



LIBRARIANS IDENTITY AND EVIDENCE BASED LIBRARY AND INFORMATION PRACTICE (EBLIP) IN NIGERIA.

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Abstract

An analytical examination of librarian identity in the twenty-first century is provided in this paper. Because of the ever-changing character of the modern knowledge society, library and information procedures must be completely redesigned through research. Promoting full participation in high-quality qualitative and quantitative research by librarians and information science practitioners is the main goal of Evidence Based Library and Information Practice (EBLIP). In order to stay relevant in this knowledge-driven culture, librarians' research output was therefore examined along with the need to reorient librarians and information professionals generally to embrace research. Nonetheless, there was also discussion of the difficulties facing evidence-based practice in the fields of information science and libraries. Accordingly, it was concluded that in order to enhance service delivery, librarians should keep integrating research into their regular, everyday activities.

Keywords: Librarians, Identity, Evidence, Based, Practice and Nigeria

Introduction

Today's librarians should continue to embrace the strategic realignment of their whole processes and procedures, since they are constantly subjected to previously unheard-of levels of competition. Keeping up with the swift transition from print to digital and making sure that services and information are constantly accessible and seamless at this time are challenges that academic librarians must deal with (Somerville & Kloda, 2016). Without a doubt, efforts must be made to address librarians' "identity" and "research output" if the profession is to produce the necessary products and services on par with its partners-in-progress. According to Daniels (2012), hyper-salespeople who continuously push the limits of knowledge for competitive advantage are comparable to high-achieving library and information professionals in the twenty-first century. In addition to all of this, should librarians engage in empirical research or consult with others while making daily decisions? Evidence-based practice, which promotes

the application of research to enhance library operations and services, is often the first thing that many librarians encounter. The librarian must do research to assist daily decision-making inside the company in addition to having standard skills in information retrieval, The best available evidence is used here, tempered by the needs and preferences of the user, to increase the quality of expert judgments. To apply evidence-based practice in LIS, research must be examined and developed further. Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) is the continuous process of gathering, evaluating, and using evidence to support claims. Booth and Brice in Molly (2019) define Evidence Based Practice (EBP), also called Evidence Based Library and Information Practice (EBLIP), as a systematic approach to decision-making that "promotes the collection, interpretation, and integration of valid, important, and applicable user-reported, librarian observed, and research-driven evidence." Academic librarians need to be knowledgeable about the research process and techniques in order to undertake original research as well as properly locate and evaluate existing research as part of their evidence-based practice because "instrumental" evidence is so prevalent in academic libraries (Luo, 2018).

Furthermore, Clark (2010) claimed that EBP seeks to capture the personal, social, and contextual complexities inherent in professional practice. The literature has demonstrated that evidence-based librarianship employs the best available evidence from qualitative and quantitative sources from library and information science practices to guide best practices and aid in future decision making in information dissemination and management.

Librarians must comprehend research processes and contribute to research projects and topics at all levels of their institutions. Furthermore, flexibility and the ability to interact and actively participate in discussions about research projects and information needs are currently required skills for aspiring librarians. According to Burlingame and Repp in Ochai and Nedosa (1998), performing research can create a sense of self-satisfaction by communicating the researcher's values to a larger audience, creating an area of competence, and gaining acknowledgment that extends beyond promotion, tenure, or income. Omoluabi-Idiodi and Bozimo (2012) noticed that research productivity can reinforce practices and develop positive ties with teaching staff.

According to Urhiewhu, Okeke, and Ejedafiru (2015), librarians' professional skills range from those of an archivist, who is concerned with records management, appraisal, accessioning and arrangement, archival buildings and storage facilities, preservation and rehabilitation, and reference services (including exhibitions and publications), to those of an information scientist, who is concerned with research on the nature and process of information.

One might wonder if the role of 21st century librarians has changed; however, it is more likely that the role is in transition because new tools, skills, and responsibilities are being introduced on a daily basis to improve research productivity and information dissemination, both of which are central to librarianship.

What is Librarian's Identity?

As a result of today's evolution and needs, the librarian's identity has given rise to a profusion of definitions and/or explanations, resulting in differing perspectives. A librarian's identity encompasses their professional identity, ideals, and self-concept. These include their roles and responsibilities, as well as the values they hold dear in their work, such as commitment to information access and equity, adaptability to new technologies and innovations, a passion for lifelong learning, dedication to meeting the needs of the community and users, and an emphasis on organization, categorization, and knowledge management. It may differ depending on individual experiences, work environments, and cultural contexts, but it is influenced by shared values and aspirations that define the profession, or how he or she perceives himself and how others view him or her. Librarians can better manage the changing information landscape and have a significant impact on their communities. With the pressing requirement to define professional status as one based on accountability and evidence (Eldredge, 2014), the promotion of intuitive thinking becomes increasingly important to the profession as a whole. A critical examination of librarians' professional identities will reveal how librarians perceive their jobs, the services they provide now and in the future, and how librarians shape their own perspective of librarianship. There is a considerable body of literature on the identification of library users, such as Bullingham and Vasconcelos (2013). Despite the fact that scholars are well aware of librarians' professional identities, they have gotten little attention. Preer (2008) makes the following distinction between identity and image in terms of ethics:

Professional identity is what we do, whereas image is how others see librarians. Ethics play an important part in establishing our identities. Every facet of librarianship, including how we address social concerns, interpret access, and seek knowledge, may be viewed via an ethical lens (p.13).

However, the public's perception of librarians is founded on an outdated notion of librarians as bookkeepers (OCLC, 2005). To regain their identity, librarians must create an alternative professional identity that blends the best of both traditional and current information ages driven by ICT. Identity is defined as a representation of oneself through particular

activities. As a result, librarians must reinvent their professional identity while simultaneously describing their professional practices as a blend of three categories of knowledge: propositional, theoretical, and/or scientific knowledge of how to do something, as well as personal knowledge about oneself and others. The librarianship profession offers ways that librarians can use to shape their identities. Practices are more than just library activities performed by librarians using the three forms of knowledge outlined above; they provide meaning and aim to practitioners' work. However, Hicks (2011) presents the following justifications for professional identity:

“Identity study illuminates what it means to be part of problematic social groups, cultures, and organizations. We can learn more about how librarians develop their identities by investigating how they use language to describe their work, their relationships with others, and the role technology plays in their careers”.

As a result, Dudd (2008) calls on librarians to confront the disturbing truth that "libraries still represent people's will and intellect or the cabalistic exchanges of an old guard." He also warns that, while development occurs, it must be deliberate and guided by professionals who are aware of and sensitive to the world in which librarianship exists as a living organism. The weight of duty placed on the 21st century librarian needs a thorough knowledge of what a librarian's identity in the twenty-first century should be.

Librarians and Research Productivity

The motto "publish or perish" underlines the significance of research production in any university, since research papers are an important indicator of academic quality and a deciding factor in an academic/librarian's career advancement (Yusuf, 2005). In recent years, it has become critical not only to undertake research for promotional objectives, but also to incorporate research into daily routine services to improve library procedures. Using EBLIP, librarians gather and analyze existing evidence from the library's three major components (people, physical facilities, and information resources) to drive programming and service decisions. Evidence-based practice (EBP) is the systematic process of gathering, evaluating, and implementing evidence to support or supplement professional practices. Gillespie (2014) defines evidence as something that a teacher librarian comes across, observes, collects as

formal data, learns from informal feedback, or analyzes in their practice. Similarly, librarians' evidence comprises all of their experiences, observations collected through formal and informal data collection methods, and user feedback from day-to-day operations. The EBLIP technique applies to a variety of scenarios in library and information science practice, including service, collection development, management, and information literacy instruction.

While Librarians should embrace EBLIP

It is becoming increasingly clear that librarians must all change since change is a permanent and unchangeable constant. Furthermore, society expects librarians to not only heal the information wounds of the past, but also to speed up the information gathering and distribution of libraries and information centers in today's technologically advanced age. As a result, Daniel (2012) argues that in order to integrate into the 21st century global audience, library and information professionals must embrace new characteristics and develop new approaches to library operations. Furthermore, librarians must earn their status as academics by actively participating in research activities and consistently increasing their research output. Obanya (2014) identifies three major causes driving today's rapid change: globalization, the information and communication technology revolution, and the knowledge economy. The librarian must address all of these difficulties and be fully equipped to develop, store, analyze, organize, retrieve, and transmit multimedia digital metadata information (text, images, sounds, and so on). The EBLIP community believes that for the process to be successful, it must become an internalized part of the profession, backed by individual organizations and institutions (Wilson, 2017; Somerville & Kloda, 2016; Howlett, 2018; Dalrymple, 2010). According to Molley (2019), the majority of respondents (Librarians) in the UK and US "strongly agree" or "agree" that their employing institution and professional organization encourages and supports the use of evidence in decision making and best practice. To be sustainable, EBLIP must be included into professionals' everyday workflows and well-being (Booth, 2009; Wilson, 2017; Partridge, Edward, & Thorpe, 2010). To attain these objectives, librarians must be willing to develop personal competencies that are judged necessary for 21st-century information dissemination. Daniel (2012p.114) defines personnel competency as those who:

- Dedicate to providing exceptional service
- Seek new challenges and opportunities within and outside the library
- Create a culture of mutual respect and trust

- Demonstrate effective communication skills
- Participate in teamwork.
- Lead at all times
- Prioritize and focus on key tasks
- Be devoted to lifelong learning and career planning
- Develop personal business skills and create new chances.
- Recognize the importance of professional networking and solidarity.
- Demonstrate flexibility and positivity in the face of constant change.

In accordance with the foregoing, 21st century librarians must be flexible, able to participate in research and constructively engage in conversations about research activities, and have an understanding of information demands. According to Partridge, Lee, and Munno (2010), awareness of EBLIP and the development of skills in implementing it are necessary for future librarians. Librarians have the problem of either being an important part of the knowledge-driven global culture or risk falling behind the digital gap. In the preface to one of his works, Dana (1916) writes:

The savvy librarian has a flexible mindset and professional approach. The most important characteristic of the librarian, if he is to be forever helpful and never an impediment, is a profound belief that the end is not yet, that new conditions arise on a daily basis, and that they can be wisely met only after a confession of ignorance, a surrender of all doctrine, and careful and unprejudiced observations (Dana, 1916, vii–viii).

Among these historical realities, there appears to be a "communication gap" between research and practice in librarianship in Nigeria. Professions that divide between practitioners (invariably in huge numbers) and "researchers" (often university-based) may struggle to maintain a culture of practice that includes research evidence into decision making (Genoni, Haddow, & Ritchie, 2004). Furthermore, the EBLIP is founded on the idea that procedures should be based on current, relevant, and credible research findings. It is therefore correct to argue that high-quality research work by librarians must not be compromised. Chandra (2007) believed that knowledge should be meaningful, accurate, valid, and inventive.

The evidence-based practice concept is mainly about information management. It addresses two information disorders (Booth, 1998). Specifically, "information overload" and the delayed spread of research discoveries in ordinary practice. It has become the librarian's responsibility to manage information overload and increase information distribution through research in day-to-day services. Publication counts and publication quality are no longer sufficient indicators of research output in librarianship; rather, they indicate the extent to which such research can be used to Evidence Based Library Practice.

Library research still favors descriptive approaches over observational or experimental methods (Feldredge, 2000). Descriptive research tries to discover the conditions that exist, the opinions that are held, the processes that are taking place, and the obvious impacts that are emerging in library and information practices. Scholarly or research activities have a long and distinguished history in librarianship. According to Fox (2007) and Omoluabi-Idiodi & Bozimo (2012), librarians prioritize scholarship as a criterion for promotion and tenure. They also evaluate existing institutional support for scholarship. A brief examination of the above reasons for conducting research reveals that librarians conduct research for personal development and institutional pride. This presents a problem for library service delivery and practice in general. The current limitation of traditional research methods in library and information science is a lack of acceptable research articles conducted in similar ways that might be merged to provide evidence for decision making. Librarians need to understand the research process so that they can gather and assess existing evidence to guide programming and service decisions.

Challenges facing Librarians in EBLIP

Research in librarianship has a significant difficulty due to insufficient time; for example, studies have revealed that librarians in university libraries complain about having little or no time for research given the nature of the services they provide (Ochai & Nedosa, 1998; Zemon & Bahr, 1998). This is consistent with Molly's (2019) study, which found that the number one obstacle for using evidences among participants was 'short of time'. This is a recurrent finding across studies on academic librarians and the EBLIP process (Luo, 2018, Wilson, 2016, Koufogiannakis, 2015). Other difficulties to employing research in decision-making include:

- Information overload
- Limited access to resources
- Poor indexing

- Poor evidence base
- Difficulty locating studies on practical workplace issues
- Inadequate awareness of EBLIP process
- Limited funding
- Inconsistent evidence value across organizations and practitioners
- Lack of support and understanding for EBLIP implementation. Furthermore, Hiller and Self in Oakleaf (2011) provided the following reasons why librarians are not evidence-based:
 - Limited knowledge of basic research methodologies among librarians, leading to uncertainty about evidence collection.
 - Limited experience in data analysis among library staff leads to a lack of understanding of evidence.
 - Difficulty in recognizing important and actionable evidence and presenting it effectively.
 - Refuse to use evidence because they believe they know best for their customers.
 - Difficulty using evidence for good transformation.

These problems highlight the need for additional training and awareness of how to do research and apply current findings in practice, as well as for library administration to recognize the long-term benefits against short-term convenience. As a result, librarians should gain the skills to manage the majority of research material, not just in the fields in which they serve, but also in their own professional practice. As a result, 21st-century librarians should begin to address these challenges. Librarians must use strong procedures and metrics to conduct high-quality qualitative and quantitative research, and it is critical to incorporate evidence-based approaches into professional practice to improve decision-making.

Conclusion

It is worth noting that there is a scarcity of literature on EBLIP in Nigeria, indicating that the field is still in its early stages. As a result, there have been no empirical studies to date that show that its easy implementation would lead to greater research distribution and application in library and information science practice. However, it is clear that the 21st century LIS practice demands are very different from the 20th century. Additionally, librarians are aware that adopting some of the elements of EBLIP could be useful in improving decision making, providing more opportunities for collaboration, and increasing credibility among library users

and funding bodies. It is also important to remark that research and its implementation in everyday practice in librarianship could favorably influence the future of the profession.

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