

**INFLUENCE OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE, WORK ENVIRONMENT AND  
COLLECTION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN EDO STATE**

**E. MADUKOMA (PhD)**

**Department of Information Resources Management,  
Babcock University, Ilishan Remo,  
Ogun State, Nigeria**

**&**

**EBUNUWELE, G. E.**

**Department of Information Resources Management,  
Babcock University, Ilishan Remo,  
Ogun State, Nigeria**

**Abstract**

*The paper explains influence of professional competence, work Environment and collection management practices in Academic Libraries in Edo State. The academic library is constantly challenged to remain an energetic part of this changing environment. A key part in meeting that challenge is to ensure that collection management practices play roles transition to meet evolving needs. New areas of professional competence and work Environment expertise are developing as are new opportunities to provide innovative, value-added services for the academic libraries and researchers in the academic community and need to professional competencies. Today traditional libraries are change to hybrid libraries. Based on personal experience and literature majority of the collection management practices in academic libraries in Edo State library are customer service competencies and are using management skills.*

**Keywords:** Professional Competencies, Skills, work Environment, collection management practices and Academic Libraries

**Introduction**

An academic library is that which is attached to a higher institution of learning that serves two complementary purposes of supporting the school's curriculum, and the research of faculty and students in the university. The support of teaching and learning requires information materials for class reading, faculty and students' research, assignment and term papers. In the past, the materials for class reading, intended to supplement lectures as prescribed by the instructor, has been called reserves. In the period before electronic resources became available, the reserves were supplied as actual books or as photocopies of appropriate journal articles. Hence, the library's collection may determine the strength and weakness of the library, which is the work of the acquisition librarian. Librarians do this by identifying the needs of the faculty and student body as well as the mission and academic programs of the university community and tailor their acquisition towards these needs and other general information needs of their users. This means that if the collection is poor, it will affect the usage and image of the library. The collection therefore, needs to be adequate and comprehensive enough to meet the needs of the library users, hence, the concept of collection management.

It is important to note that collection management and development is used interchangeably in most documents and the same is applied here. Collection management practices are ways of taking a long-term approach to the responsible stewardship of the academic library's collections and one of the library's strategic strands. It defines the different stages in a collection item's existence over time. These stages range from

selection and acquisitions processing, cataloguing, through to preventive conservation, storage and retrieval. Life cycle collection management seeks to identify the costs of each stage in order to show the economic interdependencies between the phases over time. These decisions are made in each case on the basis of the selector's knowledge of current curriculum needs, faculty research interests, research trends in the relevant subject areas, and the strengths and weaknesses of the collections already in place. Needless to say, communication between the selectors and the libraries' users is essential if the selectors are to have the information necessary for their decisions. Library collection development is the process of building the library materials to meet the information needs of the users (a service population) in a timely and economical manner using information resources locally held, as well as from other organizations. According to the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), in Scull and Amanda (2017), acquisition and collection development focuses on methodological and topical themes pertaining to acquisition of print and other analogue library materials (by purchase, exchange, gift, legal deposit), and the licensing and purchase of electronic information resources.

Evans and Soporano (2005) assert that collection management is a universal process for libraries and information centers and it involves six major components, which are: Community analysis, selection policy, selection, acquisition, de-selection, and evaluation. Collection management help to develop book and non-book material collections that provide needed support to parent institutions. Each of the components listed above are considered vital to the success of collection management and their appropriate implementation contributes to the overall success of the library. Khan (2015) observed that community analysis is one of the prescribed tools for librarianship which charge the library to study its community so that it may know the people, groups and institutions in the library's service responsibility and to enable it develop programmes fitted to their needs. Community analysis involves identifying the interests of local users, their beliefs, aspirations and their problems. In order to serve them better, the library must be tailored to meet the information seeking needs of its community of users. This can be achieved through continuous as well as periodic study and assessment of user community needs, or by a library initiated community analysis (Asghar, 2012).

Another important aspect of collection management is acquisition. Acquisition is the process of selecting, ordering, and receiving materials for university library which may include budgeting and negotiating with outside agencies, such as publishers, dealers, and vendors, to obtain resources to meet the needs of the university's library users, in most economical and expeditious manner (Carr, 2007). Acquiring information resources is a core activity of libraries. Academic libraries all over the world still obtain and maintain massive serials and continuing resources collections while managing other formats. Despite predictions of vanishing print collections and emergence of the digital paradigm, printed publications still have a central role in library collections and publishing industry. Acquisition functions are generally located in the technical services divisions whose operations provide access to information in all its forms and formats. Acquisition process may include identifying and selecting materials for the library' collection; pre-order searching to identify duplicate orders and to verify correct author and title as well as availability and price; ordering of materials from vendors or publishers; negotiating licensing agreements and contracts for electronic resources, claiming materials that may not be delivered within the expected time frame; receiving materials; approving invoices for payments; physical processing such as ownership identification, security tapping, and call number marking; binding; and preserving materials as needed (Evans, 2000). However, Reitz (2013) noted that the term acquisition refers to the process of obtaining library materials after they have been selected. Acquisition includes all the tasks related to obtaining all kinds of library information materials.

Competence is viewed as demonstrating the knowledge, skills, experience and attributes necessary to carry out a defined function effectively. It is the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities at a level of expertise sufficient to be able to perform appropriately a given task in a work place. Reitz (2014) defines competence in generic term as possession of satisfactory level of relevant knowledge and acquisition of a range of skills that include interpersonal and technical components at a certain point in the educational process. Such knowledge and skill are necessary to perform the tasks that reflect the scope of professional

practices. It is a combination of theoretical and practical experience that makes an individual able and willing to take the right decision in daily working environment.

Marshall (2003) defines competence as, “the interplay of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes required to do a job effectively from the point of view of both the performer and the observer” (p.1). He identified two types of competencies for special librarians. The first are professional competencies which relate to knowledge in the areas of information resources access, technology, management and research and the ability to use these areas of knowledge to provide library and information services. The other comprises personal competencies which represent a set of skills, attitudes and values that enable librarians to work effectively, be good communicators, be able to focus on continuing learning throughout their careers, be able to demonstrate the value added nature of their contributions, and survive in the new world of work. Unique competencies of the librarian also include in-depth knowledge of print and electronic information resources in management of information services that meet strategic information needs of the individual or group being served.

Chang and Garrison (2011) noted that competencies comprise knowledge, skills (abilities) and attitudes. They pointed out that knowledge should be acquired through formal education and training, while abilities could be acquired through practice. The Canadian Association of Research Libraries (2010) proffers a holistic compendium of competencies for librarians working in an intense research environment. The competencies are encapsulated under seven areas of the following: foundational knowledge; interpersonal skills, leadership and management, collections development, information literacy, research and contributions to the profession and information technology skills. Borin and Yi (2011) contended that competencies comprised knowledge, skills, abilities and less tangibly measurable attainments important to a library manager. Ahmed and Yassen (2009) defined attitude as, “a person’s tendency to feel and behave in a particular manner toward an object, a person or an organization” (p.6). Attitude is composed of three aspects namely, cognitive, effective and behavioural. Among these, only behavioural which refers to the action aspect can be observed. The cognitive aspect refers to beliefs, perceptions and ideas about a person, object or situation. Effective aspects refer to the feelings and emotions. Huang and Lai (2009) asserted that attitude should involve appreciation of students’ needs; clientele focus; showcasing of enthusiasm for working in the library and manifestation of intellectual curiosity. Positive attitude of librarians should include demonstration of ability to adapt to a changing library environment. The compelling nature of the outlined competencies on librarians means that a suitable work environment is required for them to thrive. If an employee possesses the right qualification and skill but works in an uncomfortable environment, productivity is bound to be low.

Work environment is another important factor that could enhance the performance of professionals within a given organization, especially collection development managers. For professionals across disciplines to thrive, the work environment must be conducive enough. A suitable work atmosphere helps in motivating professionals to perform at a high level thereby contributing immensely to the attainment of the organization’s overall objectives. Work environment play an important role towards an employee’s performance. Work environment is argued to impact immensely on employees’ performance either towards negative or the positive outcomes (Chang & Garrison, 2011). In the world, there are international organizations who debate the rights of employees. Most people spend fifty percent of their lives within indoor environments working on different tasks, which greatly influence their mental status, actions, abilities and performance (Dorgan, 2014). Better outcomes and increased productivity is assumed to be the result of better workplace environment. Better physical environment of office such as ventilated offices enough office spaces, good light, tables, chairs and computer systems will boosts the employees and ultimately improve their productivity. Various literature pertain to the study of multiple offices and office buildings indicated that the factors such as dissatisfaction, cluttered workplaces and the physical environment are playing a major role in the loss of employees’ productivity (Sekar, 2011).

Since the 1990’s, there has been an observable rebirth regarding factors that constitute work environment due to changes in several other factors such as the social environment, emergence of information technology and the flexible ways of organizing work processes (Chandrasekar, 2011). This

stems from the realization that when employees are physically and emotionally fit, they will have the desire to work and their performance outcomes shall be increased. Moreover, a proper workplace environment helps in reducing the number of absenteeism and thus can increase a competent employee's performance which leads to increased productivity at the workplace.

Work environment goes beyond the buildings, spaces and furniture to include modern office facilities such as information technology and other equipment designed to facilitate quality delivery of specific functions of workers (Sekar, 2011). Although the essential roles of librarians have not changed, the central mandate continues to be bringing information seekers and information sources together, however, the environment within which they execute their mission has changed dramatically. This change in work environment has redefined the roles library professionals play in providing needed services to users in recent times. As a result of researchers turning away from traditional libraries in favour of emerging digital/electronic libraries, new and more sophisticated information and communication technology products are being introduced and appropriated into the profession. Students arrive on campus with varied information seeking habits of new sources and new technologies, thereby adding to the complexity of challenges professionals encounter in rendering services to library users. Sabir, Iqbal, Rehman, Shah, and Yameen (2012) noted this fact by asserting that "transformation technologies and the behaviours they engender have rapidly changed the creation and distribution of scholarly journals, data and other research outputs" (p.145). Their study brought to the fore, the critical issues involved in meeting the challenges faced by academic librarians in a rapidly changing work environment. Therefore, it behooves on professional librarians to reflect their acquired competencies and address any observed shortcomings as they strive to render the best services possible to library users. For them to accomplish that, management must endeavor to provide suitable working environment and motivate library workers enough to put in their best. Within the country and within our institutions, the roles of librarians are being re-assessed and this research work hopes to add copiously to that re-assessment process with respect to professional librarians' acquired competencies and the effect changing work environments exerts on collection management.

From the foregoing, one would expect that when competent professional librarians are given a suitable work environment backed with other necessary resources, collection management practices will be executed at the highest level. Elsewhere in Africa and in other parts of the world, there has been calls for the provision of decent work environment to enable employees thrive in their chosen fields, and also to increase productivity. For instance, the African Union Extraordinary Summit on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa at the takeoff of the millennium overwhelmingly endorsed the ILO's Decent Work Agenda with an emphasis on the creation of quality jobs and decent work environment (IFLANET, 2003). Other governments across the continent have also drummed their supports towards this pan-African call for the integration of employment growth and improved quality of work through enhanced work environment. It is rather discouraging as observed by the researcher that the impact of these calls has not been adequately felt in academic libraries in Edo State, Nigeria. Collection management practices are still not at the best they can be. Library workers and managers in some of the academic libraries in the state appear to lack enough expertise, in-depth knowledge and grounding in the principles of library use and organization. This is seen in the shambolic nature of collection management practices as well as other core library services that are gross unsatisfactorily rendered to users. This study therefore is set to investigate the influence of professional competence and work environment on the practices of collection development in academic libraries in Edo State, Nigeria.

### **Collection Management Practice**

Collection management is one of the fundamental functions of the library and information management process. It is that aspect of the library and information process responsible for selecting, acquiring and managing information resources that will enable library and information resources managers render useful services to library users. Reitz (2013) describes collection management as the process of planning and acquiring a balanced collection of library materials over a period of years, based on an ongoing assessment of the information needs of the library's clientele, analysis of usage statistics and demographic

projection. It involves all processes in an academic library, from initial screening to final selection of information materials, to the acquisition, organisation and maintenance of library stock in line with the needs of users as a primary objective and also considering alternative means of information supply to supplement local holdings (Kasalu & Ojiambo, 2012). Furthermore, it includes analyzing users' needs, establishing a collection management policy (CMP) framework, selection, acquisition, collection evaluation and de-selection. All over the world, libraries – especially academic libraries - engage in collection management processes on daily basis, making the practice a universal one that primarily involve community analysis, selection policies, selection, acquisition, evaluation and de-selection (Evans & Soprano, 2012). Although collection management is a universal practice that involves majorly the mentioned activities, librarians engage in the process using different approaches by domesticating those activities to suit the objectives of the library concerned and the needs of its user community (Johnson, 2014). As a result, specific measures for obtaining material for a library's collection will vary among library types and individual libraries.

### **Acquisitions Procedures in Academic Libraries**

Some academic libraries have overall librarian, that individual is responsible for creating a collection to support training, learning, and students' recreational reading. Materials selection policies generally mandate that the library specialized, seek input from teachers, other professional staff, and students (Kahn, 2015). Academic librarians are also responsible for weeding or de-selecting collection materials following policy strategies as well as making a decision as to whether gift items will be accepted. Ideally, multiple members of a library's staff are responsible for reviewing material for purchase. The selection policy should outline the specific areas in which a library will collect, and professional library staff members should be assigned to select material for specific collection areas (Sivadas, 2012). As Gregory (2011) observed, librarians may consult and get input from faculty about purchase, but the final acquisition decisions are the responsibility of the appointed librarian or librarians. Item selection is done by professional librarians (selectors) with backing from the faculty. Each selector is in control for endorsing material for purchase in their assigned subject areas. Selectors may work with their respective faculty members to identify material and make purchasing decisions that best meet the curriculum goals while take note of the following (Gregory, 2011):

- In selecting academic learning resources, professional personnel will evaluate available resources and curriculum needs and will consult reputable, professionally prepared aids to selection, and other suitable sources. The actual resource will be scrutinized whenever possible.
- Recommendations for purchase involve administrators, teachers, students, district personnel, and community members, as appropriate.
- Gift materials shall be judged by the choice criteria and shall be accepted or rejected by those criteria.
- Selection is a continuing process that should include eliminating materials that are no longer used or desirable, adding materials, and substituting lost and worn materials that still have educational value.

### **Professional Competence in Librarians**

Professional competence is the broad professional knowledge, attitude, and skills required in order to work in a specialized area or profession. Disciplinary knowledge and the application of concepts, processes and skills are required in a test of professional competence in any particular field (Sivadas, 2012). Furthermore, disciplinary knowledge demonstrates the use of available resources to identify facts and terms and in the performance of required procedures. The proper application of disciplinary competence allows the performance of tasks, procedures and job related processes with confidence and competence. The application of concepts, skills and processes produces a product or a project in the professional arena. This application allows the accomplishment of a specific purpose related to the field of expertise. Sivadas (2012) asserts that competence is the discernable characteristics that enable performance of a job, for correctly doing the job, the individual requires skills and knowledge essential for the set duties. He further aver that

competency is a set of defined behaviors that provide an organized guide enabling the documentation, assessment and growth of the behaviors in individual employees. The term "competence" first appeared in an article authored by R.W. White in 1959 as an idea for performance motivation. In 1970, Craig C. Lundberg defined the concept in "Planning the Executive Development Program". The term increased grip when in 1973, David McClelland wrote a seminal paper entitled, "Testing for Competence Rather than for Intelligence". It has since been promoted by Richard Boyatzis and many others, such as T.F. Gilbert (1978) who used the concept in association to performance improvement. Its use varies widely, which leads to considerable misinterpretation. Some scholars see "competence" as a mixture of practical and theoretical knowledge, cognitive skills, behavior and values used to improve performance; or as the state or quality of being adequately or well qualified, having the ability to perform a specific role. For instance, management competency might include systems thinking and emotional intelligence, and skills in influence and negotiation. Competency is also used as a more general description of the requirements of human beings in organizations and communities.

### **Professional Competence and Collection Management**

Peyala (2011), and Okello-Obura (2010) declared that library professionals needed to develop strong interpersonal and team-work skills. They concurred that practical skills, experience with digital collections management and digital technologies should be integrated into library schools' curricula. Peyala (2011) employed survey method to identify perception of the knowledge and skills important in performing the job of digital librarians. His respondents rated five highest important skills and knowledge required in performing their work as: communication and interpersonal skills, project management, leadership skills, understanding of digital library architecture and software, knowledge of the needs of users, and knowledge of technical and quality standards. Respondents were also asked to indicate the most relevant/valuable courses they had taken in library and information science school for performing their current work. The most frequently mentioned courses were in the areas of cataloguing, collections development and management, systems analysis and information technology. Respondents were also asked to identify areas for which their education and training had not prepared them adequately. They (respondents) indicated overall understanding of the complex interplay of software, lack of vocabulary to communicate to technical staff, knowledge of web-related languages and technologies, web design, digital imaging and formatting, XML standards and technologies among others. Concluding the findings in their survey, Peyala (2011) assert that professionals should be required to have more breadth and depth of knowledge, and skills across the dimensions of professional training on management skills through practical experience. This implies that these skills will help librarians including the acquisition managers to improve their collection management.

### **Components of Workplace Environments**

Work environments have many properties, components or factors that may affect both physical and psychological well-being of workers (Brenner, 2000). How well employees engage with factors in their working environments influences to a great extent their error rate, level of innovation and collaboration with other employees, absenteeism and ultimately, how long they stay in the job (Chandrasekar, 2011), which is a function of their commitment towards work. Chandrasekar identified twelve factors in workplace environment which either lead to engagement or disengagement of workers. These factors include: goal-setting, performance feedback, role congruity, defined processes, workplace incentives, supervisor support, mentoring/coaching, opportunity to apply new skills, job aids, environmental factors, and physical factors. A thorough understanding of these variables makes it palpable that they are identified along with many other factors, refined and compressed into six factors by Kyko (2005). He identified six factors that have determinants effects on whether workplace environment will be conducive or toxic. These factors are listed thus:

- **Opaque management:** this factor consists of such issues as unclear vision, mission, goals, or objectives; badly defined systems, policies, regulations or rules; ambiguous roles; violated

management principles; idle and inefficiently used of resources; disruption of unity of command; when people get away cheating or not performing their duty.

- **Boss:** boss who plays favouritism showing preference for one set of subordinates over others on their functions; boss who does not give recognition for performance; boss who claims credit for subordinate's achievement; boss who censors the good performance of the employee to the higher management; boss who breaks employee's self-esteem; boss who fails to give clear instructions and directions; boss who withholds vital information from the employee where information is vital for the efficient performance of the job; boss who blames employee if things go wrong; boss who says one thing and does another; boss who is not decisive - subsequently employee does not have a sense of direction; boss who plays "God" with the performance appraisal; boss who delegates responsibility without the authority to act - curtailing the employee's self-esteem.
- **Company policies:** Win-lose policies, centralization of power, creating privileged groups in the organization, closed door policy, poor fringe benefits, too much red tape.
- **Working conditions:** Hot and noisy working environment, unsafe work conditions, dirty work environment, insufficient resources, old technology, old machinery.
- **Interpersonal relationships:** Unhealthy politicking, lack of cooperation among workers, back stabbing, empire building, rumour mongering, alienation, mistrust, sabotage.
- **Pay:** Pay below the market rate. It may be of interest to further inquire into which of these factors in workplace environments exert more influence or contribute more to job commitment among librarians. The basic question is which of the factors do staff members of libraries considered as constituting toxic environment? An empirical probing and answer to this question can serve as a guide to authorities, educational policy makers and university administrators to identify which factors in libraries need urgent modification/attention and which is not.

## **Conclusion**

The Father of Library Science Ranganathan, S.R (1931), mentioned the fifth law of Library Science as "Library as a Growing Organism". Library professional are alert to the importance of library in the context of higher Education (its purpose and goals) and the needs of students, faculty, and researchers and seek to provide services that will enhance these endeavors. Librarian must be familiar with the structure, organization, creation, management, dissemination, use, and preservation of information resources, new and existing, in all formats. The librarian has to assist the professional and personal development of people working within the information organization by creating development plans for staff to gain necessary competencies of knowledge, skills, abilities, behavior, and attitude.

## **It recommended that:**

- Academic librarians should provide information that suits user demands; information literacy, communication, critical thinking, and teamwork are the most required generic skills. In this digital era, the representative of a new generation of librarian professionals should be a person who is able to act as facilitator or mentor to help the user to find the information needed and to evaluate it.
- In order to perform the main professional work successfully in collection management practices, academic librarians need to study the discipline-specific knowledge on metadata, database development and database management systems, user needs, digital archiving and preservation, collection development, and content management systems were mentioned as the most essential discipline-specific knowledge.
- To work successfully in the academic library environment as professional competence, it is indicated that a new generation of Collection Management professionals should have a basic knowledge of database development and database management systems, which is also noted as one of the most essential required items of knowledge in university libraries in Edo State.

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