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ASSESSMENT OF ABSTRACTING PRACTICE AND EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN TARABA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
This study assessed abstracting practice and effective service delivery in academic libraries in Taraba State, Nigeria. The study was guided by two research questions. A survey research design was adopted. The total population for the study was 33,928 professional librarians and registered students in public tertiary institution in Taraba State. The sample size for this study was 414 respondents drawn using multistage sampling. A self-structure questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. Data were analyzed using mean and the standard deviations. Findings of the study revealed that, lack of plan, policies and procedures of abstracting, knowledgeable staff and funds to underwrite production cost, concern by management of higher institutions to prioritize abstracting activity in the library and network are challenges faced by professional librarians. Based on these findings, the study recommended that, management of higher institutions should prioritize abstracting activity, have plans, policies and procedures of abstracting

practice, check and reform staff strength to undertake the activity of abstracting practices, training programs should be organize to enhance skills and knowledge in professional librarians, technological infrastructural facilities should be provided to facilitate effective abstracting practices in academic libraries in Taraba State, Nigeria.
Keywords: *Abstracting, Abstracting Practices, Service Delivery, Academic Libraries*

Introduction

In any academic library, abstracting services provide access to information and knowledge. They function to serve as an important link in the chain of communication between the originator of information and the ultimate user. Abstracts assist library users to retrieve relevant information within shortest period of time in the library. These processes enable information specialists to provide advanced organization of information carriers in the library, information centres or documentation centres. According to Ashikuz (2023), abstracting services greatly improve information access by creating organized structures that can enable users' access specific content within libraries, databases or digital collections.

Abstracting is an act of summarizing the key points or vital information in a document, such as a research paper, article or report, into a concise and brief form. It involves extracting the original documents, main ideas, arguments, findings and conclusions (Cleveland & Cleveland, 2015). According to Buenrostro (2018), abstracting practice facilitates selection and guides the reader in deciding whether an item will be consulted or not and gives valuable information on the contents of the document that prevent the patrons from getting articles that have no relevance to their needs.

According to Musa and Dangani (2013), the goal of any library and information centre is to satisfy the information needs of its clientele. Thus, all services provided in the library are geared towards user satisfaction for the library to fulfill these needs; it acquires all kinds of resources such as prints and non-prints materials. Apparently, there are challenges faced by professional librarians especially in the practice of abstracting and some of the challenges have been identities by researchers such as Cabonero, Dominguez, Jandoc and Tomas (2010), Agber, Ugbagir, Mngutyô and Amaakaven (2014) including lack of plan, policies and procedures of abstracting, staff strength to undertake the activity of abstracting in the libraries seem not enough to carry out the job efficiently and effectively, lack of training programme to enhance the skills and knowledge, abstracting not practiced regularly because ICT tools that professional librarians can effectively use for efficient work are not available, high cost of periodical subscription, technical expertise in the libraries are not properly trained on how materials can be properly abstracted and lack of funds.

Statement of the Problem

Effective service delivery in academic libraries should be a great concern to all academic librarians (especially abstracting services librarians). These services are used in academic libraries as tools that help accessibility and retrieval of information without waste of time. Abstracting services produce summaries or substitutes of original documents to keep users abreast with current information in their field and make them aware of available information resources,

enabling them evaluate their importance before reaching out to the full document.

The academic libraries provide information resources to various clienteles like students, academic staff and non-academic staff, for their teaching, learning and research in various faculties and the entire academic community. The resources acquired and organized are provided to cover all courses offered in faculties of the institution based on the library selection policy. If libraries acquire relevant information resources and are properly abstracted, effectiveness of service delivery will be highly achieved.

However, users are usually confused when they cannot access information that match their needs. The resultant effect is that they become less confident with the services offered by the library. The problem of poor abstracting services and in some cases not abstracted at all, has become a serious concern. It is capable of slowing down abstracting practice and decreasing service delivery in academic libraries. It is against this background that this study seeks to investigate abstracting practice and effective service delivery in academic libraries in Taraba State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide this study:

i. What are the various abstracting practices engaged in by professional librarians and effective service delivery in academic libraries in Taraba State?
ii. What are the challenges faced by professional librarians in the practice of abstracting and effective services delivery in academic libraries in Taraba State?

Review of Related Literature

Abstracting, in every work is designed to captivate the readers to decide if they should read an entire article and to remember key findings on a topic and expect what is coming in the text to make the reading easier and efficient, so that they can quickly check the usefulness of a particular work to their research. Umar, Mohammed and Shittu (2014),Academic libraries provide information services to their respective communities which comprise of students, lecturers and researchers in order to support their teaching, learning and research needs.(Atanda &Adeyemi, 2018).

The purpose of any library is to make information in any format accessible to the right clienteles at the right time. All libraries must provide accurate, relevant and current information to users and researchers. This can be realized through the use of effective and efficient information retrieval tools (Cabonero, Dominguez, Jandoc & Tomas, 2010). Therefore, Awotola and Olowolagba (2018) reported that for abstracting practice in academic libraries to be effective for service delivery, they must be planned in relation to the information resources selected and acquired to cover the curriculum of various faculties of the institutions and the community they serve; and moreover, abstracting practices should encompass author abstracting, abstracting classified by used, critical abstracting and descriptive abstracting. Apparently, modern libraries are increasingly being automated to get unrestricted access to information in many formats and from many sources. They are extending services beyond the physical walls of a building, by providing material accessible by electronic means and by providing the assistance by librarians for

accessing and analyzing large amounts of information with a variety of tools.

Aina (2019) opined that, libraries have devised tools such as indexes, abstracts, catalogues and bibliographies which are expected to make users aware of the variety of information carriers such as books, serials, audio visual resources as well as electronic based resources available in the libraries and information centres. Users satisfaction can only be ascertained when relevant information resources are accessed to meet their information needs. In various academic disciplines, abstracting services play a vital role of providing access to information contained in documents. ICT skills librarians need to possess in this 21st century technological library operations that are somewhat not yet developed by librarians to include online collaboration skills, email management competency, sophisticated online research skills, desktop publishing, word processing skills, social media management with respect to elibrary users, spreadsheet, text digitization, content management, document management, library automation, web design and development, database management and retrieval skills to be able to operate the digital library confidently and effectively (Owate and David-West, 2021)

Owate and David-West (2021) conducted a study titled Indexing and Abstracting Practices for Effective Service Delivery in Academic Libraries in Rivers State. The result amongst others revealed that, University of Port Harcourt library does not fully practice indexing and abstracting due to lack of ICT tools, lack of training and lack of technical expertise. It was recommended among others that information professionals should be trained on indexing and abstracting to acquire the necessary skills for effective service delivery to users.

In the same vein, Ali, Hamza and Muhammad (2015), conducted a study titled An Appraisal of Indexing and Abstracting Services in the Institute of Education Library, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria. The findings of the study revealed that, inadequate facilities, insufficient funds and lack of awareness were the major challenges militating against the effective provision of indexing and abstracting services in the Institute of Education library, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Similarly, David, et al. (2020) carried out a study titled Knowledge, Practices and Challenges of Library Practitioners on Abstracting in Nueva Vizcaya, Baguio City, and Benguet in Northern Luzon, Philippines. The study revealed that, inadequate time to carry out abstracting function, lack of policies and procedures in abstracting, lack of manpower to do the job, lack of motivation to perform the task and lack of concern management of higher institutions to prioritize abstracting activity in the library. They added that, abstracts are continuously useful to the academic and research community and that library practitioners must find time to create or innovate ways of abstracting important documents useful to their users.

On this note, if abstracting activity must go on in the way it should, professional staff interest, training, provision of needed and required facilities must be put into workable consideration, management of higher institutions should show concern and prioritize abstracting activity in their libraries; libraries should have plans, policies and procedures of abstracting practice to meet the needs of library users; publishers of periodical abstract should employ qualified abstractors to compile good-generated abstracts and network services should be improve in libraries, if not the perplexing situation and conditions of abstracting practices would remain the

same.

Research Methodology

The study adopted survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 80 professional librarians and 33,828 registered students of the public tertiary institutions in Taraba State, Nigeria under study. The sample of 414 professional librarians and students was drawn from the population using a multistage sampling technique. In the first stage, Sample Size Table was used in selecting the students (Emaikwu, 2019) and in the second stage; probability sampling techniques was adopted in selecting the professional librarians.

This study used self-structure questionnaire titled Abstracting Practices and Effective Service Delivery Questionnaire (APESDQ) for data collection. The instrument was subjected to content and construct validity by two experts in the Department of Library and Information Science and one expert from the Department of Measurements and Evaluation, all from Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi. The reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach's alpha co-efficient. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics particularly Mean and Standard Deviation. The Mean benchmark was calculated thus: 4+3+2+1 =10 divide by 2 = 2.5. Therefore, any items with a mean of 2.50 and above were accepted while those below 2.50 were rejected.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the various abstracting practices engaged in by professional librarians and effective service delivery in academic libraries in Taraba State?

In order to answer the research question, data were collected on opinions of respondents relating to the various abstracting practices engaged in by professional librarians and effective service delivery in academic libraries in Taraba State. The collected data were analysed and presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics *of Responses on* the Various Abstracting Practices Engaged in by Professional Librarians and Effective Service Delivery in Academic Libraries in Taraba State

Descriptive Statistics

Abstracting Practices	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks	Decision
Author Abstracting	414	2.9855	1.02264	1st	A
Abstracting Classified by use	414	2.7005	1.06548	7th	A
Critical Abstracting	414	2.9638	1.08752	3rd	A
Descriptive Abstracting	414	2.9058	1.06146	5th	A
Inductive Abstracting	414	2.6014	.62483	9th	A
Informative Abstracting	414	2.9662	1.23853	2nd	A
Subject Abstracting	414	2.9517	.97801	4th	A
Structure Abstracting	414	2.6739	1.02153	8th	A
Other Abstracts	414	2.8502	1.22595	6th	A
Grand Mean	414	2.8443	.44152		A
Valid N (listwise)	414				

Key: Strongly Agree (SA) =4points, Agree (A)= 3points, Disagree (D)= 2points and Strongly Disagree (SD)=1point

From Table 1, it can be seen that the mean of all the items is above 2.50 with the Grand Mean of 2.8443 and Standard Deviation of 0.44152. This is to say that author abstracting, abstracting classified by used, critical abstracting, descriptive abstracting, inductive abstracting, informative abstracting, subject abstracting and structure abstracting as well as other abstracting services are the various abstracting practices engaged in by professional librarians and effective service delivery in academic libraries in Taraba State.

Research Question 2: What are the challenges faced by professional librarians in the practice of abstracting and effective services delivery in academic libraries in Taraba State?

In order to answer the research question, data were collected on opinions of respondents relating to the challenges faced by professional librarians in the practice of abstracting and effective services delivery in academic libraries in Taraba state. The collected data were analysed and presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics *of Responses on* the Challenges Faced by Professional Librarians in the Practice of Abstracting and Effective services Delivery in Academic Libraries in Taraba State

Descriptive Statistics

Challenges faced	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks	Decision
Lack of plan, policies and procedures of abstracting affect it effective practice in my library	414	2.7246	1.16091	10th	A
Staff strength to undertake the activity of abstracting in the libraries seem not enough to carry out the job efficiently and effectively	414	2.6594	1.16546	11th	A
Lack of training programme to enhance the skills and knowledge affect effective practice of abstracting in my library	414	3.2415	.96907	4th	A
Abstracting in my library is not practiced regularly because ICT tools that professional librarians can effectively use for efficient work not available.	414	3.5242	.62873	1st	SA
High cost of periodical subscription affect effective abstracting practice in my library	414	2.9396	.71898	9th	A
Technical expertise in the libraries are not properly trained on how materials can be properly abstracted	414	3.4106	.77521	2nd	A
Publishers of periodical abstracts seem not to employ qualified abstractors while others compile poor-generated abstracts.	414	2.9420	.96250	8th	A
Lack of knowledgeable staff and funds to underwrite production cost	414	3.0556	.93845	7th	A
Lack of use of abstracting services by patrons because of lack of awareness of its availability	414	3.2126	.97833	6th	A
Lack of concern by management of higher institutions to prioritize abstracting activity in the library	414	3.3382	1.00442	3rd	A
Network problem	414	3.2150	.95144	5th	A
Grand Mean	414	3.1148	.31922		A
Valid N (listwise)	414				

Key: *Strongly Agree (SA) =4points, Agree (A)= 3points, Disagree (D)= 2points and Strongly Disagree (SD)=1point*

From Table 1, it can be seen that the mean of all the items is above 2.50 with the Grand Mean of 3.1148 and Standard Deviation of 0.31922. This implies that lack of plan, policies and procedures of abstracting, staff strength to undertake the activity of abstracting in the libraries

seem not enough to carry out the job efficiently and effectively, lack of training programme to enhance the skills and knowledge, abstracting not practiced regularly because ICT tools that professional librarians can effectively use for efficient work are not available, high cost of periodical subscription, technical expertise in the libraries are not properly trained on how materials can be properly abstracted, publishers of periodical abstracts seem not to employ qualified abstractors while others compile poor-generated abstracts, lack of knowledgeable staff and funds to underwrite production cost, lack of use of abstracting services by patrons because of lack of awareness of its availability, lack of concern by management of higher institutions to prioritize abstracting activity in the library and network problem are the challenges faced by professional librarians in the practice of abstracting and effective services delivery in academic libraries in Taraba State.

Discussion of Findings

The results of this study are discussed in relation to the research questions. The first finding of the study revealed author abstracting, abstracting classified by used, critical abstracting, descriptive abstracting, inductive abstracting, informative abstracting, subject abstracting and structure abstracting as well as other abstracting services are the various abstracting practices engaged in by professional librarians and effective service delivery in academic libraries in Taraba State. This agrees with Awotola and Olowolagba (2018) who reported that for abstracting practice in academic libraries to be effective for service delivery, they must be planned in relation to the information resources selected and acquired to cover the curriculum of various faculties of the institutions and the community they serve; and moreover, abstracting practices should encompass author abstracting, abstracting classified by used, critical abstracting and descriptive abstracting.

The second finding of the study showed that lack of plan, policies and procedures of abstracting, staff strength to undertake the activity of abstracting in the libraries seem not enough to carry out the job efficiently and effectively, lack of training programme to enhance the skills and knowledge, abstracting not practiced regularly because ICT tools that professional librarians can effectively use for efficient work are not available and high cost of periodical subscription among other problem are the challenges faced by professional librarians in the practice of abstracting and effective services delivery in academic libraries in Taraba State. This study agrees with Cabonero, Dominguez, Jandoc and Tomas (2010), Agber, Ugbagir, Mngutyô and Amaakaven (2014) who identified challenges faced by professional librarians including lack of plan, policies and procedures of abstracting, staff strength to undertake the activity of abstracting in the libraries seem not enough to carry out the job efficiently and effectively, lack of training programme to enhance the skills and knowledge, abstracting not practiced regularly because ICT tools that professional librarians can effectively use for efficient work are not available, high cost of periodical subscription, technical expertise in the libraries are not properly trained on how materials can be properly abstracted and lack of funds.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was concluded that abstracting practices play a significant role on the effective service delivery in academic libraries in Taraba State, Nigeria. However, there are challenges faced by professional librarians in the practice of abstracting and effective services delivery in academic libraries such as lack of plan, policies and procedures of abstracting, staff strength to undertake the activity of abstracting in the library. Training programs like abstracting workshop, seminars, conferences and symposia should be organize by the library to enhance the skills and knowledge in librarians.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Management of higher institutions should prioritize abstracting activity have plans, policies and procedures of abstracting practice to meet the needs of library users.
2. Institutions should check and reform staff strength to undertake the activity of abstracting in the libraries, training programs like abstracting workshop, seminars, conferences and symposia should be organize to enhance the skills and knowledge in librarians.

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