Full Length Research Paper

Library and information science professionals' use of published research

Chinwe V. Anunobi[1]*, Ifeyinwa B. Okoye[2] and Ngozi Chima James[2]

[1]Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.
[2]Federal University of Technology Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria.

The survey examines the research consultation indexes of LIS professionals in Nigeria. 200 of these professionals were sampled randomly during the 45th National Conference and Annual General Meeting of the Nigerian Library Association, held in Uyo, Akwa-Ibom State in 2007. Turner's (2002) questionnaire instrument on: "Do Information Professionals Use Research Published in LIS journals?" was adopted for the survey. The results from the 89.46% returned and valid questionnaires revealed that LIS professionals make high use of research whereas professionals: with terminal certificates (PhD and HND), who were graduates of year 2000 and above and with above 15 years library work experience champion research papers' use. Research is primarily used to: obtain current information and for self-motivation in aid of good decision making and policy formulations; and inhibited by time constraints, lack of understanding on the research objective and its practical applications as well as inaccessibility of final reports/papers when published due to its non- inclusion in reputable indexing or abstracting services. Increased use of research could be achieved if research is: accompanied by guidelines on use; professionals are encouraged to develop their research skills and motivated to participate in professional activities.

Key words: Research - library and information science, published papers**,** research reports, library professionals**,** information science professionals, usefulness of research work.

INTRODUCTION

Information is never relevant to the second person until it is communicated through a medium. Received information is assimilated and applied as an extension of its relevance. Knowledge and information content of a discipline are more or less products of research endeavours. Research results/reports are often communicated to the relevant audience through journal articles, conference/seminar papers, technical reports (which are accessible as print or/and online versions), blogs, etc. Since research is a means of solving problems (Nworuh, 2001) , or according to Turner (2002), any systematic effort to generate new information, create new knowledge or produce new interpretations of existing knowledge or information, suggesting attention to method and exactitude in obtaining and analyzing results, it behoves every member of a profession to consult research results. An

information professional can be a librarian, an archivist or information scientist who can function as a documentalist or knowledge manager.

For the information professional, research result consultation is very essential especially in the present global village which is characterized with explosion in the arrays of available information and technological interventions on the operations of library and information services (Anunobi and Essmerole, 2008). To that effect, Lenox (1995:302) posited that research is a veritable tool for "program planning, service delivery, organizational development and problem solving considering the ever increasing organizational complexity of libraries". Librarians could overcome these complex challenges if they are grounded in research process and increase their consumption of research literature (Swisher, 1986). Thus, by way of extrapolation, LIS professionals must keep abreast of research advances if they must remain relevant in their profession.

A research by McClure and Bishop (1989) revealed that

---

*Corresponding author. E-mail: chiinobis@yahoo.com.

LIS professionals' use of research reports is low. Likewise, Culler (1998) in another study advanced that LIS practitioners do not make use of research findings to improve their services compared to other professionals. Further to that, research result by Powell et al. (2002) showed that nearly 62% of U.S and Canadian LIS practitioners read research-based articles, 50% occasionally apply research results to professional practices while only 42% occasionally or frequently perform research related to their job or to the LIS professionals. This low use of research result is still prevalent as implicated in the lamentations by the library faculty on the non-usage of their research results by the library practitioners (Crowley, 2005). LIS professionals' use or non-use of research result is a function of many variables.

As posited by Moahi (2007:2), research is useful if it is aimed at problem solving or in helping a professional in his overall development. Therefore "LIS researchers should not be operating in a vacuum, researching on issues that do not impact anything". Rather, their efforts should be directed at research that is relevant to the needs of industry, commerce and other public sectors (McNicol and Nankwell, 2002) . To McClure (1989), library managers will always consult research reports with high lucidity regarding the library setting. If the above-mentioned pitfalls associated with low use of LIS research reports are not highlighted, it will be very difficult to proffer opinions and meaningful recommendations to remediate the poor situation.

According to Schindele (1981), supported by the findings of Cohen (1976; 1979) and Barlow et al. (1984), LIS research is of low use because of the type of research method used which invariably limits its usefulness and applicability. Warldhart (1980) informed that LIS research is usually artificial, too specific and esoteric or dated; therefore may not be relevant to real-life problems facing library community. Cullen (1998) attributed low research use to the fact that many LIS practitioners are still engaged in old practices. Earlier concerns on low use of research was attributed to poor communication between researchers and practitioners, overwhelming professional literature, inadequate education on research methods, the perception that research result is not related to application and resistance to new ideas/change by LIS practitioners.

Townley (1991) reiterated that most researches are in-house which could be applied only to its original setting. Report from the University libraries in Seoul, Korea as indicated by Kim (2005) showed that research use is low because in most cases, the implication of research practice was not clear and there is limited time to implement new ideas and incomprehensible English research reports and statistical analysis. Hernon and Schwartz (2007) emphasized that in their Midwinter Conference, American Library Association, exhibitors were tending towards services to library customers rather than development of abilities, knowledge and skills of the staff

staff to deal with those aspects of change management that would benefit from the application of research and evaluation as inquiry process. Research result and its application as an instrument of change, should not be left unutilized, hence some suggestions have been provided to improve its implementation and application. Kim (2005) in his report noted education, practice and of theory of production which could be applied in real life.

Baski (1985) has proffered mentoring of librarians by experienced researchers, through assisting the librarians in matching research projects with personal development and encouraging them to apply the research result. According to Cave (1991:22),"a regular bulletin reporting on research in progress" is essential. Supporting him, Finnie et al. (2002) reported that Dunedin Library Research Group was on the opinion of establishing a national database or central research register which will list research in progress and recently completed ones in New Zealand libraries which all libraries could contribute or refer to. In essence, research must be communicated and the receiver accesses and understands it, for it to be applied towards affecting changes.

Statement of the problem

Library and Information Science is a service-oriented profession which is highly dynamic. In most cases, research results aimed at solving LIS problems are usually communicated to the members of the profession through journal articles, conference/seminar papers and technical reports. Though, some of these documentations could be available, it is necessary to know the extent of consultation of these research results and some of the determining variables of such consultation. Thus, the research is poised to find out the amount of research projects use by LIS professionals and the reason for or against the usage of research.

Objectives of the study

The study aims at determining the research reports use of LIS professionals in Nigeria. Specifically, it sought to:
1) Identify the amount of research projects usage by LIS professionals in Nigeria; 2) Determine the relationship between the research report use and the professional variables that could aid decision making and optimal productivity; 3) Find out the determining factors for research report use; and 4) Ascertain ways of improving research report usage by Nigerian LIS professionals.

Scope of the research

The study is all embracing as it covers all strata of the LIS professionals in Nigeria. This include Ordinary and

Table 1. Library type as determinant of research projects' use.

Type of library	Mean research usage	(%) of response
Academic	4.86	62.19
National	5	14.63
Public	4.77	10.97
Special	4.71	8.53
School	4.66	3.65

Very glaring among the libraries.

Higher National Diploma holders, Bachelors degree holders and above, in the field of Library and Information Science. The Annual General Meeting and National Conference of the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) which holds every year serves as the biggest umbrella that brings together all these professionals. Therefore, the venue of the conference was considered the best forum to get the professionals and elicit information from them.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A survey research strategy was adopted to find answer to the problem. Data was collected during the 45th National Conference and Annual General Meeting of the Nigerian Library Association which took place from 9th - 14th September, 2007 at Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The Conference brings together all library and information science professionals in Nigeria. Four hundred and thirteen (413) practitioners attended the meeting. Qualitative data for the research was collected from the randomly sampled professionals at the peak of the conference. The instrument for data collection - questionnaire was adopted from Turner's (2002) design, which was used for the research "Do Information Professionals Use Research Published in LIS journals?"

Two hundred and fifty (250) copies of the questionnaire were randomly distributed to the participants. This sampled population, at the time of the conference was representing roughly fifty percent of the participants expected. Two hundred and twenty four (224) of the distributed instrument which represents 89.60% were returned and found usable. Responses on the instrument were provided as multiple choices and on a six-point rating scale. Results were analyzed and presented using percentages and tables.

RESULTS

The objective of the research constitutes the platform for presentation and analysis of the results. It is arranged to provide answers to: the amount of research projects used by LIS professionals, relationship between research reports' use and different professional variables; reasons for and against consulting research reports and ways of improving research consultation.

Research projects' use

LIS professionals were required to rate the frequency of their research projects' usage on the scale between the

least score of 1 and maximum score of 6. Their mean response was 4.54, which is above the maiden score of 3.5, an indication of high usage of research outcomes by LIS practitioners in Nigeria.

Relationship between research projects' usage and professional variables

Correlations were made between the amount of research projects' usage and various LIS professional variables, namely: the type of library, highest LIS qualifications, year of qualification as LIS professional and the number of years served as practicing LIS professional.

The mean response on the amount of research projects' usage by LIS professionals from the various types of libraries is presented in Table 1. For the purpose of this research, all LIS educators were grouped as members of academic library.

All the respondents from the various libraries show evidence of high usage of research outcomes, though professionals from the National Library use research papers more than their counterparts from other libraries. Generally, there is no difference in their use.

Correlations between research projects' use and the highest professional qualification, reveals the result presented in Table 2.

Result on the use based on the academic purposes shows that those professionals with PhD qualification use research most, followed by those with Masters and then OND, HND who surprisingly use research projects more than those with Bachelors degree. However, none of the groups use research projects less than the Median (3.5) for the general usage of research papers.

Furthermore, comparison was made among LIS professionals based on the research projects' usage and their year of professional qualification. The result is presented in Table 3.

The respondents' years of qualifications were grouped into four, as a reflection of the trends in professional quailfication for library and information science education in Nigeria. Before 1975, library and information scientists earned qualifying certificate as Associates of Library Association (ALA), awarded by British Library Association. However, the pioneering indigenous certificates were awarded by the University of Ibadan and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Between 1975 and 1990, some other indigenous certificate and degree awarding library schools were established, while the period 1991 - 2000 was characterized by marked proliferation of library schools. In later years, the various library schools were continually engaged in review and shaping of their curricula to reflect new trends in capacity building, both for research and application of the information and communication technology (Ifidon, 2008). Though, Table 3 shows consistently high use of research projects by all the groups, with LIS professionals possessing post-2001 qualifications showing evidence of leading others in research

Table 2. Professional qualifications as determinant of research projects' use.

Highest professional qualification	Mean research usage	(%) of response
OND, HND	4.25	4.57
Bachelors	3.64	19.54
Masters	4.65	64.36
Ph.D	5.7	11.49

Note: OND/HND = Ordinary National Diploma/Higher National Diploma.

Table 3. Year of qualification as determinant of research projects' use.

Year of professional qualification	Mean research usage	(%) of response
Before 1975	0	0
1975 - 1990	4.28	26.41
1991 - 2000	4.26	35.84
2001 - Date	5.3	37.73

Table 4. Professional experience as determinant of research projects' use.

No. of years practiced	Mean research usage	(%) of response
1 - 9	4.75	45.55
10 - 14	4.36	18.88
15 and above	5.37	35.55

Table 5. Ranked reasons for using research reports.

Rank	Reason	Mean rank
1	To stay current with developments and trends in LIS for professional development	5.3
2	To provide information when conducting self-motivated research specific to my work place	4.69
3	To assist with management activities in my library /information centers such as problem solving, decision-making, planning and/or evaluation.	3.1

projects' usage. Furthermore, none of the respondents obtained professional qualification (either certificate or degree) before 1975.

The number of practiced years (professional experience) as LIS professional was another variable considered. The result is presented in Table 4.

In most cases, professionals whose experience ranges between one and nine years are considered young, even with IFLA standard, which designated them as New Professional Group (NPDG). Professionals with 10 - 14 years in the practice, in most cases are seen as matured or well experienced while those with fifteen years experience and above are expected to occupy leadership positions and with management responsibilities in their respective employment locations.

For the above-listed three groups, the difference in research reports' use is not quite evident except that the most experienced group (15 years-above) seems to have consulted more research outcomes than others. The last

of the variables considered is research component in library and information science education of the respondents as a correlate of research reports' use. All the respondents indicated that research method was part of the courses they took to qualify as LIS professionals.

Reasons for and against the use of research projects in LIS

The ranked reasons for using research projects as provided by respondents are as shown in Table 5. The Table is quite revealing. Use of research reports for management decision has a score rate of 3.1 below the Likert scale median of 3.5, an indication that research reports' use is not necessarily for that purpose. However, research reports' use is more applicable to professional development activities (mean score 5.3) and for research work (mean score 4.69).

Table 6. Ranked reasons for non-use of research reports.

Rank	Reason	Mean score
1	Time constraints	6
2	Research presented in a way difficult to understand	5.4
3	No bibliographic control to LIS Research	4.42
4	Research does not address problems in the work place	4.42
5	Research are not physically available in my library/information centre for consultation	3.9
6	Conferences, meetings and professional networking provide sufficient knowledge sharing 3.15 opportunities with colleagues and researchers	

To verify the influence of participation in conference on research report usage by LIS practitioners, the amount of research projects' use was compared with attendance to and paper presentation in conferences. Professionals who attended conferences twice or more in a year made more use of research papers (mean score 5.37) than those who attended once or none in a year (mean score 3.33) below the median. Upon the consideration of their paper presentation in conferences, it was revealed that both presenters and non-presenters recorded mean score of 5.02 and 3.51, respectively, which are above the median.

Furthermore, their responses on the reasons for non-use of research papers are presented in Table 6.

Time constraint is considered as the major hindrance to research papers' use. Others include difficulty in understanding research, non-bibliographic control of LIS research outputs (as in journals) and inability of those research findings to address problems in LIS work as well as the inadequacy of research projects in library and information centres. Respondents' attendance to professional conferences, networking and meetings do not hinder their interest in using research papers hence the score of 3.15.

Ways of improving research

Critical appraisals and views on the ways of improving LIS professionals' use of research reports indicated mean scores of between 4.40 and 3.67 for the listed variables. Respondents were of the view that research reports should include practical guidelines for applying the results in work places, encouraging professionals to attend and or present papers at conferences and other professional meetings, encouraging them to be better consumers of research papers by: developing their research skills, participating in professional networking in list serve which summarizes recent research projects and encouraging participatory research between researchers and users.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The finding that LIS professionals make high use of

research outcomes seems to be a contradiction to the earlier findings by McClure and Bishop (1989), Culler (1998) and Baker and Mika (2002) that LIS professionals use of research papers is low. The high use is not relative to the professionals in a particular type of library; rather, it cuts across all the library types, although professionals from the National Library tend to use research papers more than others. The reason could be attributed to their ease of access to all the publications in Nigeria as the National Depository library. The high use of research projects by professionals who have reached their terminal degree - PhD and HND could be the consequence of their habitual exposure to research conduct and use during their academic pursuit. Furthermore, professionals with PhD are often expected to be mentors and decision makers. Thus, consulting research results help them to exercise authority and demonstrate proficiency in such problem solving activity as posited by Moahi (2005) that research projects are used for problem solving and personal development.

The high use of research projects by LIS professionals who graduated from year 2000 and above could be attributed to a policy in the later part of 1990 that conferred academic status on LIS professionals. As academia, they are to be involved in research and publishing to earn their promotion like other faculty in academic environment. Evidently, research requires a review of existing work in the area which could inform their use of research results.

Experienced professionals, with above 15 years of professional practice (Table 4) are presumed to have acquired enough knowledge and developed the required skills to position them as mentors and decision makers. Hence, the foregoing constitutes the likely reason for their consulting research reports in order to live up to the responsibility of the offices they occupy. This confirms the position of Baski (1985) that research report consultation is used for mentoring and personal development. The use of research papers to stay current and to get information needed for self-motivated research (Table 5) implies that the professionals' use of research papers has no practical application. This confirms the findings of Crowley (2005) that faculty are lamenting that practitioners are not utilizing their research result in workplace. Low research reports' utilization resulting from: time

constraints, difficulty in understanding research presentation, non-bibliographic control of research papers which aggravated unavailability problem and the research not being applicable to workplace problem has engender any intention to use research reports. These confirmed the views and findings of Townley (1991) that most research are applicable only on the original setting; Kim (2005) that time constraints and incomprehensible research report do not allow application and Hermon and Schwartz (2007) that professionals are not helped to develop skills, knowledge and ability needed to apply results. It is also noteworthy that the research reports may be too artificial to be relevant to the demands of the work place.

The reason for non-usage of research reports can be understood better from the respondents' suggestive ways of improving its use. Such suggestions as: providing guidelines on the application of research, encouraging staff to attend conferences, meetings and encouraging staff to develop research skills implies that professionals can only use research reports if they know how to and if it is relevant to their needs, as do other professions and industries (McNicol and Nankivel, 2002).

Conclusion

Professional dynamism requires living above board in best LIS practices through involving in cutting edge research and making use of its outcomes. The survey to determine LIS professionals' use of research reports in Nigeria provided the following conclusive evidences: 1) LIS professionals make high use of research reports; although professionals: who were graduates of year 2000 and above, possessing terminal certificates (PhD and HND), and with 15 years plus experience champion its use; 2) Research is primarily used to obtain current information and for self-motivation and not necessarily for problem solving or decision making; 3) Research reports' use is inhibited by time constraints, lack of understanding on the focus of research and its practical application. Unavailability of research or lack of bibliographic control is a major factor; 4) Inhibitory factors to research reports' use could be removed if: research is accompanied by guidelines on its practical application; and 5) Professionals are encouraged and appropriately motivated to develop their research skills, participate in professional network and present papers in seminars, conferences, etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS

An extraneous issue in this survey is non- usage of research reports for operational improvement strategy. However, it is pertinent that LIS as a discipline should incorporate operational improvement strategy into its programmes for development of both theoretical principles

and pragmatic practice in Nigeria.

Finally, it is hereby recommended that: 1) Collaborative efforts should be made by researchers and research users to pragmatically develop the LIS profession; 2) Researchers should make result less theoretical and more practical; 3) Research should be founded on the core areas of LIS, including operations and services; 4) LIS professionals should endeavour to carry out researches which are focused on problem solving with wider horizon; 5) Research documentation should focus on core areas of LIS while heads of LIS centers and affiliations should design a system which will engender research result discussions among their staff and for the improvement of the profession.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

REFERENCES

Anunobi CV, Emerole N (2008). Motivation and encumbrances to research and publication: the case of Nigerian Library & Information Science (LIS practitioners). Edu. Res. Rev., 3(2): 066-072.
Barlow DH, Hayes SC, Nelson RO (1984). The Scientist practitioners: research and accountability in clinical and educational settings. Oxford: Pergamon.
Baski J (1985). What librarians need from researchers. New Library World 86: 147-148.
Cave R (1991). Research in library & information work in New Zealand: Report of an enquiry. Wellington, NZ: Dept. of Library and Information Studies.
Cohen LH (1976). Clinician's utilization of research findings. JSAS catalog of selected documents in Psychology.
Cohen LH (1979). The research readership and information source reliance of clinical psychologists. Professional Psychol., 10: 760-86.
Cullen R (1998). Does performance measurement improve organizational effectiveness? [In: Proceedings of the Second Northumbria International Conference on performance measurement in libraries and information services, New Castle upon Tyne, U. K: Information North. pp. 3-20.
Fannie E, Frame B, Steward I (2002). Research by New Zealand Library practitioners, New Zealand Libraries 49(3): 83-87.
Hernon P, Schwarstz C (2007). Editorial. A need for greater commitment in the profession to research and evaluation. Lib. Infor. Sci. Res., 29(2): 161-162.
Ifidon SE (2008). Review of library & information science practice in Nigeria in relation to the adequacy of the curriculum. [A paper presented at the IFLA/ALP Workshop on Review of Library and Information Science Curriculum in West Africa, at the University of Lagos Guest House & Conference Centre, Yaba, Lagos, 21st -24th July, 2008.] [Unpublished]
Kim K (2000). Perceived Barriers to research utilization by Korean University Libraries. The J. Academic Librarianship. 31(50): 438-448.
McClure CR, Bishop A (1989). The status of research in library and information science: Guarded Optimism. College and Research Libraries 50, 127-143.
McClure CR (1989). Increasing the usefulness of research for library

managers: Propositions, issues and strategies. Library Trends 38(2): 280.

McNicol S, Nankivell C (2002). The LIS research landscape: a review and prognosis centre for information research. Center for Information Research.

Moahi KH (2007) Library and Information Science research in Botswana: an analysis of trends and patterns: World Library and Information Congress: 73rd IFLA General Conference and Council, 19-23 August, 2007, Durban, South Africa. http://www.ifla.org/iv/ifla 73/inden.htm (Accessed 13/05/08).

Nworuh GE (2001) Basic research methodology for researches trainees and trainers in management science. Owerri, Nigeria: AMBIX Publishers

Powell RR, Baker LM, Mika JJ (2002). Library and Information Science practitioners and research. *Library & Information Science Research* 24 (1): 49-72.

Schindele R (1981). Methodological problems in rehabilitation research. Inter. J. Rehabilitation Res., 4: 233-248.

Swisher R (1986). Focus on research. Top of the News, 42: 175-177.

Townley CT (1991). Opportunities and challenges for LIS research in academic libraries: Elements of strategy. [In: McClure, C. R. & Hernon, P. (eds.) Library and Information Science research: Perspective and strategies for improvement]. Norwood, N. J.: Ablex, pp. 267-278.

Turner KJ (2002). Do information professionals use research published in LIS journals? 68th IFLA Council and General Conference, August 18-24, 2002. Conference proceedings.

Waldhart TJ (1980). Editorial. Library Res., 2: 105-106.