and

updated with addition of all materials in to the library collection. The cataloguing procedures were: Exporting/Importing Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) records, setting for voyages cataloguing module and miscellaneous cataloguing procedures. Libraries have gone beyond traditional ways of cataloging library resources, hence the need for the AMPL to adopt the new technology of Online or Offline Public Access Catalogue. It allows the user at the terminal to search the database in order to see if the library holds a Particular work, to know its location and find out the present status of the book (for example, on loan and so no immediately available). Consequently, on the use of computer for technical service routine, Ngozi (2003) in her book 'Fundamentals of Library Practice – A Manual on Library Routines' discuss about Master Data Input Form (MDIF) devised from a computer template. It is used for original descriptive cataloguing, subject cataloguing and classification as well. The cataloguer does less work on the data input form before the data is keyed in to the computer. The Master Data Input Form has spaces for previous title, parallel title, statement of responsibility (author, editor, corporate body, conference/meeting, etc.), edition, publication distribution area (publisher, publication place, and publication date), ISBN/ISSN, CODEN, price, pagination, etc. Digitization is another important aspect of today technical service, missing in the AMPL. Rafiq and Ameen (2012) found that, though less than third (30.9%) of the libraries in Pakistan engaged in digitization activities, another one-third of the libraries are currently engaged in such digitization, hence, the need for AMPL to make a move. Similarly, Liu (2004) surveyed more than 100 digitization projects in US academic, public and special libraries, and mentioned that the majority of the libraries engaged in digitization projects.

CONCLUSION:

Abdullahi Muhammad Public Library also abbreviated as AMPL was found cataloguing original and classification of it library materials with 100% scores but do not conduct the activities of selection, acquisition, digitization processes, hence Sir Kashim Ibrahim Library of Ahmadu Bello University does the selection and acquisition of the library materials. Also, computer was not found to be used in any technical service routine including, Master Data Input Form (MDIF) for cataloguing and classification, and Online or Offline Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) for information access. 92% response suggested users not utilizing the traditional public catalogue in the library and 75% library staffs showed not been adequate with the manual processes of cataloguing and classification of library materials compared to 25% who were satisfactory. However, a famous Indian library scientist S. R Ranganathan made the postulate that 'the library is a growing organism'. On this note, the researcher concluded that the AMPL should incorporate information technology using the computer in it activities of technical services.

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