



## Article

### INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY IN LIBRARY SCHOOL EDUCATION IN ANAMBRA STATE

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#### **Abstract**

*This examines the adequacy of training given to students to be ICT compliant in Nigeria Library Schools. The study examines three library schools in Anambra State. It describes the traditional and modern role of librarians and the need to upgrade the library schools curricula for the proper training of librarians to meet the challenges of the Information Communication Technology need of the libraries of the 21st century. The education of librarians means provision of funds, computer/ICT laboratory, and specialist instructors to support the library educators.*

#### **Introduction**

The application of Information and Communication Technology, (ICT) in training librarians in our library schools must not be neglected in this century. ICT is defined as diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate, create, disseminate, store and manage information. These technologies include computers, the internet, and even broadcasting technologies (radio and television). (Wikipedia, 2007).

ICT is an umbrella term that includes any communication device or application, encompassing: radio, television, cellular phones, computer networks, hardware and software, satellite systems and so on; as well as the various services and applications associated with them, such as video conferencing and distant learning. ICTs are often spoken of in a particular context, such as ICTs in education, health care or libraries. The context in which we are examining it in this paper is ICT in the libraries. This paper examines ICT and Library School Education in Anambra State. This is to present the

role of the Library School Management in training and education of the librarians that can confidently fit into the changing world of Librarianship due to advancement in information and communication technology.

In recent years there has been great interest on how computers and the internet can best be harnessed to improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of education in both formal and informal setting and the Librarian cannot be left out in this move.

As stated by Mckinzie, Steve (2002), the changing roles of librarians is due to the new technologies which keep increasing the accessibility of information, librarians must seek to adapt to the evolving needs of users that emerge from the new technology. The new technology has brought about so many changes in the practice of librarianship. For instance, the traditional card catalogs are giving way to online public access catalogs (OPACs), the surface mail ordering of books is giving way to internet ordering through website, hence the need for the proper education of library professionals to meet these challenges.

### **Education of the Librarian in the Nigerian Library School and Library School Management**

The librarian must be trained properly to meet the challenges of the information needs of the 21st century and to be able to combine ICT and traditional library elements in discharging the library duties. Akintunde (2006) and Igun (2006), have observed that the training of librarians in the Nigerian Library School is inadequate compared with the new trends in technology. Highly competent and relevant librarians were produced in the past, but in this modern age of ICT, the schools need radical restructuring to produce librarians that can deliver service in the library in an ICT based environment.

The Library School Management in our tertiary institutions should see the implementation of ICT in the library schools as a long lasting process that must be carried out for the students and staff to be relevant in the area of information communication technology. The process, as Vrana and Ivan (2007) put it, contains such activities as: Building a communication and network infrastructure.

- Provision of adequate hardware and software environment for staff and students
- Implementing transaction and information system for all activities that can take advantages of ICT
- Setting up computer laboratories for the students and staff
- Organizing training for all categories of students and staff

- Developing multimedia course materials for learning.

The Heads of Department of all library schools should know that a lot of effort is needed to accomplish these activities. They must be determined to make sacrifices to see that the objective to move along with the ICT trends is accomplished; no matter how long it takes, so that our library school students can compete effectively in the outside world when they graduate.

## **2.1 Access to Computers and Electronic Materials**

**Table 1**

| <b>S/N</b> | <b>Institution</b>              | <b>Students Population</b> | <b>We have computers but no free access</b> | <b>%</b> |
|------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|---|----------|
| 1.         | Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka | 51                         | 51  | 100      |
| 2.         | Madonna University, Okija       | 14                         | 14  | 100      |
| 3.         | Federal Polytechnic, Oko        | 400                        | 120   | 30       |

From the figures above, it is alarming that (100%) of the library school students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka and Madonna University, Okija have computers in their library schools, but have no access to these computers. The library school of the Federal Polytechnic, Oko is not different because only 120 students representing (30%) of the population have access to computers and they are mostly final year students. This further explains the fact that few of the library schools in Nigeria have computers and electronic materials. For instance, in Anambra State, there are about eight tertiary institutions. Out of the eight tertiary institutions, only three have library schools, and they are Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Madonna University, Okija and Federal Polytechnic, Oko. The above interview on access to computers is a great highlight of the situation on ground. From the interview questions presented to some of the library school management, and students, the following findings were made:

### **I. Nnamdi Azikiwe University Library School**

This is a Federal University, with an accredited library school with qualified lecturers. The academic staff members are seven (7), the student population is about fifty-one (51), made up of 100 levels to 400 level students. The postgraduate programme started in 2008. There is a computer laboratory in the library school, they have a better equipped laboratory, for training the students. Presently, in 2004 the University established a

computer centre named AfriHub, a joint venture of the university and AfriHub, an ICT consortium with its headquarters in Fairfax, Virginia, USA. The centre provides dual service to the university in the areas of:

- i. Complete internet-intranet services, which offer the university 24hrs service for browsing and other internet facilities.
- ii. Training in ICT which prepares the university staff and graduates of the University for the information age and the competitiveness of the 21st century.

The computer centre introduces a computer literacy programme called UMITT (Universal Mandatory I.T. Training) to provide students with practical and functional knowledge of computers (Onwuka, 2006). Since the inception of the centre in 2004, the library school management ensures that the students participate in the course because it has become a part of the students' General Studies (GS) and therefore a pre-requisite for graduation. The library school also has a course on ICT and Information Science, though it is theoretical, it is hoped that with compulsory ICT literacy programme in AfriHub, and the library school graduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka can confidently work in an ICT environment.

## **II. Madonna University, Okija**

This University is a privately owned institution with a library school that offers degree, masters and doctorate programme in Library and Information Science. The Academic Staff Members are seven (7), the students' population is about sixteen (16), covering 100 level to 400 level students and post graduate students. The library school does not have a computer laboratory, but have one computer and offers courses on ICT and Information Science. The students do not have access to any computer centre, except when they visit the cyber cafe outside the University campus. This however will not give them enough knowledge and training to compete favourably in the changing world of information technology.

## **III. Federal Polytechnic, Oko**

This is a Federal Polytechnic with a library school that offers ND and HND programmes; with thirteen (13) lecturers on staff. The students' population is about four hundred (400) students. The ND programme started in 1984 and in 1986 the HND programme in Library and Information Science started. In 1990, the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) published a unified curriculum for the polytechnic-based

schools in Nigeria which included a course on ICT. It was not until 2003 that the library school has known tremendous progress in the area of infrastructure and other facilities which includes ICT equipment. Presently, the library school has a resource sharing arrangement with the main library with about twenty-four (24) computers with internet and intranet connectivity. The school has a specialized internet ICT instructor that teach MBTE course on ICT, they have also introduced internet as a course to ensure that the students and graduates of the institution are ready to compete effectively in the ICT world. The students in the library schools are hardly allowed access to these facilities except in their final year, because of the cost and fragile nature of such equipment. The report of the Higher Education Consultancy Group (2002), puts it that there is great concern about access to electronic materials. An increasingly important challenge to access is the restrictions placed by institutions on access to their electronic materials. In most libraries and library schools, access to electronic material is only to hard copy and not to anything electronic or screen based.

Majority of our library students are students without access to any computer at home and they can be at great disadvantage in practicing ICT skills. The provision of suitable ICT resource laboratory which is open and freely accessible throughout the day can be a way towards overcoming this problem (<http://www.selb.org/library>).

| S/N | Institution                     | Accreditation of library school | No. of Academic staff | Students population in the library school | Ration of staff to students |
|-----|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 1.  | Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka | Yes                             | 7                     | 51  | 1:7                         |
| 2.  | Madonna University, Okija       | Yes                             | 7                     | 16  | 1:2                         |
| 3.  | Federal Polytechnic, Oko        | Yes                             | 13                    | 400                                       | 1:31                        |

From the above table, the ratio of the Academic Staff to the student's population in the library schools meets the recommended standard.

## **Availability of Computer Laboratories**

**Table II**

| <b>S/N</b> | <b>Institution Highlight</b>    | <b>Students Population</b> | <b>We have computers but no free access</b> | <b>Ratio</b> |
|------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|---|--------------|
| 1.         | Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka | 10                         | 51  | 1:5          |
| 2.         | Madonna University, Okija       | 1                          | 16  | 1:16         |
| 3.         | Federal Polytechnic, Oko        | 24                         | 400   | 1:17         |

From the table, there is need for the school library management of each institution to embark on the purchase of more computers, especially in Federal Polytechnic Oko, followed by Madonna University Okija and Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka.

## **Recommendations for the Training of Librarians in Anambra State**

### **Upgrading the Curriculum**

Nzotta (1994) defined curriculum as the main aspect of education process on which the success of an education programme depends. He explained that the successful implementation of a curriculum depends on such factors like the institution and its administrative structure, the availability of funds and the prevailing social conditions. Based on this, the library school management should incorporate ICT courses into the library school curriculum and make drastic measures to upgrade their curriculum to be ICT based.

### **Provision of Funds**

Secondly, the impact of ICT on educational programmes is increasing at an alarming rate, but the library schools are not seriously taking this into account (Oketunji, 2005). However, even where the ICT impact is considered, availability of fund to purchase the needed equipment is a problem because of the expensive nature of the facilities. Therefore, library school management should seek grants from philanthropic organizations, and parent institutions.

### **Provision of Computer Laboratory**

None of the Library Schools in Anambra State has an up-to-date computer laboratory, where lectures can be delivered and students can practice what they have learnt theoretically. Therefore, it is recommended that standardized ICT laboratory with direct

internet connectivity should be provided in the library schools with specialized instructors to instruct both the staff and students and to support the teaching staff in the use of the new technology.

### **Training of Staff and Students**

The personal competence of lecturers and students can affect their interest in ICT. To make more progress with ICT in our library schools, sufficient funds must be released for proper equipping of staff and students in the new technologies. Lecturers should make out time to write grant-winning proposals to secure funds and facilities for teaching and learning, computer laboratories and other ICT needs.

Librarians should not continue to wait for institutional management who do not share the ICT library school vision. They have to find alternative routes to develop unique skills to be able to fit into the profound changes going on in the educational system. This means that they must not wait for training in computer software to be organized for them before they can teach the students. However, the lecturers should update themselves, and then integrate what is known to combine traditional and modern method.

### **Conclusion**

The implementation of ICT in the training of students in our library/ schools must be paramount in the minds of librarians and the library school management. This is because our society is changing into one in which ICT competence is regarded highly. Moreover, the information and communication technologies are transforming our educational system to adopt more active teaching and learning styles.

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