



Issues and Trends Affecting Reference Services in Nigerian Polytechnic Libraries

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Abstract

A critical review of literature on issues and trends affecting reference services in Nigerian Polytechnic Libraries was conducted. Qualitative research design was used for this study. Secondary data through a systematic review of related literature to the concepts in this study were analysed to picture the current issues and trends affecting reference services in Nigerian polytechnic libraries. Result showed that reference services in Nigeria, are plagued by several issues ranging from less relevant materials, bureaucratic in-orderliness, poor funding, and lack of the zeal to introduce new services, insufficient computers, inadequate staff to respond to users' query. Inadequate funding of libraries, non-compliance with the demands of information and communication technology (ICT), indifferent attitudes of library managers, lack of ICT policies, poor working conditions, lack of ICT facilities, lack of passion for the profession, lack of motivation, non-attendance to workshops/seminars, institutional policies not in favour of librarianship, absence of well-defined and uniform library policies and librarians phobia for emerging technologies were the identified trends affecting reference services in the reviewed literature. Documented in the literature reviewed includes the non-adequacy of the available internet and search engines in the reference section of the polytechnic libraries though the polytechnic has embraced this trend. The findings of this study showed that the problems affecting reference units of polytechnic libraries has extended beyond unsteady power supply and inadequate ICT facilities. The study therefore concluded that issues and trends in the reference services of polytechnic libraries are compounding and worsening. Therefore, it is recommended that polytechnic libraries' management extend developmental focus to the unit in order to nib the problems in the bud.

Keywords: Reference services, Reference section, Polytechnic library, reference issues and trends, e-reference.

Introduction

An academic library is a library that is attached to a higher educational institution and it serves two major purposes; to support the school curriculum and to support the research of the staff and students. Polytechnic libraries are libraries that are attached to polytechnics and are, therefore, different and distinct from the institution in which they serve. Higher institutions can be categorized into different kinds. These include polytechnics, which is the main focus of this focus. Others are universities, monotechnic, colleges of education, and allied institutions such as school of nursing etcetera They perform functions related to the mission of each institution. For the purpose of the study we would be considering the Polytechnic library.

Polytechnic library is defined as a library created, administered and funded by the polytechnic to meet the information, research and curriculum needs of its students, faculty and staff (Reitz, 2004). The purpose of the polytechnic library is to sustain the objective of the polytechnic, which are in the area of educating, acquiring knowledge, research and services. To a large extent the value of the library is measured by the services provided by the library because of its distinctive position in the over-all polytechnic system. The user of the polytechnic library is students, lecturers, non-teaching staff and members of the local community in which the library is located.

The library is regarded as the intellectual system of the polytechnic. The polytechnic library



is also expected to provide information studies for extra mural studies, recreation, entertainment and general knowledge. A polytechnic library is organized based on a functional approach, subject approach, or a hybrid of subject. In a functional approach, the library is organized based on a function performed in the library; hence the sections of the library include; readers service section, cataloguing and classification section, acquisition section, collection development unit, bindery unit, reference section.

Reference section of a library houses the library reference sources, which are those resources that are meant to aid research by providing prompt and handy information on any topic. They are usually consulted to find facts and broad overview. Reference section is a section of the library which contains information resources that cannot be read from cover to cover. Rather are expected to be consulted as and when necessary in order to supply information desired by a user of the library. Reference section contains documents that contain miscellaneous information on any topic – be it an event or individual.

Reference resources are authoritative works that help user locate information about people, fact and ideas because most of these resources are written by expert. These sources can help user find the date of an important event, history of an individual, major achievement of an individual or an organization. Reference sources are resources that contain specific information and accurate information and rarely do a reference material contain opinions. Reference resources are various sources that provide background information or quick facts on any given topic. Reference sources provide answer to specific question/ queries such as statistic and technical instruction; direct to additional information sources.

Reference services are personal assistance eagerly given to users in pursuit of information by a librarian in charge of reference section known as the reference librarian (Madu and Ezeani 2010). Its services rendered to users include users' education, meeting users request for specific information and assistance, maintenance of the resources in the reference unit. The library's reference section headed by the reference librarian, is an important section that houses and takes care of important

information resources that cannot be borrowed by users. These information resources include: encyclopedias, directories, biographies, gazetteers, dictionaries, maps, almanacs, bibliographies etcetera.

Statement of the Problem

It is no doubt that the fundamental role of the reference librarian is to ensure that users of the library are given the requisite assistance that will enable them to meet their needs. Reference and information services represent one of the cardinal services provided in libraries and information centres, rendering assistance to users in their pursuit for information is very essential, no matter how sophisticated a user is in terms of level of education and experience he or she needs to be assisted to have the right contact with the right book at the right time and in the right personal way. This is because the essence of having voluminous collection whether print or electronic in polytechnic libraries and by extension reference section is to equip users with adequate resources to complement what is being taught in the classroom. However, observation and literature revealed that the availability of information communication and technology (ICT) tools, search engines, smart phones, electronic books and social collaborative tools has made users demand for easy and efficient ways to access scholarly publications as against the traditional subscription and this may not be unconnected to the reference service not reflective of emerging technologies, librarians behind the reference desk not answering users' query satisfactorily and lack of competency of reference librarians.

Low level of awareness of the available reference and information services, non-participation of students in orientation programmes, inadequacy of reference information sources, lack of space / location of reference unit and poor communication skills of library staff, lack of competency, lack of technology literacy, poor internet connectivity, inadequate power supply, poor funding and sustaining the resources were major issues and trends affecting reference services in Nigerian polytechnic libraries.

Methodology

Qualitative research design based on literature analysis was used for this study.



Secondary data through a systematic review of related literature to the concepts in this study were analysed to picture the current issues and trends affecting reference services in Nigerian polytechnic libraries. Keywords include Reference services, Reference section, Polytechnic library, Reference issues and trends, e-Reference. The inclusion criteria include articles on reference services specifically on polytechnic libraries while excluded articles were those that do not deal with polytechnic libraries. Analysis include the synthesis of both theoretical and empirical findings from the reviewed literature.

Literature Review and Analysis

Types of Reference Queries: The following are types of reference queries as posited by Ezekwe and Muokebe (2012) and Dhar (2010), which are anticipated from library users:

- i. *Straight or Directional Query:* This is a type of query that requires minute answer. The users only need to be directed on where the information resources can be found. He may ask questions such as "Where is the Acquisition section?", "Where are the subject based dictionaries?" etcetera
- ii. *Factual or Ready Reference Queries:* These types of queries are answered with fundamental knowledge of reference materials. The answers to these queries can be found easily. Factual or Ready reference queries are: Names of inventors of power, density of gold etcetera. Answers to these types of questions can easily be found from reference books placed on the reference desk/shelves.
- iii. *Topical or Specific Queries:* These are queries usually posed on current issues. In answering queries relating to this kind of search, there may be limited amount of information on the topic which may also involve searching a large number of sources of information. Examples of this type of queries include importance of medications, Properties of water, background information sources. Examples of long range or advisory queries are current developments in Political Science etcetera
- iv. *Long Range or Advisory Queries:* This query seeks the librarian's advice on available information sources. This type of queries cannot be answered from few sources.

Rather, it would require the use of many specialized information sources. Examples of long range or advisory queries are current developments in the manufacturing of cars, history of Librarianship etcetera to answer this question, sources such as manuscripts, unpublished documents, periodicals, pamphlets, books etcetera needed to be consulted.

Reference Services Provided in Libraries

The following are the reference services provided in the libraries:

- a. **Information Services:** This service can also be called Referral Service. This is the process of locating resources and agencies with special services or information needed by library users, and the capacity of the libraries to refer these users to these organizations for the purpose of satisfying their information need from time to time. Libraries receive a good number of reference and information enquiries whose range is usually very long i.e. from general to specific. Majority of reference and information queries by users received at the reference desk can be answered through the use of dictionaries, directories, encyclopedias, handbooks and manuals, atlases and gazetteers, indexes and bibliographies etcetera
- b. **Bibliographic verification and documentation services:** In promoting effective reference services, bibliography and documentation services should also be made available. According to Madu (2010) in Madu and Ezeanu (2010), bibliographic verification is the use of bibliographic tools for verifying the correctness and completeness of the used information. These resources provide information about publications, and to achieve this, librarians in the reference section consults and searches both manual and electronic versions of standard bibliographic resources. Some bibliographic tools may include abstracts and indexes, gazettes, encyclopedias, almanacs, catalogues, bibliographies to mention but a few. Documentation services may include monthly list of additions, reading lists, documentation list, subject bibliographies etcetera. on the topics of seminars,



- conferences, research projects etcetera and documentation list of contents (Dhar, 2010).
- c. Inter-library loan and document delivery services: Are important services due to the increase in the prices of document and budgetary constraints on libraries, which makes them unable to purchase more and new resources. A library that does not have certain required documents among its collection may borrow, through the inter-library loan from other libraries and making them accessible to the users at the earliest and required time. In other words, no single library or information centre can brag of having in its collection all the resources that can be demanded of their users. Therefore, it's appreciated and necessary to look for co-operation from other libraries or information centers in order to provide services to their clientele. After the library has identified its areas of need it places a demand after a verification done manually in many libraries. The discharging process can also take place on the internet for both requesting for and the delivery of inter-library loan materials. In the inter-library loan and document delivery services, periodical articles can be transmitted instantly. The library can also benefit from the services of inter-library loan in order to enrich the collection and provide improved and qualitative services to users.
- d. Current Awareness Services (CAS): These services are provided for researchers to accustom them with recent publications that will help them in their research work. The reference Librarian responsibility is to make its users aware of latest information relating to their work field. Current Awareness Services (CAS) can be re-packaged to befit the information needs of the users. It can be introduced in the routing of periodicals, abstracting or indexing of documents, circulation of accession lists of newly acquired documents, library bulletin containing all types of useful information and so on.
- e. User Education: It is important that the library organizes user education through the reference section. The basic objective of this service is to infuse information seeking habit among the user so they can independently and without help from the reference Librarian, search the information sources in the library.
- f. Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) Services: This is another form of reference service provided in the library. In some cases, it can be referred to as Current Awareness Services (CAS). It is a user packaged reference services that keeps users abreast of latest information. Many libraries use computerize service methods for disseminating the selective information for the users so as to keep them well informed. This service is mainly for researchers. The Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) alerts a user that a resources of his interest has been received in the library information centre.
- g. Reprographic Services: The reprographic facilities in the library fulfills the basic reference and information services such as preservation of reading materials issued on poor quality paper, providing reading materials issued on poor quality paper; reduction of storage problem; increasing the accessibility of documents which are unique or a few in number; providing a means of publication for specialist material that are uneconomic to commercial publishing; and the content of a newly received periodicals may be duplicated (or reproduced in many copies) and sent to the readers for their information.
- h. Computerized Reference Sources: The internet in this 21st century is an excellent medium for accessing and using reference sources. In a short period of time, the internet has become popular as a source of information in that one can get any information he wants within a short period of time. Madu (2010) in Madu and Ezeani (2010) posited that with the use of computers and telecommunication in information handling, we now have access to electronically retrievable information in a wide variety of disciplines. Online reference sites or resources play a very significant role in providing reference and information services to users (Dhar 2010).

Challenges of the Polytechnic Libraries in Nigeria

There are many problems facing the nation's polytechnic libraries and this has



adversely affected the nation's growth and development. Some major problems that have affected the efficiency and smooth operation of polytechnic libraries in Nigeria. They are as follows:

i. Poor Funding

One of the major problems facing reference section of the polytechnic libraries in Nigeria is inadequate funding. Most polytechnic libraries in the country are owned by higher institutions which are directly funded by the federal or state governments. Most polytechnic libraries are allocated 10% of the recurrent annual budget of their parent institutions. In most cases, this has proven to be insufficient as it is usually unable to equip the libraries to the highest possible standards. However, it is disgraceful to state that most institutions are usually unable to meet up with the 10% normally appropriated for the libraries as most polytechnics continue to face budget cuts stemming from bad leadership, bad economic policies and the terrible state of the economy. The issue of poor funding has also made polytechnic libraries unable to acquire new foreign and indigenous materials (books and journals) that would have helped propel the efficiency and effectiveness of their roles.

ii. Poor Infrastructure

Most reference section of the polytechnic libraries in Nigeria lack proper infrastructure and facilities to enable them perfectly carry out their duties. The infrastructure in the library are old and on the verge of destruction and total collapse. Some of the reference section of the polytechnic libraries in the country also lacks up to date library materials and insufficient storage devices. This problem has also distorted the growth and development of the country by hampering the reading culture of the populace. This poor development has also deprived qualified graduates from applying for jobs in the polytechnic libraries.

iii. Lack of Investors

Polytechnic libraries in the nation have failed in securing support and sponsorship from relevant bodies. In order to improve upon the current situation, stakeholders in the library and information sector need to fashion out ways of getting philanthropists, organisations, individuals, international partners and groups to massively invest in the library and information

sector. This will help enhance the reading culture in the country.

iv. Absence of Digital Resources

Polytechnic libraries in Nigeria have not been fully able to adopt the use of modern technology and ICT. Most of the polytechnic libraries lack the skill, manpower and capital needed to operate a digital library. Only a very few institutions adopted the digital library system, therefore a lot more still needs to be done because even the few parent institutions that have adopted the new technology are severely constrained by a number of factors that includes unreliable internet services, poor power supply, lack of hardware and software and in most instances poor IT literacy among librarians.

v. Lack of Properly Trained Staff

The absence of trained staffs is also a great source of problem for the libraries as they are poorly trained on handling library materials and also ignorant of new trends and updates in the library and information sector. There is also a lack of adequate professional librarians as the polytechnic libraries have failed to train students in library science, today the few graduates of library science rather hunt for jobs in other sectors due to the poor state of the polytechnic libraries in Nigeria. Library staffs that are not well trained are not always able to handle user behaviour and prospect.

vi. Proliferation of The Internet

Due to the popularization of the internet, internet has made it easier to acquire information and satisfy one's information need most especially using search engines. User can just google search from the comfort of home, using an internet enabled device.

Reference services being provided in the current electronic era

There are several reference services provided in polytechnic libraries. This section highlights those services that are mentioned in the literature. These include:

- i. *User orientation and training:* To maximize the utilization of library resources, orientation and training programs are arranged for readers. This includes helping them use the OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue) which is made available through LAN (Local Area Network). All the



departments of the polytechnic are provided with this facility. Furthermore, to the library's stock of resources, it also provides access to the library's journal holdings and theses collection.

- ii. *The users are also educated on how to use the various library databases and the CD ROM Network service which is also provided through LAN so that number of users is benefited at a time and they can retrieve information relevant to their needs within a period of time from any of the CD-ROMs provided in the CD server.* Also, the information is provided to the users from individual CDs covering some specific aspects e.g. specific data. A number of databases are available which are bought in from external sources. Some of these databases are available on local network and some on a standalone workstation in the library e.g. LISA, Dissertation Abstracts International, etcetera
- iii. *Sessions on Internet training are also prearranged to help them make the best use of it:* Internet facility is an advantageous to the user group. Internet's vast number of websites presents special challenges to reference librarians. Locating and evaluating web sites for research purpose has become an attach responsibility.
- iv. *Inter-lending and Document Delivery:* In this, the information regarding the materials to be discharged had to be communicated or the transmission of electronic copies of the actual documents. The technological developments have led to the use of e-mail for sending and receiving requests, sending scanned copies of the material which has additionally enabled the reference staff to achieve high success in the faster access of information. The physical location of the resources is no longer an issues.
- v. *INDEST Journals:* Polytechnic also accessing e-journals using different medium such as INDEST consortium. Around 300 electronic journals are being accessed through this consortium.
- vi. *Free e-Journals with Print Subscription:* Polytechnic also get electronic access for some of the journals, which have been subscribed, in print mode.
- vii. *Journals in Public Domain (Open Access Journals):* Library is maintaining a list of

electronic journals which are available free (open access) on the Internet. Till date polytechnic has more than 8000 journals in this group.

- viii. *Theses and Dissertations:* It provides links to a range of websites which provides information on the research work done around the globe. Some websites also make accessible the abstracts of the research already done. Links are provided to the following websites:

- i. Proquest Digital dissertation
- ii. Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC) database
- iii. Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations

Other E-Reference Sources available on the website with various linking facilities are

1. Encyclopedia
2. Dictionaries
3. Yearbooks, almanacs, handbooks
4. Sources of Biographical information
5. Sources of Geographical information
6. Sources of Statistical information
7. Sources of Educational information
8. Sources of Current information
9. Indexing and Abstracting services
10. Standards and Patents
11. Indian Reference sources
12. India specific search engines
13. Important reference sites
14. Some useful software

Overview of reference services in Nigerian Polytechnics Libraries

Reference service has traditionally played a crucial role in the delivery of library services especially in polytechnic libraries. Reference services are the culmination of all library activities aimed at facilitating the use of the library and its resources. It is perhaps the most demanding aspect of librarianship, and its performance can either make or mar the image of the library (Adebayo, 2009). Oketunji (2005) defined reference services as professional advice and assistance provided by the library staff from the materials in the library's collections or elsewhere, to assist individuals using the library's reading rooms or making enquiries by mail, telephone or on-line to meet their information needs.

Ifidon and Ifidon (2008) consider reference services as direct personal assistance given by librarians to library patrons who are in



pursuit of information for whatever purpose. They further assert that reference service does not only involves directing the user to the location of the material where the information can be found or the identification and selection of materials related to a particular information need and the provision of a piece of brief factual information, but also locating what information is relevant from a mass of relevant and irrelevant information. They concluded that the process includes practical help, community education, outreach services, selective dissemination of information (SDI) and referrals.

An examination of the various definitions given reveals the following salient characteristics of reference services: inter-personal relationship between the library user and the librarian; meeting the information needs of enquirers at different levels and depths; utilization of all sorts of internal and external resources, be they bibliographic, electronic, or personal knowledge to satisfy users' information needs; sense of urgency on the part of both the library patrons and the librarians. This demands use of quick and efficient techniques of retrieving information; a good sense of judgement on the part of the librarian in gathering appropriate information to meet the users' needs; professional training and subject knowledge; currency and recency of information; availability and accessibility of resources; quality of information arising from the accuracy of the information provided and degree of user satisfaction as an indicator of correct information provided by the reference personnel.

The important role of the Reference librarian in the entire process of reference service cannot be over emphasized. Reference librarians are variously referred to as 'mediators between the user and the information', and 'navigators of information superhighway' (Schement, 2002). Joseph (2011) asserts that Reference librarians play an important role in the daily operations of an academic library. They provide assistance to library users in finding resources and how to efficiently use the library. The role of the reference librarian has changed greatly over the last two decades with the emergence of information technology and the huge impact on the library and information profession. The role has grown from that of a collector and preserver of information resources to a professional involved in very complex issues of organization, the dissemination of and access to information.

Traditionally, the librarian's function was to assist in the collection development and acquisition, cataloguing and classification, circulation, provision of reference services, and preservation, conservation and archiving. As the library evolves into the digital library, reference librarians have been considering how to adjust reference services to the new environment and new information needs.

Trends in reference services in Nigerian Polytechnics Libraries

Application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to reference services is believed to have had tremendous effect on reference services in polytechnic libraries (Oyegade, 2000). Ukachi (2008) enumerated the effects as modification of traditional services, introduction of new services, disintermediation of services and the extension of services to remote users. Ukachi (2008) outlines the internet, online-search, e-query and online public access catalogue as ICT facilities that promote effective reference services in polytechnic libraries. The deployment of ICT has brought about a revolution in the concept of reference services in libraries. Most libraries in developing countries like Nigeria are yet to fully apply ICT to all their operations and services. The study therefore examined the present state of deployment of ICT in carrying out reference services and effect of ICT skills of reference librarians on reference service delivery. The reference environment is being transformed by rapid developments in ICTs, as collection and information in general become increasingly accessible electronically.

Rodriguez and Wilson (2000) defined ICTs as 'the set of activities which facilitates by electronic means the processing, transmission and display of information'. ICTs include all electronic devices used for information communication such as computers, internet, cell phones, telephones, intranet and indeed any gadget that facilitates the transmission of information from one person to another. Polytechnic libraries employ ICT to provide quick, effective and efficient information delivery when compared to traditional methods. The process of applying ICT in libraries is known as library automation. Library automation facilitates easy access to information materials and simplifies the tasks of cataloguing, acquisition, circulation and



reference service. Ukachi (2008) categorized the effects of ICTs on library services as modification of traditional services, introduction of new services, disintermediation of services and the extension of services to remote users. The internet is perhaps one of the most important ICT facilities in the provision of reference services. It is the electronic resource that is now having the most significant impact on the services, operations and professional activities of librarians (Ilo and Ifijeh, 2010). First it is more dynamic and far reaching than any other resource used in the library setting. Secondly, it provides a medium of communication that has extended the potential of librarians for interactions beyond the physical library (to users, colleagues, and other professionals), beyond any previous capacity and in a host of new ways. The internet is the most significant telecommunications advance affecting online searching.

Katz (2002) emphasized that with the internet, ready reference can be performed with even greater speed since information carrying materials can easily be downloaded from numerous sites. Online – search provides access to online information resources especially databases. The online database is an important reference tool in the modern information system. It can be described as computerized stores of information, which are accessible through the host computer or across computer networks. On-line searching as a reference service is an important service especially as journals and books are now available electronically on the internet. Users and reference librarians can now access required information online. It makes access faster and easier. E-Query Service is a Web-enabled contemporary reference service offered to the registered members of the Library mostly through e-mails. Online public access catalogue (OPAC is a most essential need for reference and circulation activities in the library as it makes for easy retrieval of information. It is an important finding tool for information held in the library as well as information held outside the library but available through the web. A web-based OPAC system can be accessed through the internet anytime and anywhere.

Issues affecting reference services in Nigerian Polytechnics Libraries

Reference librarians are variously referred to as 'mediators between the user and

the information', and 'navigators of information superhighway' (Schement, 2002). Joseph (2011) asserts that Reference librarians play an important role in the daily operations of an academic library. They provide assistance to library users in finding resources and how to efficiently use the library. The role of the reference librarian has changed greatly over the last two decades with the emergence of information technology and the huge impact on the library and information profession. The role has grown from that of a collector and preserver of information resources to a professional involved in very complex issues of organization, the dissemination of and access to information. Some authors have discussed the new role of librarians in the digital age (Burke, 2003; and Tedd, 2003). The reference librarian must guide users in information gathering, information skills and tools, organizing information resources, search strategies, basic reference works, etcetera. It has become necessary for reference librarians to be involved in research by facilitating access to information, such as finding, delivering and summarizing information.

Various issues affecting reference services in Nigerian polytechnics libraries include: lack of competency, lack of technology literacy, poor internet connectivity, inadequate power supply, poor funding and sustaining the resources. Characteristically, a transformed library to Michalak (2012) is where staff members actively manage their work and take intelligent risks, if only to step forward with suggestions for improvement. Fagbola, Uzoigwe and Ajegbomogun (2011) argues that despite the tremendous development associated with the birth of ICT, there exist basic challenges that tend to hinder reference services especially in developing countries like Nigeria and these include: poor/unreliable public power supply, inadequate operational human resources, apathy on the part of staff, lack of maintenance and poor funding.

Poor quality of resources has negative effects on reference service to users and most Polytechnic libraries in Nigeria have limited access to modern Information and Communication Technology Facilities and this makes it difficult for reference librarians and patrons to keep abreast with current developments in their academic lines. The existing interest of the reference librarians is important in relation to the quality of



service their libraries render to the users. Personal attention is at the very heart of the reference desk, and the goal of the information literacy is to create confidence in information consumers (Unomah, 2006). It is equally important to adequately stock library with relevant resources and all possible means. Technological developments have affected not only the formats and sources of the information but has also affected how and where to provide library services. Libraries and their resources have partially moved to the virtual world of the Internet. As a result, library users can access the resources from outside the physical library (Mohamed, 2012).

It is obvious that, there is the need to induce high staff morale, reasonable workplace and, user friendly environment as a matter of urgency to enhance quality reference services without which there will be no proper utilization of the library resources. This is because; decrease in utilization of reference resources was as a result of non-availability of the required books, library catalogue and out-dated materials. Amen (2007) asserts that, library patrons often have need that books will not meet noting that information and referral services help people obtain relevant and accurate information to meet specific needs. Libraries should provide user education as this will equip users with enough knowledge in the use of library resources effectively and efficiently (Aina, 2004). Odeinde, (2007) equally noted that, selective dissemination of information services motivates researchers' minds and knowledge skills toward providing quality and current awareness literature. The issue of non-availability of resources have been confirmed in the Nigerian Polytechnic libraries by Ugah (2008) who uncovered that, availability and accessibility of information resources in libraries have relationship between the availability of information resources and the use of library resources.

While considering selection of books for libraries, Aguolu (1983) maintained that "consideration should be given to book budgets because the amount of money available will determine the quantities of resources the library can afford. Users' satisfaction can only be achieved when there is an innate expression of contentment by the library users or patrons especially when their needs are adequately met by the library's offerings (Applegate, 1997). The

level at which library users' needs are fulfilled or met with the available services and information resources of a given library is termed as users' satisfaction (Haruna, 2002). It is regarded as a function of availability, accessibility and relevance. It is not enough that the information resources are made available to the users in the library, but the resources should be relevant to the users' needs at that particular time. One of the general phenomena affecting libraries is under-funding and this is inhibiting libraries to cater for their teeming users. This is also not unconnected with the fact that the society is changing technologically and any library that does not move along with such changes will risk the needs of its users. Odeinde (2006) also noted that some of the scientific resources are being published in foreign languages and such information are lost to a large percentage of users who have no access to translations.

Summary and systematic analysis of the reviewed literature

The findings of the study revealed reference services in Nigeria, no doubt are plagued by several issues ranging from less relevant materials, bureaucratic in-orderliness, poor funding, and lack of the seal to introduce new services, insufficient computers, inadequate staff to respond to users' query. Inadequate funding of libraries, non-compliance with the demands of ICT, indifferent attitudes of library managers, lack of ICT policies, poor working conditions, lack of ICT facilities, lack of passion for the profession, lack of motivation, non-attendance to workshops / seminars, institutional policies not in favour of librarianship, absence of well-defined and uniform library policies, librarians' phobia for emerging technologies. On the availability of internet and search engines in the reference section the result showed that only few polytechnics have embraced this trend. The findings of this study negates the findings of Gama (2013) that found out that the problems facing reference service delivery in most polytechnic libraries in Nigeria is unsteady power supply and inadequate ICT facilities, that these are the challenges facing reference service delivery in Nigeria.

This systematic literature review examined the issues and trends affecting reference services in Nigeria polytechnic libraries. Transformation of library and information centres



is all about improving product and services offered in Nigerian libraries to meet the needs and demands of the knowledge society. Among other benefits, it enhances the capability of libraries to contribute positively to the reality of knowledge society in contemporary Nigerian society. However, it is obvious from the literature analysis conducted that there are a lot of issues affecting reference service effective service delivery in Nigerian polytechnics.

Suggestions for improvement

Some suggestions were made in line with the summary of the literature analysis:

1. Retraining of LIS practitioners; provision of adequate funding; provision of relevant and functional ICT facilities relevant to the Nigerian libraries and formulation of viable library policies that can transform Nigerian Libraries by relevant bodies such as Librarians' Registration Council (LRCN), Nigerian Library Association (NLA) and National Association of Library and Information Science Educationist (NALISE).
2. Training and Re-Training of Library and Information Science Professionals: in order to effectively transform library and information services, there is need for training and re-training of library and information science practitioners so as to equip them with necessary ICT skills / competencies required for them to be able to render effective service. The library staff should be sent to conferences, seminars and workshops that are library science oriented. Efforts should be made to ensure that librarians that are ICT compliant have access to institutional sponsorship especially when the institution ultimately will benefit from the development.
3. Provision of adequate funding: funds no doubt is the bed rock for success of any organization. In view of this, adequate fund should be provided to the effectively carry out the transformation processes. Finance is required to procure ICT facilities, hire the right staff, train and re-train the staff and implement other staff development programmes. To ensure that this is achieved, there should be orientation amongst library and information science practitioners on strong lobbying and

advocacy strategies as a way of attracting fund.

4. Provision of relevant and functional ICT facilities: - relevant and functional ICT facilities should be provided for polytechnic libraries to facilitate the change process. Being in the digital age, however, it will require the availability of the right ICT facilities for the library to render effective reference services expected by library users.
5. The right library software should be made available in Nigerian polytechnic libraries, formulation of viable library policies: librarians have come a long way as a profession and in order to facilitates a smooth transformation process, there is need for various bodies like Librarians' Registration Council (LRCN), Nigerian Library Association (NLA) and National Association of Library and Information Science Educationist (NALISE) to come up with a framework upon which professional practices should be based. For, instance in Nigerian polytechnic, in principle, 10% of the subvention received from the institution should be allocated to the library but it is not so in practice. The various bodies should come with strong policies that will guard against unethical practice with all these put in place, there will be smooth and effective reference service delivery in Nigeria polytechnic libraries.

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