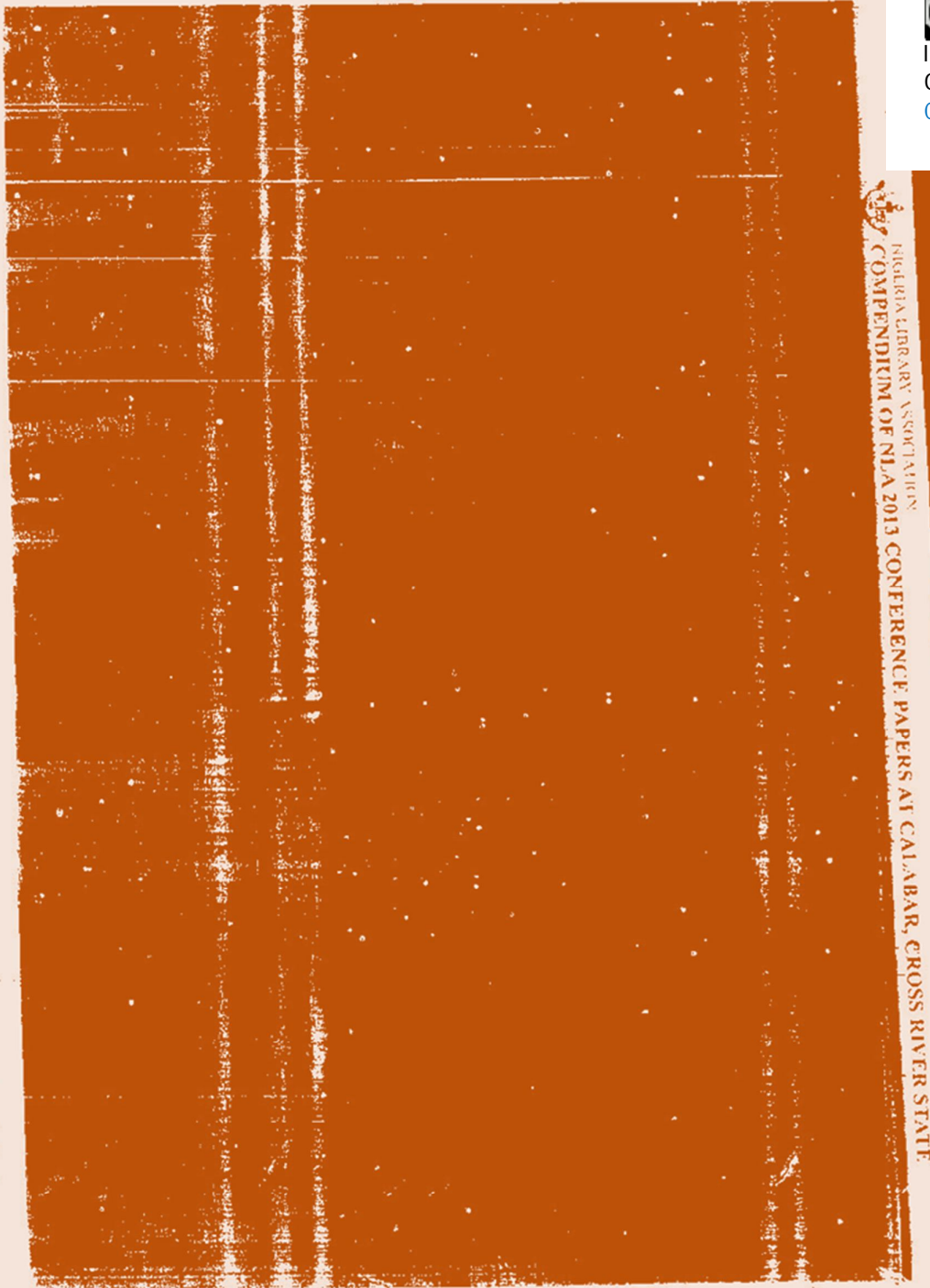




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## INNOVATIVE AND CREATIVE SKILLS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE PROFESSIONALS

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### Abstract

*Library and Information Professionals in this 21st century require innovative and creative skills in order to provide timely and relevant library and information services with a view of meeting the information needs of users of library and information centers. This paper examines the various innovative and creative skills that libraries can integrate into their libraries to improve service delivery. The concept of innovation and creativity were highlighted. Rationale for innovation and creativity in library and information services, characteristics of innovative and creative librarians, innovative and creative skills required of 21st century library and information science professionals and the challenges to acquisition of innovative and creative skills were adequately addressed in the paper. The stand point of this paper is that innovation and creativity are the catalyst that transforms the landscape*

**keywords:** Innovation, Creativity, Skills, Library, Information Science

### **Introduction**

Library and information service is one of the noblest professions on planet earth that is tied and associated with history of mankind. The creator of the universe in the book of Genesis, chapter one started by classifying. No wonder anything or force of revolution that has the capacity to transcend human history end up transforming libraries and information centres. For decades now, libraries and information centres have been affected by the swift and dramatic changes associated with information's technology. The emergence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has tremendously transformed the way and manner with which library and information services are being carried out in the various types of libraries of the 21st century.

Libraries of all types since the beginning of the 21st century are caught up between demands of creativity and innovation in order to keep pace with developmental needs in librarianship. Rapid advances in information technologies have revolutionized the role of libraries and libraries are now redesigning services and information products to add value to their services as well as satisfy changing information needs of the user community (Ukpanan & Akpan, 2011).

### **Creativity and Innovation: Conceptual Framework**

Creativity according to Nwankwo, Onyali and Obikeze (2011) is the ability to produce ideas that are both novel and valuable and it is a manifest of insight and above all a major element of existence. Koveckiene (2012) conceptualized creativity as the driving force of innovation in the transforming society. In other words, creativity has the potency to influence transformation of any organization when properly applied.

Etuk (1992) defined creativity as the conception, proposal, and development of original or imaginative ideas, products and services while Stokes, Wilson & Mador (2010) citing Cox (2005) saw creativity as the generation of new ideas. Creativity according to Zaid & Oyelude (2012) involved applying new methods to more familiar ways of reaching users and need not involve fiercely original ideas but simply new ways to approach a well-known service with some

fearlessness as just having access to technology is not enough.

Creativity therefore, is not just a useful or desirable component of entrepreneurship, but it is a central feature of the phenomenon. Whereas, innovation on the other hand implies change. According to Anyanwu (2010), innovation is the ability to apply new ideas that will enable you to undertake activities differently. In which case, it is all about using individual initiative, imagination, intuition and insight to change things around or devise ways of doing things to accommodate whatever new situation one finds oneself.

Schumpeter (1955) conceptualized innovation as the design and the development of something new, as yet unknown and not in existence, which will establish a new economic configuration out of the old known, existing elements. However, Trott (2005) viewed innovation as the management of all the activities involved in the process of idea generation, technology development, manufacturing and marketing of new (or improved) product or manufacturing process. Innovation can be said to be the application of knowledge.

Innovation according to Rugman, Collinson & Hodgetts (2006) can be broadly divided into product/service development and process development. The former refers to activities that support the creation of new products and services that customers want, or improvements to existing product / services that make more customers want them instead of those of rival firms.

### **Rationale for Innovation and Creativity in library and information centres**

With the rate of technological development sweeping across the globe and virtually every sector, the need to be innovative and creative has come to stay, if library and information professionals must be relevant in the provision of information services.

How are the rationale for integration of innovation and creativity in library and information centres include:

- Innovation creates many opportunities for librarians which position it to gain competitive advantages if these opportunities are explored.

- To improve and sustain the quality of library and information service rendered in libraries.

- To reposition library and information services centres in their place of relevance in an information conscious society.



- ✓ Libraries as noted by Chunli & Jinmin (2011) must innovate in order to meet the clients changing needs.

According to Ezeala, Alabi & Nduka (2011) the 21st century has brought with it a great transition in the library and information profession. The transition from traditional library practice to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) driven practice has posed a serious challenge to librarians. Therefore, there is need for librarians to acquire the required competences to conform to the new trend.

The above assertion aptly points to the need for librarians to be innovative and creative.

#### Innovation Management Process in Libraries

- i. Scanning the library and information science community to identify areas that there are looming threats that can be converted to opportunities or changes.
- ii. Deciding the threats to respond to how library and information services can be improved tremendously
- iii. Acquiring the necessary resources that will facilitate the response.
- iv. Implementation of the project by developing both the technology and the market in order to respond effectively.

The above innovation management process in libraries is based on Stokes, Wilson & Mader (2010) idea of Innovation Management process.

#### Characteristics of Innovative and Creative Librarians

Creative individual, according to Etuk (1992) refers to those people who have managed to retain and express a substantial portion of the innate potentialities with which all humans are born and equipped, or whose life experience at home and at work have not totally suppressed such potentialities.

Below are the traits embedded in creative and innovative librarians

- i. **Insight:** for the librarian to be innovative and creative, he/she must have deep insight into the realities of the profession. He ought not to approach librarianship casually. Creativity according to Nwankwo, Onyali & Obikeze (2011) is a manifest of insight and insight is a sudden and often novel realization of the solution to a problem.
- ii. **Curiosity:** curiosity often gives birth to discovery. Therefore if librarians are to be innovative and creative, there is room for personal curiosity

that may likely give birth to fresh insight that will provoke creative and innovative ideas. The innovative and creative librarians should have an inquisitive mind

- iii. **Zeal:** for a librarian to be innovation and creative there must be a zeal or force that drives such individual. The zeal to make a positive change in the library and profession must drive the librarian into being creative.
- iv. **Analytical Mind:** creative and innovative librarians are analytical in nature. They don't easily swallow things hook line and sinker. They possess some level of investigative mindset that enables them to analyze situations and events in order to come up with ideas that are change oriented.
- v. **Adaptability:** creative and innovative librarians are highly adaptable to new situations. For instance, most of the librarians taking full advantages of the inevitable wind of technology sweeping across the globe are the ones that are innovative and creative.
- vi. **Solution Mind-set.** Being creative and innovative implies that one always have a solution mind-set and not a problem mind set. The innovative and creative librarian possess the ability to see opportunities behind every problem
- vii. **Ability to communicate effectively:** being creative and innovative is not enough to make a change in any organization, which is why communicative skill is paramount. The librarian should have the ability to communicate newly discovered ideas to the management before it can be integrated into the system.
- viii. **Technologically Literate:** it is no longer news that we are in the technological age, if the librarian must be innovative and creative enough to make a change, then he must be technologically inclined after all most innovations and creativity going on in library and information centres today are ICT oriented.

#### Innovative and Creative Skills Required of 21st Century Librarians to Promote Library and Information Services

According to Owuoye (n.d.), skills and competencies are necessary for library work and these include the perceptual and symbolic competencies that are directly related to the ability to effectively gather and re-arrange information by quantitative data analysis and ensure the organizational objectives.

Below are the innovative and creative skills required of the 21st century librarian, they include: --

- i. **Website Management Skills:** There is need for library and information professionals to have the skills for managing the library website. Websites of institutions/libraries needed to be managed effectively. Library and information professional need the skill required to upload scanned document / information resources to the library's website and this can be of immense value to those who are likely to visit the institutions websites.
- ii. **CD-ROM Management Skills:** Librarians that want to operate effectively in an online environment and remain relevant to the immediate community that it serves must have the skills and competencies required to manage CD-ROMs. Most modern textbooks, subject based books, reference book do have accompanying CD-ROM. Librarians are expected to have the requisite skills to ensure proper handling and management of CD-ROMs. Considering that most institutions require their undergraduate, postgraduate to submit research report, thesis and dissertation in CD-ROM format. It is expected that this CD-ROM containing these valuable information are adequately managed by library and information science professional. More so, Electronic resources (e-resources) which are downloaded from the internet can be managed by saving them into the CD-ROMs to serve as database for the students.
- iii. **E-Resources Management Skills:** Library and information science professional need to be innovative and creative in the areas of e-resources management. One thing about electronic resources is that it has to be properly managed for easy accessibility. However, with vast information resources being uploaded to the internet every second, one has to be creative and innovative enough to organize them appropriately. For instance, in the course of searching for information on the internet on 'Agricultural information', you may come across some document technically prepared which may or may not be relevant to your research interest, as a professional, you may create a special folders for such materials, so that when a library user / client have a felt need for such, it can easily be traced. More so, we have electronic journals (e-journals), electronic thesis (E-thesis), electronic books (E-books), and electronic magazines (E-

magazines) etc, as forms of electronic resources. With the prior permission of the editors, copyright owners, this e-resources can be accessed, downloaded and use for accreditation in the academic environment.

- iv. **Blogging Skills:** The 21st century library and information professional should have the basic blogging skills in order to communicate with library users in the various social networks that are now being integrated into library and information services. In other words, the library and information professionals must be versatile in the application of social media to library services.
- v. **Database Management Skills:** The 21st century library professional must have the basic database management skills. It is not enough to have a full package database of information resources without having the ability to manipulate such database to the benefit of the institution.
- vi. **Resources Networking Skills:** The 21st century library and information science professional need to have the ability to provide links to any other resources of other sister libraries or allied institutions. This will facilitates easy accessibility and retrieval of information resources.
- vii. **Online Selective Dissemination of Information (OSDI):** The 21st century librarian is expected to have Online Selective Dissemination of information Skills. The professional should be innovative enough to use online articles in e-journals, e-thesis, e-books etc which corresponds with the information needs of the users in the online environment.
- viii. **Provision Of Online Literature Search (OLS) Skills:** If one needs specific skills in order to fully exploit the resources of the conventional libraries and information centres that were evaluated before the resources were acquired, then it will not be out of place to say that library and information professionals need to possess high level online literature search skills in order to be able to meet the needs of information professionals.
- ix. **Provision of Online Indexing and Abstracting Skills:** With the proliferation of information, there is need for the 21st century library and information professional to be highly innovative and creative in the area of Online Indexing and Abstracting (OIA) services. According to Amadi, Dike & Ossai-Onah (2011), the advent of information

technology will not completely eradicate the usefulness of abstract and index as information location tools; rather it will help to revolutionize the whole services system

### Challenges to Acquisition of Innovative and Creative Skills Among Librarians

- i. **Limited financial ability:** limited financial ability is one of the major factors affecting innovative skill empowerment, most institutions hardly send their staff on special trainings/conferences, whereas most of these workshops/ seminars are powerful platform for training the trainer
- ii. **Low level of technological literacy:** low level of technological literacy apparently will have a negative impact on the possession of innovative and creative skills among librarians. For instance there is hope for librarian that lacks basic ICT skills in the digital environment. Even in social networking, you must possess some basic ICT literacy skills.
- iii. **Non recognition of Staff with Innovative and Creative Skills:** In most case librarians that innovative and creative are more often than not being labeled as "being to forward" and the pertinent question here is that should we continue to lag behind all in the name of professional humility without commiserate responsibility.

### Conclusion

Creativity in librarianship is all about discovery of new ways of carrying out library and information services. Creativity in librarianship cannot be taken for granted. Creativity and innovation is all about transformative changes and effective change in the way and manner with which library and information services is offered. Would require a more realistic and holistic approach to be able to completely transform the library arena even though the changes may not be easy to effect.

Innovation and creativity can be utilized as strategic approach for repositioning the 21st century librarian for effective service delivery. Librarians in Nigerian academic libraries have no option but to be innovative and creative. It can thus be concluded that innovation and creativity are the catalyst that transform the landscape of library and information services into a more valuable concept.

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