

# **Blogging Among Library Staff In Public Libraries In Nigeria: The Case Of Imo State Public Library Board, Owerri, Nigeria**

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## **Abstract**

*The study was carried out to evaluate blogging among library staff of Imo State Public Library Board, Owerri, Nigeria as a case study. The survey design method was used in the study and findings shows that library staff in public libraries do blog once in a while and they blog in order to access current new information. Mobile phones and cyber cafes remains the avenue employed by library staff when blogging. High cost of accessing the internet as well as low level of ICT literacy was identified as the major constraint to effective blogging among library staff in Nigerian public libraries*

**Keywords:** *Weblog, Imo State, Public, Library, Staff*

## **Introduction:**

Library and information professionals are forced to use the Internet as a reference tool to do search for information and the phenomenon known as blogging or weblogging as observed by Downes (2004) is sweeping the internet. Weblog which was not originally intended for library services has become an important tool currently being employed by libraries in creating awareness of their services

Weblog according to Pattanaik and Pattanaik (2008) is considered as an effective solution and renewed challenge for information publishing web-world, which not only seeking to address the special and discursive implication but also for creating a medium of information seeking habits among upcoming net-generation. Blogging has become the latest trend on the Internet (Habermann, 2005). Blogging has evolved from its origin as a medium for the online publication of personal diaries to a respected vehicle for editorials on specific topics (www.educause, 2005).

Blogs as a new online tool is being effectively used

regarding library resources and services. According to Schwartz (2007), blog are a simple and efficient way for librarians to stay informed and for libraries to disseminate information in a timely manner. Blogs have exploded on the web because they have made it much easier to publish contents online and librarians have identified blogs as another means to market libraries and their services (Fichter, 2003).

Blog according to Bansode and Pujar (2008) is a welcome and easy tool to be used in the libraries to provide various modern library services and expose electronic resources and it's a best place to expose thought, aim and the vision of the library. A blog is a user-generated website where entries are made in journal style and displayed in a reverse chronological (Trivedi, 2010). In library context, blog is define as a referring content management (or distribution) tool/system (CMS) that helps to broadcast useful information to end user, in order to promote awareness of library programs and services in electronic environment (Pattanaik and Pattanaik, 2008). Librarians named by Bar-Bar (2007) and

do serve as new information channels both for the library and information science community and for general public. No wonder Habermann (2005) submits that weblogs play an important role for information professionals and knowledge managers.

### *Review Of Literature*

Conceptually, the term "Blog" according to Pattanaik and Pattanaik (2008) refers to a website that is called "Log of the web" which indicates a blending of words web and log. They contend that the "log" stands for describing the systematic/sequential recording of data processing event often chronologically and "web" points to material available on the World Wide Web.

Wu (2006) and Fichter (2003) see blog as a chronologically organized site which contains brief entries arranged in reverse chronological order. According to White (2007) blogs apart from being presented in chronological order are usually compiled using blog-specific content management software and no HTML skills are required.

Weblog is a web page that provides frequent continuing publication of weblinks and / or comments on a specific topic or subject (broad or narrow in scope), often in the form of short entries arranged in reverse chronological order, with the most recently added piece of information first (Bansode and Pujar, 2008). In the words of Reichard and Harder (2005), weblog is a website resembling a personal journal that is updated with individual entries or postings.

However, there are various types of blogs. Bansode and Pujar (2008) classified blogs by types namely: By media types, by device and by subject, according to them, a blog can be private or for business purposes. Greyford (2010) from a different point of view posited that blogs have evolved to arrive in a number of forms which include composed entries, which is the most common form of running a blog and blogs may also consist of photo entries (photo blogs) videos (Vlogs), audio content material (Pod casts) e.t.c., he further highlighted on the following numerous kind of blog such as Personal weblogs, Business weblogs, Corporate blogs, Non-profit blogs, Information blogs, Professional weblogs, Entertainment and fan blogs among others.

The peculiarity of weblogs as noted by Downes (2004) is their ease of use and this is what makes it so attractive in both the educational community and

the internet at large. Blog can also characterized by the length of time they exist (Bar-Ilan, 2007). Also blogs as one of the more significant tools in web 2.0 as pointed out by Torres-Salinas et al (2011) are characterized by their social and constant updates and the reverse chronological order in which entries or posts are presented. Greyford (2010) submits that the uniqueness of blogs comes from the voices of the people within them and how they select to utilize the extra blogging application functionality and running blog resources available to them to create the weblogs standout from the crowd. Weblogs is also characterized by frequent chronological publication of personal thoughts and web links (Habermann, 2005). Nevertheless, some of the key features of a blog as identified by White (2004) are:-

- Content changes on a daily (Sometimes hourly) basis.
- They are written from a personal point of view.
- There is often an opportunity to contact/ collaborate with the author.
- Viewers will find topical material that will usually relate to them
- They respond to, rather than create news
- Issues of the day are generally those that are discussed in detail
- They are written in format with the most recent material at the top, while older material is stored in an archive.

With regards to the library, blogs are set to provide information on: News or information for users, links to recommended internet resources, books reviews, information about new books, entertainment and amusement for users, news or information for libraries, researcher tips (Bansode and Pujar, 2008). A library blog therefore has the potential as a tool for promoting library resources and services.

Schwartz (2007) submits that weblogs are an excellent way to stay current. According to him, by visiting the blog of other librarians, you gain the perspective of others working in your field, confronting similar issues and exploring solutions. As aptly noted by Bansode and Pujar (2008), blogs can be useful in the library and information centers to promote outreach services, dissemination of information, library administration, community building, library resources, fast communication, marketing of library amongst others. Weblogs can be used as means of developing a discussion and also a means of creating a community of interest. Similarly Garrod (2004) opened that weblog could be used to support local reading groups,

clubs and other special interest groups, as well as adult learning and homework activities for children.

- iv. To ascertain where and how the library staff blog
- v. To determine the constraints to effective blogging among library staff in Nigerian public libraries

From the foregoing, the bottom-line is that weblogs like any other tool can be used in the library for a variety of purposes. Therefore, librarians and information organization could use weblogs for a range of purposes, including contact with clients or user, information provision, marketing of services and for knowledge management applications

### Objectives Of The Study

The Specific objectives of this study are as follows:-

- i. To find out if library staff in Nigerian public libraries do blog
- ii. To determine the frequency at which library staff in Nigerian Public libraries blog
- iii. To identify the reasons why library staff in public libraries do blog

### Research Methodology

The library staff of Imo State Public Library Board, Owerri, Nigeria was used for the study. The survey research design was used, while the simple random sampling technique was used to select thirty (30) staff in the library under study. The instrument used for collecting data was a structured questionnaire and the retrieved questionnaires were analyzed using simple frequency counts and percentages. The findings were presented in tables for better comprehension and clarity of expression.

### Results, Data Analysis and Interpretation

The questionnaires retrieved from the respondents were analyzed and presented as follows:

**Table 1: Do librarians in Public libraries blog**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	28	93.3
No	2	6.7
Total	30	100

Table 1 above, shows that 28 (93.3%) of the respondent, confirmed that they blog while 2 (6.7%) do not blog.

**Table 2: Frequency of blogging**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
On daily basis	8	28.6
Once in a while	13	46.4
Weekly	4	14.3
Monthly	3	10.7

Table 2 above, shows that library staff under study blog once in a while as confirmed by 13 (46.4%) of the

**Table 3: Reasons for blogging**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
To interact with fellow librarians	-	-
To promote library services	5	19.9
To interact with library users	3	10.7
To access current news information	18	64.3
To keep library users abreast of recent happenings	2	7.1
Total	28	100



news/information. It is therefore obvious that library staff under study hardly blog with a view of promoting library services.

**Table 4: Where and how they blog**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
At home through personal computer	2	7
Cyber cafes	9	32
Use of internet facilities at place of work	5	18
Use of mobile phones	12	43
Total	28	100

From table 4 above, the results show that the library staff mostly use their mobile phones when blogging and visits the cyber cafes as confirmed by 12 (43%) and 9 (32%) respectively. The library staff hardly makes use of their personal computer and the internet facilities at their place of work.

**Table 5: Constraints to effective blogging**

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Low ICT literacy level	9	32.1
Poor service by internet service providers	2	7.1
Lack of personal time to carryout blogging	4	14.3
High cost of accessing the internet	11	39.3
Low level of blogging awareness	2	7.1
Total	28	100

From table 5, the results show that the major constraints to effective blogging among library staff in public library in Nigerian is high cost of accessing the internet as well as low level of ICT literacy as confirmed by 11 (39.3%) and 9 (32.1%) respectively.

### **Conclusion/Recommendation**

Weblogs are relevant in the provision of effective library services and offers a platform whereby the librarians and library users can interact participatively with a view of ensuring a high level efficiency in service delivery especially in the online environment. It is worthy to note that the vision of bringing library and information services to the door step of the users in the online environment will be realized only when librarians plug in to the various social media. Weblog has the potency of promoting library events, supporting dedicated users, engaging library user community on special interactions as well as supporting user's community in their information exploration.

Weblogging as tool in disseminating information is an emerging social network services that have not been fully harnessed especially in developing countries to improve library services. Weblogging which can be used as a powerful tool for marketing

library and information services is still at the low level because of the low ICT literacy level among librarians. It is disheartening to note that even librarians have not realized the role of weblogging in the information world. It can be utilized as a tool to interact with fellow librarians to keep abreast of current trends. Worst still is that some do blog without knowing what they are doing just because they engaged in it for the fun and excitement in it.

The NLA online forum today is a good platform for sharing ideas and keeping members of the NLA abreast of recent happenings. In the same vein, librarians should create a platform whereby they interact with their users/patrons and keep them up-to-date with recent information relevant to their needs.

However, this is only attainable where the library itself and the librarians there-in are ICT compliant and the users as well are conversant with the ICT environment. Therefore, to improve the knowledge of weblogging among librarians, the following should be considered:

1. Training and re-training of Public librarians on the skills necessary to operate in an ICT environment as this is the foundation upon which every action will be based and built upon. Today,

an ICT skill is no longer negotiable if librarians are to remain relevant in this ICT driven society.

2. Building of cooperate website for Public libraries should be considered. It is imperative that public libraries in Nigeria should design and developed a corporate website with provisions for interacting with users in order to get feed-back.
3. Attending special conference/workshops: librarians in public libraries should be sent to special training and workshops that can enable them acquire the necessary ICT skills to operate in the ICT library environment.
4. Librarians should be encouraged to own a laptop or personal computer and be connected to the internet as this will afford them the opportunity to improve their skills on daily basis.

Therefore, librarians should consider linking to the weblogs where they exist from the library home page. Weblogs should be effectively utilized as a powerful marketing and current awareness tool. Weblogs are easy to use and as such can be employed by librarians and libraries to promote their services.

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