Innovation in the Library Profession: Issues and Challenges

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Abstract

Innovation is all about introducing significant, relevant ideas and practice that are new and are likely to bring positive changes in libraries. Today, libraries face many challenges from rising costs and shrinking budgets to demand for new types of services. If libraries are to meet these challenges and to successfully innovate, they must not only provide adequate value to the user, but must work together with the user for service innovation. Some of the challenges discussed in this paper include; inadequate number of digital librarians, the demand for new types of services, shrinking budgets which may not cater adequately for new equipment and other things associated with innovation. However, innovation studies are quite rare in libraries and it could be said that leadership and management can foster innovation in a library. This study explored innovation in the library profession: issues and challenges. It is recommended that library associations should organize useful training courses, seminars and conferences which could help in preparing well versed librarians in the country for innovation. Stake holders should also give adequate support to librarians by providing fund. Issues related to librarian's scale promotion and salary must be resolved so that the librarians may get mental satisfaction and work with devotion. This could spur innovation skills in librarians.

Keywords: Innovation, Library Profession, Issues, Challenges

Introduction

The desire of librarians to meet up with the pace of growth and development calls for innovative skills. Innovation in librarianship is all about looking for new ways to improve library services (Njoku, 2008). The environment in which professionals have to perform is rapidly changing due to economic, social, demographic, political, educational and technological developments. The revolution in computers, communication and content in the past three decades has had a dramatic impact on the library profession and information professionals society continues to become more paperless, moving away from formal, paper-based communication patterns to electronic information. Innovation in libraries can be a new idea that is introduced in the learning process. Innovation is all about introducing significant ideas, relevant ideas, practices that are new and are likely to bring positive changes in libraries(Onuoha,Anyanwu,Ossai-onah&Amaechi, 2015). These ideas could be the method of charging information resources, managing traditional and online resources, digitizing information resources, effective management and introduction of local content in librarians amongst many others.

There are different avenues through which librarians can be adequately exposed to innovation in library and information science profession. It could be through organization of conferences and workshops for staff. Zaid and Oyelude (2012) stated that innovations could be introduced in the following areas of librarianship pracitse; electronic reservation services, incorporating web 2.0 tools in the library, e-resources management services, virtual library environment, laptop loan service, provision of research tools, instant messaging and the 24-hours library service. All these innovations could be better enhanced with the support of internet. According to Anyanwu (2010) innovation is the ability to apply new ideas that will enable librarians to undertake activities in a different form. She further stated that through individual initiatives, imagination, intuition and insight, new things could be devised and accommodated. However, the rationale for innovation in library profession is that they help to improve and sustain the quality of library and information services, thereby repositioning the library in the society that views librarianship as a profession as a profession of the last resort or alternative. It is important to know that innovation recreates opportunities for librarians and reposition them to gain competitive advantages. The focus of this paper is to examine the issues and challenges that affect innovation and library profession, proffer possible solutions and recommendations. The paper is premised on the fact that innovation is in existence, but have not been fully integrated into library profession.

Concept of Innovation

Innovation according to Trott (2005) is the management of all the activities involved in the process of idea generation, technology development, manufacturing and marketing of a new/ improved product of manufacturing process or equipment. If innovation is seen as the process of idea generation, it is therefore the application of knowledge and the successful exploitation of new idea is the essence of innovation. However, Anyanwu (2010) defines innovation as the ability to apply new ideas that will enable you to undertake activities differently. Hence, application of new ideas is important and it should be a regular thing in the organization so it can produce result. Innovation therefore is the application of knowledge. It is worthy of note that all innovations begin with an idea (conception). Njoku (2008) contends that innovation implies change, but not mere change which can even occur on its own, or change brought about by man for the sake of it without any benefits. In other words, any change associated with innovation is expected to have economic or social benefits to the organization.

Chunliand Jinmen (2011) contend that librarian have to innovate in reference and information services to meet the clients changing needs because what the clients need in the digital age is not only information or documents but processing of the information into products. Apparently, as good as innovation is, there are still some barriers to it. As rightly noted by Stokes, Wilson and Mador (2010) there are a range of internal and external barriers to invention, depending on the particular industry, size of enterprise, records structure and motivation of those involved. However, innovation requires focusing on user involvement and closing the gap between user expectations and the library's ability to meet them(Islam,Agarwal & Ikeda, 2015).

Types of Innovation

According to Rothwel and Gardner (1989) there are four types of innovation: product, service, process and strategy or business concept innovation. This categorization is based on the idea of applications or uses for innovation.

Product Innovation: Product innovations loom large in the public imagination. Products, especially consumer products are probably the most obvious innovation application. The Dyson bagless vacuum cleaner is an example of a product innovation. James Dyson developed what he terms 'dual cyclone' technology and used it to create a new more efficient vacuum cleaner. As a vacuum cleaner it is a consumer product and what makes it innovative,

is that it functions in a quite different way from a conventional vacuum cleaner. It is still a vacuum cleaner and it does what vacuum cleaners have always done, it extracts dust and other items of household debris from carpets and upholstery. But the innovation lies in the way in which it functions. Instead of employing a fan to suck dust into a bag, it dispenses with the bag and uses Dyson's patented 'dual cyclone' technology to extract dust and place it in a clear plastic container (Dyson, 1997). The above example could be related to the use of OPAC for cataloguing information resources in the library as against the manual cataloguing method of the traditional type of library which takes so much time.

Service Innovation: According to Rothwel and Gardner (1989), service innovations usually take the form of new service applications. One reason why service innovations do not attract as much attention as product innovations is that they are often less spectacular and less eye catching. This probably has something to do with the fact that where innovation is concerned, the public imagination has always tend to identify with inventions, rather than innovation as such, because of their high novelty value, inventions are usually products. Service innovations typically take the form of a new way of providing a service, often with a novel and very different business model. Occasionally it even takes the form of an entirely new service. The creation of the 'Direct Line' telephone insurance business is a good example of the first type of service innovation. For years the insurance business had been transacted via high street outlets, door-to-door, by post or through intermediaries known as insurance brokers. Service innovation could be introduced in the library, for example through inculcating the pattern of 24hours opening in the library like few others do. This will attract more library patrons.

Process Innovations: Process innovations often have a bigger impact on society than either product or service innovations. The early nineteenth century Luddite movement in and around Nottingham, where stocking knitters who worked on machines in the home, took to rioting and breaking the new more efficient machines located in factories, because they feared that the new machines would destroy their livelihoods, is a testimony to the power of process innovations (Chapman, 2002). The humble photocopier, developed by Chester Carlson, may not sound like a spectacular innovation and yet it had a big impact on the way in which administrative systems in offices are organized. One has only to look at what happens in an office when the photocopier breaks down to see how reliant we are upon it. Much less well known, but just as significant in terms of its impact on society, is the Float Glass process developed by Alistair Pilkington, in which plate glass is manufactured by

drawing glass out across a bed of molten tin (Quinn, 1991). Prior to the introduction of this process innovation, plate glass used for shop windows and office windows was expensive and of poor quality largely because the only way of getting a flat surface was to grind it and polish it. The Float Glass process at a stroke eliminated the need for time consuming grinding and polishing it, leading to a dramatic fall in costs.

Strategy Innovation: It is possible to incrementally improve one's business strategy but Hamel (1996, 2000) contends that radical business concept innovation is now paramount. He claims that the current environment is hostile to industry incumbents and hospitable to industry revolutionaries. The fortifications that protected the industrial oligarchy have crumbled under the weight of deregulation, technological upheaval, globalization and social change. What is now required to ensure organizational success is to continually revolutionize the basic organizational strategy.

Process of Innovation

The process of innovation entails a number of stages and in each stage of the process there are activities requiring inputs of knowledge, embodied in skilled personnel, specialized equipment and investment of time in using these resources. However, each stage, if successful, produces an output, initially intangible in the form of new knowledge but later tangible if applied to goods for sale. Therefore, the innovation process in organizations can be seen as a stage process involving the generation of an innovative idea, the acceptance of that innovation represented by an organizational mandate to change and its implementation so that the innovation becomes ingrained within the organization (Bunduchi & Smart, 2010). Existing literature has examined the benefits and costs associated with innovation adoption either as antecedents of the decision to accept and/or to implement an innovation (Chwelos 2001; Premkumar, 1994) or, less often, as the outcomes of successful or not so successful acceptance and/or implementation (Klein & Sorra, 1996; Meyers 1999). Innovation acceptance and implementation in the organization could be dependent on the relationship between implementation success, innovation outcomes and anticipated benefits (Bunduchi & Smart, 2010).

The Library Profession

Library profession could be described as a noble profession and the father of all disciplines; it is a profession that is usually headed by a qualified librarian. A librarian is a person who

looks after the storage and retrieval of information. In a workplace, the librarian is usually a professional who is trained and educated to deal with information in a wide variety of formats and settings (WordiQ, 2010). Librarian helps users to navigate into the voyage of internet and evaluate information efficiently. Librarian offers a helping hand for users to find out the required piece of information and to use it for personal and professional purposes. Due to the advent of Internet, World Wide Web and proliferation of online catalogue, the role of librarian has drastically been transformed. The librarians now has new roles, such as;metadata, scholarly communication,intermediary, facilitator, end-user trainer, educator, web organizer and designer, researcher, interface designer, knowledge manager and sifter of information resources (Rao &Babu, 2001). Librarians are expected to be knowledgeable in a variety of information sources and be abreast of development in the society, the new trends and advancements in technology.

Innovation in the Library Profession

Innovation is the application of knowledge of all types to achieve desired social and economic outcomes. The innovation system plays an important role in acquiring, creating, adopting and disseminating knowledge, which is crucial for success in the knowledge economy (Dahlman&Utz,2005). Innovation in libraries and information centres has become imperative due to the technological revolution and prolific growth of electronic information of late. Due to dramatic changes in the information environment and the ICT sector, library managers have interest not only to adapt to these sweeping changes, but, more importantly to trigger innovative ideas from their personnel with a view to remain at the frontiers of knowledge rather than mere passive observers. Technology can be used creatively in service delivery by means of the mobile phone. For instance, some libraries have adopted this tool to send overdue reminders to patrons for the late return of library materials whereas others use this for current awareness. While technology is definitely part of the solution, there is no reason to over glorify technology and overlook the human resource behind the technological revolution (Scupola&Nicolajsen, 2010).

The use of OPACs, CD-ROM, databases and internet access in the libraries, convincingly demonstrate the ability to master, manage and use advanced technologies. Thus, it has become fashionable to speak of a new librarianship and of a new image of librarians. The perception may be new and recognition gratifying, however, in reality librarians have long been pioneering users of new technologies (Malinconico, 1997). The range and complexity of

challenges facing libraries and librarians today are unprecedented. Certainly the proliferation of information technologies has made a significant impact on libraries in the way they deliver their services and content as well as the format of that very content as most libraries move towards digital collections or at the very least hybrid print and digital collections. There is also growing expectations of users for quality, accuracy and immediate responsiveness to their needs. Scupola and Nicolajsen (2010) remark that innovation in library is inevitable due to the following reasons:

- The discovery of unmet user needs.
- The introduction of new services or the retooling of traditional services resulting in a better user experience.
- Creative collaboration among libraries or between libraries and other institutions explorations of the future of libraries.
- Implementing new technologies to improve and extend library services to meet user needs.
- Redefining processes that encourage finding new and better ways to make library collections and facilities more useful.
- Incorporating best practices from foreign libraries wherever possible.

DeJong and Hartog (2007) stated that innovation theorists often describe the innovation process as being composed of two main phases: initiation and implementation. The division between the two phases is believed to be the point at which the idea is first adopted, that is, the point at which the decision to implement the innovation is being made. The first stage ends with the production of an idea while the second stage ends as soon as the idea is implemented. According to Barsh, Capozzi and Davidson (2008) there are some practical steps to advance innovation and building a more innovative culture, such as:

- Define the kind of innovation that drives growth and helps meet strategic objectives.
- Add innovation to the formal agenda at regular leadership meetings. This approach is common amongst leading innovators and it sends an important signal to employees (library staff) about the value management attached to innovation.
- Set performance metrics and targets for innovation. Leaders should think about two types of metrics: the financial (such as the percentage of total revenue from new products) and the behavioural. What metrics for example would have the greatest effect on how people work?

Martins, Martins and Terblanche (2004) investigate the steps needed to stimulate innovation in the university library. They suggested involving employees in decision making, setting standards for work performance and giving regular feedback. In a study carried out by Scupola and Nicolajsen (2010), it was observed that academic libraries involve users in library service innovations.Avdeeva (2010) discusses how innovative services are provided in Russian State Library by offering digital dissertation services and virtual reading rooms. Jantz (2012a) presents a process model and propositions on the ways by which the research library might innovate. Jantz (2012b) investigates the characteristics of innovation as understood by university librarians and found leadership, management, organizational factors such as size and complexity, the individual and environmental factors such as the norms of the library profession to be important for innovation. DeJong (2014) conceptualize service design SD approaches to building customer service systems for libraries and posit that libraries that do not focus on the SD approach, may began to suffer patron dissatisfaction.

Buckland (1996) took a historical perspective and commented critically on the lack of innovation in U.S. libraries during the early 20th century. He pointed out that innovation was a vital force in librarianship in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but that the period of the 1930s and 1940s did not produce any significant innovation in U.S. libraries. In contrast during this period, there appeared to be a great deal of innovation in Europe, which was ignored by U.S. libraries. For example, microforms were considered as an expansion of the paper codex. Dalbello (2005a, 2005b) examined technological innovation in the National Digital Library Program (NDLP) at the Library of Congress (LOC). It is important to know that understanding technological innovation in the library context depends on insight into how innovators and the environment are shaping innovation decisions.

Musman (1982) pointed to some important areas to examine. He stated that the serious researcher must pay careful attention to the libraries' organizational structure and the technological environment, noting that the most important structural predictor of innovation over a period of time is the number of occupational specialties found in an organization. In assessing 100 years of innovation in libraries, Musman (1993) chronicled some of the attitudes of librarians toward technological change and the role innovations have played in shaping the development of library processes and services. In the early 20th century, a strong cultural influence developed among librarians, in part as a reaction to technological advancements in the larger industrial environment. Librarians suspected that automobiles, movies and television were having a negative impact on reading. Hours traditionally spent

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with a book were now being diverted to other types of entertainment. To librarians, the book represented the embodiment of knowledge and thought; technological diversions did not go well for the health of the society.

Issues and Challenges of Innovation in the Library Profession

A number of studies have been conducted that explored the problems faced bylibrary profession with regards to innovation. Ademodi and Adepoju (2009) investigated computer skills among librarians in academic libraries in Ondo and Ekiti State in Nigeria. The study revealed shortage of computers in the libraries and inadequate computer skills among professionals. It was suggested that more attention and funds should be provided for training and procurement of ICT infrastructure in Nigerian libraries. Adomi and Anie (2006) in their research on computer literacy skills of professionals in Nigerian University libraries concluded that most of the professionals do not possess high level of computer skill and their use of computer and technology is still maturing. Library management and leaders should organize and offer in house computer training programmes for librarians and enough computers should be provided in this regard.

Sreenivasulu (2000) studied the role of a digital librarian in the management of digital information systems. He stressed that the multimedia nature of the next generation of digital libraries requires the digital librarians (DL) to be essentially a type of specialist librarian who has to manage and organize the digital library, handle the specialized tasks of massive digitization, storage, access, digital knowledge mining, digital reference services, electronic information services, search co-ordination, archive management and its access. He should be well-versed in mark-up languages, cataloguing, metadata, multimedia indexing and database technology, user interface design, programming and web technology.

Johnson (2007) viewed library and information science education in developing countries. He concluded that LIS programs in developing countries continue to suffer from lack of financial support by governments. Rahman, Khatunand Islam (2008) reviewed the library education in Bangladesh. The study revealed that majority of the institutions in Bangladesh does not have adequate equipped computer laboratories. A sufficient number of classification and cataloguing tools such as; DDC, LC, Sears's list of subject headings for practical were not present. Many institutions either have no library or inadequate collection of textbooks. Professional's status was also found very low, low pay scale and limited opportunities for promotion.

In Iran Gavgani, Shokraneh and Shiramin (2011) observed that librarians do not have traditional skills and sufficient background knowledge to meet the changing needs of their customers. They need to be empowered by new skills and information before going to empower their patrons. So there must not be a gap between librarian's professional, technological knowledge and their society's informational need.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper reviewed literature on issues and challenges of innovation in the library profession. Although it is obvious that innovation is visible and being applied in the library profession, it is important to know that there are so many challenges facing innovation in library profession. It is not out of place to conclude that the level of innovations amongst library professionals is an offshoot of the advent of ICT into library services. Therefore if we must innovate and create avenues for successful change that will culminate efficient innovation in library profession and service delivery, adequate support at all levels should be given to librarians. This could be in terms of government support, economic and social support, establishment support, financial support amongst many others. A lot of strategies can be adopted to develop knowledge innovation culture in the library, such as: creating a learning culture, shaping knowledge-based team organization, improving trust and cooperation, enhancing human resource development and cultivating innovation talents. Therefore, it is high time for leaders, management, stakeholders, policy makers, planners and library administrators to properly look at how they can constantly encourage innovation in libraries in order to ensure effective delivery of their roles and services for the society at large. The following recommendations were made:

- Attending conferences, seminars and workshops: Library and information centres should encourage their staffs to attend conferences and workshops as these are viable platforms for acquiring innovative skills. Conferences like Library and Information Technology Today (LITT), their annual conferences are always loaded with mind blowing trainings that no serious minded librarian after attending such conferences will remain crawling on the floor while others are flying on the wings of technology.
- Installation of Modern Technologies in Libraries: Though these modern technologies that are transforming the landscape of librarianship are expensive. It is recommended that heads of library should apply for funds, because the availability of certain

facilities has the tendency of provoking the untapped inherent innovative skills among librarians.

- Organizing of In-House Training: It is important to share knowledge and ideas internally that is within the organization. This calls for in-house training among libraries and information science practitioners. This in-house training will afford librarians the opportunity to share innovative and creative ideas irrespective of their status or designation.

- Librarians should acquire technical skills, IT skills, managerial skills and communication skills, in order to be able to work effectively and efficiently in this information age.

- Librarians should be abreast of the new trends in the profession, continuing education and development programs (CEDP).

- All issues relating to librarian's scale, promotion and salary must be resolved on priority basis so that the librarians may get mental satisfaction and work with devotion. This could spur innovation skills in librarians.

- Scholarships, fellowship and awards should be offered to promote professional competition among the library and information professionals.

- Staff and Training: Human expertise has always been and will remain one of a library's greatest assets. Thus, recognising that staff and their collective knowledge are important is a way of promoting opportunities for staff to reach their full potential through well designed human resource development plans and training. Librarians need to update, acquire skills and knowledge to ensure proficiency in an environment that is constantly faced with new technological breakthroughs and new ways of doing work.

- Information professionals should keep track of the revelations of technological innovations so that the practical applications in libraries and information systems can be effectively implemented to promote up-to-date and value based information services to the users of innovative technology generation.

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