

Full Length Research

Information Explosion: The Role of Modern Librarians Bridge the Gap

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Accepted 25 June 2023

The aim of the article is to explore Information Explosion: The role of Modern Librarians Bridge the Gap. The information era has thrown up many challenges not only for libraries but also for librarians by drastically changing the information environment, it has transformed the role of librarians into those of information managers. The research design was descriptive survey method. Survey research is the type of research which studies sample from population to discover relative frequency of occurrence, sociological variables. The population for the was librarians of two selected academic libraries in Delta State. Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba and Delta State University, Abraka Campus. The sample for the study was purposively drawn from two University libraries in Delta State, using census sampling technique. The sample size is made up of fifty (50) respondents drawn from the two (2) selected academic libraries. The main instruments used for gathering data about information explosion as a challenge to the librarian is questionnaire. Instrument were analysis by statistic tools. The researcher provide some recommendations for the study.

Keywords: Information Explosion Modern Librarians, Gap, Dennis Osadebay University and Libraries

Cite This Article As: UDOH, C.N. (2023). Information Explosion: The Role of Modern Librarians Bridge the Gap. *Inter. J. Acad. Lib. Info. Sci.* 11(5): 177-182

INTRODUCTION

The fundamental challenges before the Nigerian library in the information age would principally center on their capacity to educate, train and produce qualified information professionals capable of utilizing information infrastructure to maintain a competitive edge in all of human endeavors in the provision and dissemination of the right users at the right time in the right package. Also, some of the challenges facing the librarian in the 21st century include, the acquisition of management techniques in the dissemination of information, acquisition of knowledge on data base creation, Management and Networking, Possession of the Capacity to use Telecommunication, information technology and network facilities and systems to acquire, store, retrieve and disseminate information. Possession of the mastery of computer and information gathering and management.

Planning is the process by which librarians like a manager, looks to the future and discovers alternative course of action. The library organizations develop awareness of the precise nature of their objectives. As a means of systematic planning, therefore, a lot of serious homework is needed for the librarian to determine, identify and provide in terms of human, material and financial requirement for achieving the goals. However, with the advance in technology that have turned the predictions of a 'paperless society' into a reality, the role of libraries has been redefined. In this era of e-libraries, librarians need to reinvent their roles in librarianship. Though the works of librarians have not substantially altered, they must now realize that 'libraries without walls' are actually libraries with a new wall.

More so, hard choices are required to salvage the situation. Book votes are daily diminishing. Fewer copies are being bought in place of the former multiple copies. This trend alone does not appear to help matters. The only situation which appears would have a fairly long lasting effect is that of learning how to manage the resources, that is, books, serials, and equipment which the librarian should be able to create a model through his understanding of the library is adequately represented and stimulated.

According to the new-age information managers. Ghai, (2004) the information era has thrown up many challenges not only for libraries but also for librarians by drastically changing the information environment, it has transformed the role of librarians into those of information managers. UNESCO believes that libraries of all kinds are probably the best agencies to maintain a flow of ideas and information and create a climate of mutual understanding and friendliness.

In the field of acquisition, organization, and utilization of collections the library should plan to stabilize the acquisition of literature at its present level by selecting literature intended for permanent storage with greater thoroughness; automated acquisition procedures, raise the quality of cataloguing by working out and introducing library standards into the cataloguing of printed matter.

While, in the field of scientific and information activities, the library is expected to expand these information services rendered to central and government bodies participate more actively in the publication of union catalogs of recent acquisitions, and reflect in them national and foreign publication; prepare basic retrospective bibliographical indexes more intensively. Lastly, in the field of methodological guidance of public libraries, the library have to actively contribute to the organization of centralized systems of state public libraries, improve the composition and structure of the collections of public and universal scientific libraries, create a network of depository libraries, introduce cooperative cataloguing and classification, improve medium term and long term planning of library development not only on a countrywide scale but on the regional and local levels too. This research work is aimed at knowing the challenges of information explosion to the librarian. The researcher therefore undertakes this study with a view of knowing the solutions to the 'phrase' information explosion. Based on the above the researcher want to investigate modern librarian on era of information explosion.

Statement of Problem

The problems with the library hitherto has been that, there appears to be a general lack of knowledge amongst the public concerning the functions, needs, limitations, and potentialities of libraries. There is the urgent need to define precisely what libraries should do, how they do it and principally one should have a good knowledge of how that which is done varies from one library to another. It is obvious and certain that most library and information studies schools in the country lack the personnel and facilities for the Information Technology (IT) education training essential for the 21st Century Nigeria. Based on the forgoing, the researcher want to investigate whether information explosion affect librarians positively or negatively and how the control the information with the use of ICT bt bridging gap between the traditional and electronic age.

Purpose of the Study

- i. To identify some of the way has the role of a librarian changed in this information age
- ii. To establish the need for quantify the rate of growth of knowledge in this information age
- iii. To ascertain the effective selection be made in the face of ever increasing volume of information.
- iv. To know the extent to which way could information explosion be controlled.
- v. To find out the ways librarians need to do in order to achieve the gateway obligation as the new role of library services

Literature Review

Concept of Digital Divide

The digital divide is the difference in access to contemporary information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as computers, the internet, and mobile devices, between people, households, businesses, and geographic areas. Access to computer gear, software, high-speed internet connectivity, and digital literacy are some examples of this divide. The digital divide can have significant implications for individuals and society as a whole. For example, individuals without access to digital technology may be unable to access important services and resources, such as online education, job opportunities, and government services. They may also be left behind in terms of digital literacy and the ability to use technology for communication, entertainment, and other purposes.

Moreover, the digital divide can exacerbate existing social and economic inequalities, as those who lack access to digital technology may be disadvantaged in terms of education, employment, and economic opportunities. This, in turn, can lead to a further widening of the gap between the "haves" and "have-nots" in society. Efforts to bridge the digital divide have included initiatives to increase access to digital technology in underserved areas, provide digital literacy training, and expand high-speed internet connectivity. However, despite these efforts, the digital divide remains a significant challenge in many parts of the world, particularly in developing countries and rural areas.

Library's Role in Curbing Digital Divide

With the rapid development of information and communication technologies, access to digital information has become increasingly crucial. However, not all individuals and communities have equal access to this technology, which has created a digital divide that affects many aspects of society. As information professionals, librarians play a critical role in addressing the digital divide. Librarians can help bridge this gap by providing access to digital resources, promoting digital literacy, and ensuring that their communities have the necessary skills to navigate and use digital technology. Librarians can also work to create more inclusive and equitable access to digital resources, particularly for marginalized communities (Fourie, 2007). One way librarians can address the digital divide is by partnering with community organizations and other stakeholders to provide digital literacy training and resources. This can include offering computer classes, providing access to online resources, and working with schools and community centers to ensure that everyone has access to the digital tools and resources they need. Moreover, National Telecommunication and Information Administration (2019) avers that librarians can promote equitable access to digital resources by advocating for policies and initiatives that address the digital divide. For example, librarians can work with policymakers to develop and implement programs that provide funding for broadband infrastructure in underserved areas or provide low-cost internet access to low-income individuals and families. Libraries have traditionally served as gatekeepers of knowledge, providing access to information and resources for the betterment of society (Ogunmodede, Adio, Aboyade, Ebijuwa and Oyetola (2023). However, in the era of the digital divide, where there is a disparity in access to digital technology and the internet, the role of librarianship has evolved to address the challenges posed by this divide. Librarians play a crucial role in bridging the digital divide by providing access to digital resources and services to underserved communities. They serve as intermediaries, facilitating access to information and technology for those who may not have the means or skills to do so on their own. Libraries often provide free access to computers, the internet, and digital tools, allowing individuals to search for jobs, access educational materials, and engage in online communication. (Koontz, 2016).

In addition to providing access, librarians also play a pivotal role in digital literacy training. They offer programs and workshops on digital literacy skills, including computer literacy, online navigation, critical evaluation of digital information, and data privacy. Librarians assist individuals in developing the necessary skills to effectively use digital technology, empowering them to be active participants in the digital world (Subramaniam and Taylor, 2017; American Library Association, 2013). Moreover, librarians are advocates for equitable access to information and technology. They work towards minimizing the barriers that prevent individuals and communities from accessing digital resources, such as advocating for increased internet connectivity in underserved areas and promoting policies that support net neutrality and open access to information.

Julien, Pecoskie, & Reed (2015) examines the role of rural libraries in bridging the digital divide. The authors argue that rural libraries can serve as important community digital hubs by providing access to technology, digital resources, and digital literacy training. Subramaniam & Taylor (2017) proposed a framework for understanding digital literacy and its role in addressing the digital divide. The authors argue that digital literacy encompasses a range of skills, including the ability to use digital technology effectively, evaluate digital information critically, and participate in digital communication and collaboration

METHODOLOGY

The research design was descriptive survey method. Survey research is the type of research which studies sample from population to discover relative frequency of occurrence, sociological variables. The population for the was librarians of two selected academic libraries in Delta State. Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba and Delta State University, Abraka Campus. The sample for the study was purposively drawn from two University libraries in Delta State, using census sampling technique.

The sample size is made up of fifty (50) respondents drawn from the two (2) selected libraries. The main instruments used for gathering data about information explosion as a challenge to the librarian is questionnaire. The retrieved questionnaires were thoroughly scrutinized to ensure that they were properly completed by the respondents. The data gathered were arranged in tables and are analyzed and interpreted using simple percentage to present and illustrate opinions of the respondents.

Table 1. Is Information Explosion an unprecedented growth in number and variety of data?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage%
Yes	50	100
No	-	-
Undecided	-	-
Total	50	100

From the table above 50 (100%) of the respondents agreed that information explosion is an unprecedented growth in number and variety of data. This is an indication that the library and librarians have serious job in other for their selection to be meaningful and appreciated by the management and users.

Table 2. What way has the role of a librarian changed in this information age?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage%
Selection and organization of information resources	5	10
Use of computers	32	64
Decision making	3	6
Adaptation to information formats	10	20
Total	50	100

From the table above the following is deduced: 5(10%) of the respondents agreed that selection and organization of information resources has changed the role of librarian, 32(64%) of the respondents agreed that is the use of computers that has changed, while 3 (6%) agreed on decision making and 10 (20%) respondents were of the opinion of adaptation to information formats.

Table 3. How would you quantify the rate of growth of knowledge in this information age?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage%
1000 volumes per annum	6	12
800 megabytes per person per year	8	16
90% of publication every year	22	44
Double in each five to ten years	14	28
Total	50	100

From the table above, it shows that 6(12%) of the respondents agreed that the rate of growth of knowledge is quantified by 1000 volumes per annum, 8(16%) of the respondents agreed that it is 800 megabytes per person per year, 22(44%) of the respondents agreed on 90% of the publication every year, while 14 (28%) of the respondents agreed that it doubled in each five to ten years.

Table 4. How can effective selection be made in the face of ever increasing volume of information?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage%
Ability to choose appropriate software from the market	16	32
Skills for information gathering and management of resources	2	4
Using of information technology(IT) based resources	11	22
Increase of budget	21	42
Total	50	100

From the above table, it can be inferred that 16 (32%) of the respondents agreed that the ability to choose appropriate software from the market can lead to effective selection of information, 2 (4%) of the respondents agreed that the skills for information gathering and management of resources can aid in effective selection of information, 11(22%) of the respondents agreed that using of information technology (IT) based resources will help in effective selection, while 21(42%) of the respondents agreed that increase of budget will create room for effective selection in the face of ever increasing volume of information.

Table 5. What do librarians need to do in order to achieve the gateway obligation as the new role of library services?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage%
Commented	38	76
No comment	12	24
Total	50	100

From the above table the following is deduce: 1(2%)of the respondents agreed that increase of fund will control information explosion, 31(62%) of the respondents agreed that library automation will help in controlling information explosion 11(22%) of the respondents agreed that policy on book publishing will control information explosion, 2(4%) of the respondents agreed that information literacy will control information explosion, while 5(10%) of the respondents agreed that computer literacy that is automation has the highest percentage of respondents.

From the above table the following is deduced: 38(76%) of the respondents commented on the issue while 12 (26%) did not comment. Most of the respondents commented on the need for libraries automation.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Based on the data collected for the research project, the results were obtained and analyzed. Table 1 was the characteristics of the respondents and it inferred the sex of the librarians in Dennis Osadebay University library, Asaba and Delta State University library, Abraka. The study revealed that 15 (30%) of the respondents were females, 35(70%) were males. Table shows that 28(56%) of the respondents has worked with zero to five years, 18(36%) has worked for six to ten years, while 4 (8%) has worked for eleven to fifteen years.

On the issue of information explosion as a challenge to the librarian in table ---- of the study, the table shows that 50(100%) of the respondents agreed that information explosion is an unprecedented growth in number and variety of data.

Table 2 shows that 32(64%) of the respondents agreed that the use of computers has changed the role of librarians in this information age. Table 3 shows that majority of the respondents agreed that the rate of knowledge has increased to 90% of publication every year.

From the analyzed data in table 4 the table shows that 46 (92%) of the respondents strongly agreed that increase of budget is relevant for effective selection of information resources. Table 6 with a response rate of 50 (100%) clearly indicated that lack of adequate policy in librarianship poses a challenge to the librarian in this era of information explosion. 38(76%) of the respondents commented on what the librarians need to do in order to achieve the gateway obligation as the new role of library series. Majority of the respondents commented on library automation, which help to reduce work load in the library.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The research has logically carried out a case study on the information explosion a challenge to the librarian. Two academic librarians in Delta State were used. From the results of the analysis carried out, we can therefore conclude that information explosion can be checked and controlled. Therefore, librarians should have positive attitude towards the phrase "Information Explosion"

It was also discovered that librarians are facing some challenges which must be met such as Automation of library sections, using information technology (IT) based resources policy on book publishing, to choose appropriate software from the market, increase of budget etc. in order to meet up the challenges in this information age. From the findings and conclusion drawn from the research, the researcher was poised to make the following recommendations.

- Some of the Academic libraries that have not automated their operations and services should try and automate all operations and services that need to be automated such as the circulation section, Serial section, Cataloguing section and classification section, Acquisition and Reference section.
- Provisions should be made in acquiring more sophisticated ICT (Information Communication Technology) facilities in order to meet the challenges that is facing the librarians.
- Parent organization of various academic libraries should increase their allocation of fund towards automation of their libraries in its budget.
- Both the management, staffs and users of academic libraries should be made to understand the importance of automation in the libraries.

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