

21st -CENTURY INFORMATION SERVICES DELIVERY: CASE OF REFERENCE LIBRARIAN**Dr. Joy C. Onyenachi (CLN)**

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Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike
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21st Century is age where information as a resource is valued above other productive resources. It is the age the old adage “information in power swam to make its most meaning.” The Library/librarian, relevance on any society is an information source/resources provision and information service delivery to information seekers. In the 21st century this important services are rendered in print as well as electronic to both near and distant information seeker hence the terminology library without walls. The reference librarian is at the fore in rendering this offline and online information services making sure that information seekers need is met and by implication satisfied. This discussion is therefore handled under the following sub headings: Introduction; Reference Librarian as leader and mentor, Reference librarian as a teacher; Characteristics that make quality reference librarian presented as: curiosity; Optimism and Enthusiasm; Flexibility and Creativity; Ability to Communicate, Ability in Market library Resources and Services; Ability to be a Team Player; Confidence and Sense of Humour and Technological Competence; Reference Librarian in Assessment/Evaluation. This paper conclude thus: The reference librarian has the opportunity to actively engage and help facilitate both the immediate and lifelong learning of library users. While technological advances allow easier and quicker access to information, they also save to heighten the important role of librarians as educators. The issue of finding enough information has turned into an issue of sifting through too much information in order to find the most relevant while learning what resources are appropriate for which kinds of information as well as how to access the needed information. The 21st century reference librarian is the intermediary between the library user and the information resources.

Keywords: 21st Century, Information Services Delivery, Reference Librarians

Introduction

Academy to Use 21st century will continue to be an evolving world of traditional courses moving to the online format of virtual learning at the same time the traditional university as a place of higher learning will continue to exist. Though more and more courses and entire programs are being taught virtually, there will continue to be a role in society for traditional modes of learning especially in the tertiary institutions. This means tertiary institutions will continue to have hybrid learning environments, offering students a place and a tradition as well as the opportunity to take some of their course work online (Hanson, 2003). This ever-changing hybrid tertiary institution: environment offers exciting opportunities and sometimes daunting challenges for clientele. Reference librarians possessing certain key characteristics will be better suited to fulfil both the libraries and the university (Hanson, 2013).

The Reference Librarian engages in outreach information delivery to diverse constituencies. The clientele served in academic libraries are students (undergraduates and postgraduates), lecturers' researchers and the host community as well as others that have Information need which falls within the area of coverage of the institution. Each Institution has a mandate/mission on which it is established by the establishing body. The supervisory body on behalf of the establishing parent body makes sure that the theory vision is actualized for public tertiary Institutions the establishing/parent body is either Federal or State Government. The institutions are: University, Polytechnic and Monotechnic and College Education: The regulatory/supervisory bodies are: the National Universities Commission (NUC) for Universities, National Board for Technical Colleges (NBTC) for Polytechnics and Monotechnic and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) for Colleges of Education. The information services delivery is by type of Institution.

The communities as it were have the institutions and their libraries as blessings because they could likely be the only/major source of information easily reachable to them. That is why the mandate of information service delivery by institutions is not restricted to the students and faculty – focusing only on the programmes offered in the institution. Rather the community forms major clientele concern in that, in addition to courses offered in the institution, libraries in these institutions equally hold materials of general interest. This enables the entire library clientele; students, faculty, researchers and community members to have information resources that meet their information needs either tertiary education programme (McDowell, 2001).

Reference Librarian as Leader and Mentor

The librarians have the additional professional responsibility of serving as leaders and mentors in professional networks as consultants, for advice, and professional development needs of the library clientele. Often these tertiary institutions are rurally isolated because of their location and the library personnel may have neither the means nor the incentive to seek continuing education and training outside the vicinity thus the importance of outreach on behalf of the institution's librarians to these institutions and their staff (Onyenachi, 2016) As a professional at an institution whose mission is to serve the needs of the people, the academic librarian (reference) has a professional obligation to join and play a leadership role in state professional

organisations. The academic librarian, by this leadership role to other library colleagues in the state, has a professional obligation to be involved in regional and national library associations to develop professionally and bring new knowledge and skills back to colleagues at libraries big and small across the state and to pass it to them through formal workshops and/or informal networking (Onyanschl, 2020)

The librarian has a professional obligation to contribute to the knowledge in the field through research and creative activities. Such activities include not only doing original research and publishing in professional journals, the also engaging with other professionals acute the curriculum in interdisciplinary activities and publishing and/or presenting research findings and best practices in widely read or largely attended venues (Onyenachi, 2012), In the same vain 10wyznachi 280213 maintain that the librarian can also benefit themselves, their institutions and their constituencies through involvement in grant project that bring additional funding to shrinking University budgets and extend research and learning into new area of study for the librarians to have success, attributes that will contribute to the success are: enthusiasm, flexibility, empathy, a teamwork orientation, patience and sense of humour.

Reference Librarian as a Teacher

The reference librarian's teaching responsibility is not just reaching the school that may not even be necessary rather the reference librarian is not constantly touching the library clientele. This involves one-on-one contact with the library users at the reference desk or office. Consultations and one or two-shot instruction sessions for the entire class that come to the library. Library faculty instruct in a broader environment often in tandem with a colleague, depending on the traffic at the reference desk. Because of this wood team-oriented teaching environment, the successful academic librarian is of course a contributing member of a collective and its services mission to back more common ground in their teaching role with one another than individual teaching faculty in other departments. More and more academic libraries are moving to organizational structures composed of teams. Effective team involvement necessitates flexibility, ensures continued success and helps the librarian avoid burnout (Raider. 2001)

Additionally, academic reference librarians, in this team spirit should be eager and willing to mentor junior colleagues and peers. Mentoring allows the individual to give something back to the profession while strengthening the organization and ultimately the profession (Spaulding Abston and Cam, 1991. In their instructional role, academic reference librarians should strive to students and library users to teach themselves. The essence of Library user education/library literacy is to equip users through teaching with the night skills for information retrieval and use in fact retrieval and use can never take place unless the user has accessed the information material hence the chain of information access information retrieval- information utilization (Onyenachi, 2012).

A competent user has learned the accessing skills and has become an independent library service: This is the hallmark of library services that is training the user to be an independent library user. This makes for the lifelong use of the library and its services. Constant dependence

frustrates, but when a user confidently/competently accesses his/her information needs from the library collection, retrieves and uses the same to meet needs, the confidence of continual use of the library is achieved. The information seeking behavior of such a patron is different because he/she knows how to search and get information that will satisfy his information need. This does not exclude assistance from the librarian when the patron is having a challenge locating what he/she needs.

The third law of Ranganathan on Onyonachi (2016) says "save the time of the user", the assured way of saving user's time is to teach him/her to be literate in information accessibility, retrieval and use. Where the patron is always having difficulty accessing the resources that will meet his/her information need, but always calling for assistance this will defeat the desire to come to the library to seek for information source resources. Rather than just telling the user where to find answers or the reference librarian providing the information source that will meet the need, the reference librarian should guide users to develop information literacy skills to enable them to be skilful in search/access, and utilization of this will ensure the users become lifelong learners or lifelong library users.

Ranganibao equally said the book is for use" which by extension means the library is for use, the academic reference librarian should play a positive role in collaborating with teaching faculty in designing assignments and even syllabi to facilitate the best learning possible for students. Whether library users are on campus or at a distance, they should receive the same consideration as campus users. It is the challenge and reward/pride of the academic libraries/librarian to extend their mission beyond the library walls.

Characteristics of a Reference Librarian

Curiosity

Reference librarians in this information age should possess curiosity for curiosity is the mark of intelligence, not stubbornness. According to Smith (2003), curiosity is first of all marker of intelligence, second and more importantly, the habits of curiosity explanation and learning, make for a knowledgeable person with perennially up-to-date skills. Though it is good that the reference librarian knows the latest software or has experience in some trendy new areas of service, these are transient advantages. In the long run, the person of lively and omnivorous interest will be the more successful librarian. The importance of creativity, and active intelligence is non-negotiable in this information age despite technology that is emphasized and tries to be preferred above other qualities librarians possess. The best librarians make surprising connections between one topic and another while attending to information seekers' needs that is topic connections with information sources that will satisfy the information needs of the information seeker. This is a strong skill in serving users such as intelligent librarians rephrasing questions in ways that invite new perspectives. It is not a matter of knowing how or where to search for something. Often enough it is a matter of knowing what else to exploit ("you should also try..." In this regard, the role of intellect, knowledge and creativity are tremendously important. If librarianship could be boiled down to technology, then technology would replace librarians (Smith 2003). In a competitive job market, curiosity might well be the

factor that separates the ordinary from the extraordinary staff. Curiosity is because curious people are consistently adding to their knowledge base Curiosity reflects Intelligence, it also reflects something even more important, the values and habits of learning.

Ranganathan said, "Save the time of the over." In this information age with technology touch, there is pressure to provide information faster, and better. Anywhere and anytime. As a result, these essential characteristics are vital for reference librarians. The characteristics presented by (2003) are:

Optimism and Enthusiasm

Librarians who expect positive outcomes, even in the face of and who are highly motivated to provide personal, individual tail road reference assistance are assets in an academic environment. Those who are excited about working with both traditional and digital information resources will resolve numerous challenges since change is accelerating. Proactive reference with an enthusiastic service orientation will find it easier to approach customers to deliver high-quality reference and instructional service regardless of complexity, format or location

Flexibility and Creativity

Reference librarians who embrace change and adapt to new realities as they appear will thrive in the 21st-century Library patrons come from varying backgrounds racial, ethnic and cultural makeup, and flexible reference librarians will develop an understanding and appreciation for cultural differences to successfully meet the needs of diverse customers and coworkers Academic reference librarians will also need to become more sensitive to issues related to customers learning styles Furthermore, librarians must be creative as their roles shift, digital collections expand and as physical access and delivery methods expand the flow of information to independent learners on and off campus. Digital reference interviews and collaborative 24/7 reference services will demand flexible and creative responses as well as strong thinking and problem-solving skills

Courage

To be successful in the 21st century, reference librarians will need to take risks, be assertive and experiment with new approaches embracing approaches from outside the world The traditional librarianship values and priorities are being challenged by the new technology hence the reference librarian should know how to marry the old and the new as to achieve excellent result in serving library patrons. Librarians also have to deal with sensitive political and social issues, including censorship, the digital divide pornography, copyright, privacy and confidentiality concerns, intellectual freedom and electronic archiving of resources

Ability to Communicate

Reference librarians who are articulate; persuasive and use active listening will be most successful in querying customers to determine needs particularly. If they are friendly and non-judgmental, ask open-ended questions, and then follow up for customer satisfaction. Active

listening allows a reference librarian to reflect on another person's message while soliciting feedback to better understand the speaker's frame of reference. Reference librarians should understand the nature of problems before offering assistance, listening skill helps in achieving this. Articulate librarians also make effective presentations to teaching faculty and class-teaching. Information retrieval and electronic manipulation skills are essential in a digital world. Students who learn these skills will be competitive in the workplace and able to engage in lifelong learning. These teaching activities contribute to the research and instruction reserves, and seamless access to electronic agendas of the campus.

Ability to Market Library Resources and Services to customers.

Proactive reference librarians will embark on library services by marketing their expertise and helping customers make effective use of these resources. Indeed librarians MUST be Involved in public relations and marketing if these are to survive in this competitive information age. Major corporations, Internet dotcoms and other commercial competitors are publicize value-added services such as electronic and print collections, assistance with integrating electronic resources into courses and course constant, online tutorials, electronic notice of newly purchased materials and quick guides, to resources these will enhance the of library contribution to the university mission.

Ability to be a Team Player

Reference librarians do not work, independently of each other, they need to develop collaborative partnerships with others to advance library goals, services and programmes. With colleagues, librarians need to share their knowledge and skills and work as team members to work cooperatively to assist in the classroom and expertise projects. With publishers, librarians need to negotiate consortia agreements to save many and to centralize services or customers' convenience. With computing professionals Librarians need to develop joint-reaching programmes and expand seamless access to electronic resources. New partnership also extend the library's influence on the use and contribute to enhanced fund raising efforts. Within the campus community collaboration ensures that the mission of the library will remain viable in the 21st century.

Confidence and Sense of Humour

As the nature of library work changes self-confidence and a sense of humour help relieve stress and anxiety. A relaxed demeanour allows a librarian to focus more on customer needs, encourage productivity and enhance the achievement of goals with less effort. These characteristics also encourage self-reliance, active learning and professional activity. Self-motivated learners are highly valued in their workplace.

Technological Competence

Librarians with a strong technological background will be essential in creating 21st-century library collections and services. It is clear that full-text article databases, electronic books, chat-based interactive technologies, video conferencing, voice-over applications and streaming media have already impacted the services and roles of reference librarians, Understanding

these varied technologies, including imaging technologies, Web markup languages, metadata, user interface design, Internet searching and multimedia will be essential. As this paradigm shifts secure reference librarians will be involved in developing seamless Interfaces help systems, delivering information for a variety with a variety of computing platforms and coordinating this activity with computing and other personnel outside the library.

Reference Librarian in Assessment/Evaluation

Assessment Evaluation is the key responsibility of academic librarians that is often neglected because of time and staffing constraints. When libraries and librarians neglect to assess/evaluate what they are doing they can easily assume that their priorities meet users' priorities and needs so they rate their performance as satisfactory Assessment including self-assessment and self-reflection upon oneself as A practitioner, is essential to sustained access Unless libraries engage with constituencies, both formally and informally to determine whether they are meeting user's need, they cannot grow and evolve adequately with the changing nature of the learning environment nor can they meet the needs of the learner sufficiently (Kellogg Commission 2001).

Conclusion

The reference librarian has the opportunity to actively engage and help facilitate both the immediate and lifelong learning of library users. While technological advances allow easier and quicker access to information, they also heighten the important role of librarians as educators. The issue of finding enough information has turned into an issue of sifting through too much information to find the most relevant while learning what resources are appropriate for winch kinds of information as well as how to access the needed information. The 21st-century reference librarian is the intermediary between the library user and the information resources. However, reference librarians cannot sit back and wait for Information seekers to come to them. Reference Librarians everywhere must be proactive in helping users satisfy their information needs. Enthusiastic and skilful research assistance will gratify library users, keep them coming back and ensure their support of the institution and the library profession well into the future. However, reference librarians cannot sit back and wait for formation seekers to come to them. Reference Librarians everywhere must be proactive in helping users to satisfy their information needs Enthusiastic and skilful research assistance will gratify library users, keep them coming back and ensure their support of the institution and the library profession well into the future.

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