

Research activities and promotion prospects of young academic librarians in Nigerian universities

The Authors

O. O. Oso (Mrs),
T. Y. Danjuma Library,
AjayiCrowther University,
Oyo, Oyo State

Richard Olorunsola,
T. Y. Danjuma Library,
AjayiCrowther University,
Oyo, Oyo State

Keywords

Scholarly communication, Journal article, Publish or perish, Academic librarians, Academic libraries.

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to report on the research that explored the factors that contributed to the research success of young librarians: motivation, e-resources and IT infrastructural facilities, coping strategies, number of articles published among others. The research design was adopted for the study. The questionnaire was the instrument used to collect data from 106 librarians in the South-west region of Nigeria. The questionnaire consisted of two sections on demographics and issues related to research activities of young academic librarians respectively. The 106 responses (100%) were processed, analyzed, and the results are presented herein. The librarians reported that peer group support and institutional support (53.8%) as major motivation factors for research, and have published a number of articles. This study adds to the body of knowledge about publish or perish syndrome as it affects academic librarianship.

Introduction

It is no news that practising librarians in universities, colleges of education, polytechnics and research institutes require scholarly publications as a prerequisite to promotion, career advancement and tenure. The 'publish or perish' or 'swim or sink' syndrome became applicable to practising librarians in universities in 1993 (Ochai and Nedosa, 1998). The initial years of its implementation was characterized by debate, discussion and argument as to its desirability and the implementation of the new policy. A lot were written during this early period of the serious publication challenges facing academic librarians (Bryan, J. E. (2007); Ogunrombi, S. A. (2007). The authors reinforced the importance and desirability of faculty status for academic librarians but pointed out that the issue of flexible scheduling needs to be addressed so that the librarians can have sufficient time to pursue meaningful research and at the same time maintain a high quality of library service. However, the dust has now settled but some problems still remain, as Olorunsola (2011) noted: "For some, writing for publication can be difficult, and new librarians need to learn how to write publishable papers..."

Studies have shown that librarians who regularly engage in research are thought to be more receptive to change, and have more effective relationship with other faculty than those who do not do research (Mitchel and Reichel, 1999). The import of the findings is that academic librarians whose works are well published are more acceptable by a teaching faculty. For young academic librarians who are new on the job, the onus lies on them to start learning the ropes so as not to 'perish in the trenches'. Caswell (2010) observes that "getting published is a journey, not a

destination. It's a long and bumpy road...". For young and or new librarians to succeed in publication, and survive the bumpy road, they need to grapple with the nitty-gritty, confront challenges and obstacles headlong.

The study also revealed that intellectual curiosity is the main factor for research success of the respondents while availability and access to internet facilitated access to the electronic resources. The major hindrance and challenge faced by young researchers are also related to the constraints associated with these facilities.

Olorunsola and Ibraheem (1997) also agree that many young librarians may find it difficult or problematic writing publishable articles. The authors are of the view that with proper mentoring by experienced librarians and supervisors, they will learn how to turn their daily work to publishable articles. Farmer, Stockham and Trusell (2009) see international initiatives such as peer support groups, research clubs and formalized mentoring programme as means of helping and supporting young librarians. Fennewald (2008) goes beyond that by saying that research success could be achieved with institutional support in the form of grants, sponsoring of workshops, seminars and conferences and release time from supervisors. However, the author remarks that some librarians achieve tremendous success just out of intellectual curiosity.

Cooke (2009) strongly supports formal mentoring programme, by opining that "it is an excellent resource for anyone who is interested in scholarly publishing". The author adds that mentoring "as a process removes the fear of 'publish or perish'". This is achieved because the process takes the mentee through series of tutorials that will teach the basic concepts involved in the scholarly publishing

process. Another major problem being faced by young or new librarians, and perhaps has been with the Library and Information Science (LIS) profession and widely discussed is the lack of adequate training in research and methodology. Ochai and Nedosa (1998) observe that the educational status and experience of LIS professionals are factors that affect their publication output. According to their findings, most librarians enter the LIS profession with a first degree and majority do not advance beyond the acquisition of a master's degree. In most cases, the master's degree is not a research degree.

Also, there is usually the fear of one's article being rejected. This is not peculiar to young librarians or those who are new in the profession but almost every academic who is engaged in research. On that, Caswell (2010) believes editorial criticism is to "strengthen one to work better on the draft, and to enhance thorough, balanced and concise draft".

In this study, the authors have used the work of Onohwakpor and Tiewo (2006) to provide some background information on the group of librarians that form the focus of this article. The duo listed some requirements for promotion in the Delta State University Library from the positions of Graduate Assistant Librarian to University Librarian. However, for the purpose of this study, the positions below are being considered for discussion:

- Graduate Assistant Librarian must have master's degree in Library and Information Science, within two years, to move to the cadre of Assistant Librarian
- To move to Librarian II, an Assistant Librarian must have a master's degree in Library and Information Science with one publication in a reputable journal

- For promotion to the cadre of Librarian I, a master's degree in Library and Information Science, is mandatory, plus four publications.

Young Librarians defined

The main objective of this article is to determine the issues surrounding the success of young librarians as it affects writing publishable articles required for promotion. The above publication requirements were used as yardstick, to elicit information on the factors that motivate them to engage in research, the challenges they face and how they have been coping with them. For the purpose of this article, young librarians include these positions: Assistant Librarian, Librarian II and Librarian I. Since most librarians in these three positions are relatively new in the system, and hold master's degree as the highest qualification, it is assumed that they are likely to find writing publishable articles problematic.

Methodology

The research design adopted for the study was the descriptive survey method. Questionnaire was the only instrument used in the collection of data for the study. The data collected for the study was analyzed using descriptive statistics and percentage tabulation where necessary. The article derived the questionnaire for this study by reading the literature, relevant information in the articles contributed by some authors notably Fennewald, (2008) on what motivate librarians, challenges confronting them and other issues were extracted and used in the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of two sections: Section A contains the demographics, while B contains statements on research success and challenges. There were

ten statements, in all, including general comments on hindrances to research. The statements/questions are on issues related to research activities of young librarians: factors that motivate research, how librarians cope with research challenges and other factors that have assisted their research successes. In addition, some statements were included to determine the role of ICT-based resources and infrastructures in research success. A question specifically sought information to determine the level of research success in terms of number of publications. The issues are deemed pertinent to success in research.

The administration of the questionnaire was carried out by the first author who visited all the participating institutions. The visits took place between June and November, 2014. The population survey included librarians in the positions of Assistant Librarian, Librarian II, and Librarian I. A total of 106 copies of the questionnaire was administered, and returned. The 100% return rate was achieved because only librarians on ground at the time of the visit received and completed the questionnaire promptly. The participating libraries are listed in the Appendix.

Findings

Demographics

Categorizing respondents by gender shows that of the 106 respondents, 57 (53.8%) are male, while 49 (46.2%) are female. Based on the result, there were more male respondents than female who participated in the study.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Qualification

Valid	Frequency	Percentage (%)
B.L.S	11	10.4
M.L.S	25	23.6

M.L.I.S	60	56.6
Ph.D	4	3.8
Others	6	57

Table 1 shows that out of the total of 106 respondents, 11(10.4%) have first degree as the least qualification while those with master's degree rank highest with 85(80.2%). However, 4(3.8%) hold the Ph.D degree. Majority of the respondents hold master's degree. The distribution of respondents by their present status reveals that of the 106 total respondents 30(28.3%) are Assistant Librarians, while 47(44.3%) are Librarian II, and 29(27.4%) are Librarian I. From the result, it can be deduced that majority of the respondents are in the cadre of Librarian II.

Factors that motivate research

Fennwald (2008) points out that previous studies have identified several factors that contribute to librarian's research success. A question dealt with this important aspect. In analyzing the result in this study, the frequency of each motivating factor is given with its corresponding per cent. This applies to other questions as the findings are given.

Table 2: Motivating factors for research

Factors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Institutional support (Funding)	57	53.8
Mentoring Programme	34	32.1
Peer group Support	60	56.6
Research Club	8	7.5

From Table 2 above, it is clear that young librarians are motivated to engage in research

by the peer group support. Of the 106 respondents, 60(56.6%) found the peer group support as a source of motivation to do research.

Factors for research success

The authors sought to know the factors for the research success of young librarians. Apart from the environmental factors that motivate librarians to embark on research, a question was asked to elicit information if there were other factors that aided their research success.

Table 3: Factors for research success

Factors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Motivation to write	59	56
Intellectual curiosity	66	62
Ability to convert what I do to article	48	45
Sharing early draft of articles with senior colleagues	36	34
Reviewer's comments strengthen my articles	40	38
I am surrounded by librarians who actively engage in research	54	51
Availability of journal/print/electronic	56	53

Table 3 reveals that intellectual curiosity ranks high as a factor for research success among this group of librarians. This simply means librarians discover the right question they want to pursue and they pursue it to a logical conclusion. It is instructive to note that the motivation to write, availability of journals

(print/electronics), and research activities of other categories of librarians were other factors that led to their success.

IT infrastructures and e-resources

Access to e-journals and other resources is an important matter in a research environment. The availability and suitability of the library's IT infrastructure are also important when access to the online resources to effectively support research. Another question considered is whether the availability of ICT infrastructures and e-resources assisted their research activities.

Table 4: ICT infrastructures and e-resources

Facility	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Internet connectivity	105	99
CD-ROM	40	38
Printer	74	69.8
Photocopier	55	52
Computer	56	81

As shown in table 4, access to internet connectivity which facilitated the use of e-resources assisted immensely their research activities

Coping with research challenges

It is assumed that no matter how successful one may be, in research, there will always be some challenges one would need to cope with. To this effect, a question investigated how young librarians cope with research challenges. Based on responses, the help received from library administration in form of encouragement assisted in coping with research challenges.

Number of articles published

In order to measure the research success of librarians in terms of articles published, the authors asked for the number of articles published to date.

Table 5: Number of Articles Published

Number	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1-5	65	61
6-10	20	18.9
11-15	6	5.7
16 and above	1	0.9

Table 5 above shows that 92(86.7%) responded to the question. Looking at the number of publications, 65(61%) published between 1-5 articles. Going back to the publication requirements for this group of librarians would help us to determine their success. One of the publication requirements to move to Librarian II is one, while four publications are needed to move to Librarian I.

From this finding, it is safe to conclude here that the majority that published 1 – 5 articles were those that hold the master's degree, while those that published between 7 – 16 articles were those with research degrees (Ph.D).

Hindrances to research activities

The comment part of the questionnaire was designed to allow respondents some latitude of freedom to comment generally on their research activities.

A perusal of the comments by the respondents revealed that time constraints was a major hindrance as indicated by 61% of the respondents. This finding agrees with

Olorunsola and Ibegbulam's (2003) position on the issue of release time for research for academic librarians.

Discussion

Data analysis of the survey results showed that peer group support was the strongest motivating factor for research by young librarians. The study revealed intellectual curiosity as the most powerful factor for research success. As reported in the literature, those who have recorded research success by intellectual curiosity said they had a "personal sense of satisfaction" and feel they really accomplished something and also learning in the process of doing the research and writing about it" (Fennewald, 2008). Also, the results of the survey on this agreed with the authors' stand that intellectual curiosity is an initiative that appears to benefit most librarians with limited research experience.

The study has revealed the relevance of e-resources in research success which is facilitated by internet connectivity. A further look at the results of the study revealed that the library management played a major role in helping young librarians to cope with research challenges by way of encouragement. Taking a holistic view of data analyzed in this study, it is clear that young librarians' prospects for promotion is not in doubt as their publications output are more than adequate for promotion to the next grade. The study revealed that their major hindrance in doing research is time constraints. This has been discussed in previous studies and librarians have advocated

for release time and flexible working hours to enable practising librarians engage in research (Olorunsola and Ibegbulam, 2003). It is noteworthy that the literature review here supports the results of this on the effects of the issues discussed on research activities of young librarians (Fennewald, 2008; Bryan, 2007; Olorunsola, 2011).

Overall, there appears to be no other similar research that examines the research activities of this group of librarians. However, in light of the above aforementioned findings, it is highly likely that young librarians are doing well if not more than other categories of librarians.

Conclusion

The primary objective of the study was to elicit information on the research activities of young librarians with the aim of identifying their success, what motivate them, hindrances, among others. The findings reviewed in the foregoing indicate that they have published more than enough articles for promotion. Also, the notable motivator and hindrance to research have been brought to the fore. The current reality is that writing a publishable article is not as easy as it seems, however, if the time constraint issue among others are addressed, it will become less tedious. It would be helpful to replicate this study among the senior category of librarians in academic libraries.

Appendix

Participating Libraries listed by Proprietorship (public and private)

S/N	INSTITUTION	PROPRIETORSHIP	YEAR OF ESTAB.	NO. OF RESPONDENT
1.	University of Ibadan, Ibadan	Federal	1948	14
2.	ObafemiAwolowo University, Ile-Ife	Federal	1962	6
3.	Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta	Federal	1988	3
4.	Federal University of Technology, Akure	Federal	1981	5
5.	University of Lagos, Lagos	Federal	1962	8
6.	LadokeAkintola University of Technology, Ogbomosho	State	1990	10
7.	Babcock University, Ilishan Remo	Private	1999	3
8.	Bowen University, Iwo	Private	2001	3
9.	Covenant University, Ota	Private	2002	8
10.	Redeemer's University, Mowe, Ogun State	Private	2009	6
11.	AjayiCrowther University, Oyo	Private	2005	4
12.	Bells University of Technology, Ota, Ogun State	Private	2005	5
13.	Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State	Private	2005	5
14.	Crawford University, Igbesa, Ogun State	Private	2005	2
15.	Crescent University, Abeokuta	Private	2005	2
16.	Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji-Arakeji, Osun State	Private	2006	2
17.	Fountain University, Osogbo	Private	2007	2
18.	The Achievers University, Owo	Private	2007	2
19.	AfeBabalola University, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State	Private	2009	9
20.	Oduduwa University, Ipetumodu, Osun State	Private	2009	2
21.	Landmark University, Omu-Aran, Kwara State	Private	2011	5

References

- Bryan, J. E.** (2007). The question of faculty status for academic librarians. *Library Review*. 56(9), 781-787.
- Caswell, N.** (2010). Publish or Perish: A guide to getting in print. *NAC Newsletter*. January, p 31.
- Cooke N.A.** (2009). Publish, not perish: Learning, research and writing for librarians. *Public Services Quarterly* pp. 192-200.
- Farmer, D., Stockham, M. and Trussel A.** (2009). Revitalizing a mentoring program for academic librarians. *College and Research Libraries*, 70 (1): 8 – 25.
- Fennwald, J.** (2008). Research productivity among librarians: Factors Leading to publications at Penn State. *College and Research Libraries*, 70(1): 104 – 116.
- Mitchell, W. B and Reichel, M.** (1999). Publish or Perish: A dilemma for academic librarians. *College and Research Libraries*, 60(3): 233 – 243.
- Ochai, A. and Nedosa, P.** (1998). Publication output of librarians: the search for alternative justification. *African Journal of Library, Archival and Information Science*,.8(2), 89-96.
- Ogunrombi, S. A.** (2007). Research and publication requirements in Nigerian university libraries. *Library Review*. 40(5), 38-42.
- Olorunsola R.** (2011). Learning the real nitty-gritty is the answer: but what was the question? *Ogun Journal of Arts*,17, pp.13-26.
- Olorunsola, R. and Ibegbulam, I.J.** (2003). Flexible working hours for academic librarians in Nigeria. *Library Review* 52(1/2), 70-75.
- Olorunsola, R. and Ibraheem, I.A.** (1999). Academic librarians and Institutional reward: a view from Nigeria. *Library Herald*. 37(1), 32-37.
- Onohwakpor, J. E and Tiemo, P. A.** (2006). The pains and gains of the publication requirement: A survey of librarians at Delta State University, Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice*.8(2), p.3.