

Full Length Research Paper

Globalization, information revolution and Higher Education in Nigeria: The challenging roles of Library Professionals

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Accepted 22 November, 2016

The influence of globalization and information revolution on higher education in Nigeria was investigated through the authors' structured questionnaire. The design of the study was descriptive survey. Fifty-three professional librarians from Nnamdi Azikiwe Library University of Nigeria Nsukka, lecturers from Department of Library and Information Science University of Nigeria, Nsukka and librarians in Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) library were surveyed. The instruments for data collection were questionnaires and observation. Findings from the investigation reveal that globalization and information revolution have positively impacted on higher education in Nigeria in terms of access to information, collaboration and contact among faculty members, better and faster scholarly communication among researchers as well as students throughout the world. The implication of these revelation is that professional librarians in this environment should try to embrace these new technologies through retraining, retooling and then adopt new strategies which would improve information services delivery that would meet international best practices.

Key words: Globalization, information education, library professionals

INTRODUCTION

A phenomenal change through close interaction and integration of cultures is rapidly impacting on the entire world. This change branded globalization is propelled by information and communication technology (ICT). Economic Commission for African (2000) remarked that globalization refers to changes occurring at global level, which in several ways have not been in the control of individual nation states and their governments. Globalization is the integration of national economies, culture, social life, technology, education and politics. It is the movement of peoples, ideas and technology from place to place (Emeagwali, 2004; Yau, 2005; Omekwu, 2006; Chang, 2008). Emeagwali traced the genesis of globalization in Africa to the period of slave trade which resulted to colonization and Christian Missionary activities in Africa.

Generally, two contrasting paradigms ignite the debate

on globalization – as a form of integration and as a form of imperialism. Western scholars such as Wallerstein, cited in Chang (2008) propagate the former while scholars from Africa and other developing countries such as Mojah (2004), Nderitu (2005) and Chang (2008) have the later perspective. They argue that globalization is a metaphor for imperialism since there are several inequalities in the globalization process to the detriment of the developing countries.

A pertinent issue however, is that globalization like several other changes cannot be wished away. This is because the new information revolution which Omekwu (2001) believes has come to replace the agrarian and industrial revolution is rapidly compressing the world into digital global village. The revolution has led to a social process which involves a compression of time and space, shrinking distances through a dramatic reduction in time taken – either physically or representation ally – to cross them, so making the world smaller and in a certain sense bringing human beings closer to one another (Yau, 2005).

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communication technology (ICT), has give impetus to a new information economy. Information and knowledge have become a very critical factor of production just like land and capital during agrarian and industrial revolution. This revolution is tremendously impacting in all aspect of human life particularly in critical areas like education. This has been recognized by Mojah (2004) who argues that the global restricting of the economy has had major impact on higher education. He however regrets that people who benefits from global economy tend to enjoy better developed system of higher education since educational resources emanating from the global information environment are more sophisticated in developed economies than in developing economies. The librarians being information resources managers are critically positioned in this new information revolution to enhance information availability and use in higher education in the country. The focus of this paper therefore, is to find out how globalization and the new information revolution has influenced higher education in Nigeria and the challenging roles of librarians in the new information environment.

Objectives

The objectives of this paper are to:

1. Find out how globalization has influenced Nigerian higher education.
2. Identify the impacts of information revolution in Nigerian higher education.
3. Determine the roles of library professionals in information provision in higher education.
4. identify strategies for effective library service delivery in the global environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Globalization is a phenomenon that is multi-dimensional and multifaceted. It has economic, political, socio-cultural and educational implications (Robertson, 1992; Guillen, 2000; Obilade, 2003; Yau, 2005). It is the transformation of domestic matter to a matter of international concern. Yau (2005) argues that globalization is all about greater interaction among countries and people. He however fears that this integration is dangerous in many ways because of disparities existing between developed and developing countries particularly as it concerns information and communication technologies, the engine that powers globalization. In line with this, Chang (2008) fears that globalization is a sugar-coated bitter pill which has reduced developing countries to mere appendage of Western super powers.

Undoubtedly, globalization has deep economic dimensions; conquest, dominations and trade. The underlying principles of globalization are integration, liberalization and privatization (Cogburn and Adeya, 1999) which have impacted on government policies particularly as it con-

cerns higher education. Therefore, Gilbert (2007) has reasoned that these developments mean an uncontrollable process of globalization in education system and can at the same time offer new perspectives to solving educational problems. Education is now more concerned with critical thinking and self directed learning opportunities which will serve the individual over a life time. As a result of this Cleveland (1999) and Floyed (2007) remarked that Nigeria needs world-class higher institutions, bearing in mind that internationally competitive educational system is the first step in building an economy that generates that dividend of globalization.

In the era of globalization, information revolution is a critical factor which is reshaping the education processes. Corgburn and Adeye (1999) have noted that the driving force behind the current information revolution is the new technologies that go with information and communications technology (ICT). These technologies continue to provide enabling environment for global education process in which geographical regions are benefiting one way or the other from the vast opportunities in the global education industry (Geleijnse, 1994). However, for this to be made possible Emeagwali (2004) and Yau (2005) posit that critical infrastructures must be in place. These infrastructures include computers and internet connectivity, sustainable power supply, human capacity development and the political will by the government. Peraton and Greed (2000) has identified a numbers of opportunities that the new information environment can provide for scholars and students. These include unlimited access to data bases scattered around the globe through the internet. According to Ite (2004), contact, collaboration and communication have provided veritable environment for linkage programmes between and among University. This has definitely added values to higher education globally.

Several challenges however, face Nigeria and other developing countries in the new information revolution. A nagging issue is the problem of digital divide existing between developed and developing countries. This is glaring when one considers African's web visibility. Studies have provided evidences that Africa has the lowest web presence globally (Emeagwali, 1997; Peraton and Creed, 2000; Mutala, 2002; Omekwu, 2003; Yau, 2005). Mutala's study reveals that Africa's global web contribution is about 1.08%.

Similarly, Peraton and Creed (2000) are worried that more than 80% of global website is from North America and Europe and more than 85% of scientific publications are also from the same area. The poor global web presence in African countries is a serious threat to the development of higher education in Nigeria since it will be difficult for Nigeria to globalize its local educational resources. Owing to this Akanni (2008) believes that a sure way to respond to the challenges of globalization and information revolution is the provision of virtual library services in higher institutions in Nigeria. According to him this can be achieved in two ways.

Table 1. Influence of globalization on Nigeria higher education.

Influence of globalization	SA	A	D	SD	(X)	Rank	Decision
Globalization provides educational opportunities for Nigerians.	11	18	14	9	2.59	4	+
Globalization improves teaching and learning resources in Nigeria.	13	23	9	7	3.00	2	+
Globalization has improved scholarly communication in Nigeria.	10	27	15	10	3.09	1	+
Collaboration among researchers has been improved by Globalization.	10	22	10	10	2.61	3	+
Globalization does not promote indigenous knowledge.	0	7	30	15	1.84	5	-

Criterion means = 2.50, N = 52

The first approach is group of libraries pulling their resources together to form a consortium aimed at providing information to library users through the use of resources of member libraries. The second approach is the establishment of e-learning centre that would provide users resources within and outside the country.

METHODOLOGY

The design of this study was descriptive research. The population of the study was 53 (all the 7 professional Librarians in the Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), the 8 lecturers in the Department of Library and Information Science, UNN and all the 38 professional Librarians in the Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, UNN. The researchers sampled all the Library and Information Science Professionals since their number is very small.

The instruments for data collection for the study were questionnaires and observations. These two instruments were deemed appropriate for this study because the questionnaire enables the researchers to establish good rapport with the respondents and observation gives the researchers the opportunity have a first hand information about the issues at hand. A 53 set of 28- item questionnaires with a four-point modified lickert scale of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD) was designed and administered on different occasions to the 53 Professional Librarians in the three institutions mentioned above to measure their level of responses to the options provide. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistical tables and charts.

Data was analyzed using descriptive data analysis of weighted means (X) . The item mean (X) and the criterion means (2.50) were computed and utilized to measure the level of agreement and or disagreement. The decision adopted was that if the criterion mean (2.50) is greater than the item means (X), or the bar is below 18.5 in the x-axis, the option is negatively rated; if otherwise, the option is rated positively.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings were presented following the manner in which research objectives were posed as follows: influence of globalization on Nigeria higher education; impact of information revolution; roles of library professionals in information provision and strategies for effective library service delivery. Table 1.

Respondents were asked to use (SA), (A) (D) and (SD) to measure their level of opinions on the influence of globalization on Nigerian higher education. This paper has discovered that in their order of influence, scholarly communication has improved greatly due to the incorpo-

incorporation of information technology (IT) in teaching, learning and research in higher education in Nigeria. This was rated highest by respondents with item mean (X) of 3.09 as against the criterion mean of 2.50.

With a mean (X) rating of 3.00, it was found that improvement in teaching and learning resources over the traditional system of leaning has been noticeable in Nigeria higher education as shown in Figure 1. The internet has granted scholars in Nigeria opportunities to harness education resources available beyond their frontiers at a speedy rate and at different location.

Globalization has opened up a wider horizon for co-researchers, not only in Nigeria, but also in other developing countries. Internationalization of resources has permitted researchers and scholars with different culture and locations to show-case what is obtainable in their environment. Scholars in Nigeria can as a result of globalization, today access simultaneously resources in other Universities without traveling to the physical locations.

Today learning opportunities have improved markedly in Nigeria since the advent of information technology and the globalization processes. The ubiquitous learning resources on the web have spurred scholars to take collaborative strides in the pursuit of knowledge. More importantly is its influence in distance learning, in which a learner can register as a student at their base and receive instructions online.

This paper also found that globalization has had great influence on the promotion of indigenous knowledge. This idea was rated negatively by respondents with mean score of 1.84 when they were asked to indicate whether globalization does not promote indigenous knowledge.

This paper found that there are many ways information revolution has impacted on higher education in Nigeria. As shown in Table 2 and Figure 2, all the items were rated positive. One of the ways the revolution has exerted much impact is in the area of access to information. Ranked highest in the table with item mean (X) of 2.94, access to information in higher education in Nigeria has shifted much from traditional library bibliographic search to the globalized information.

That electronic information storage and retrieval (e-storage and e-retrieval) has improved teaching and learning in higher education in Nigeria was ranked second with item mean (X) of 2.84. There is fundamental

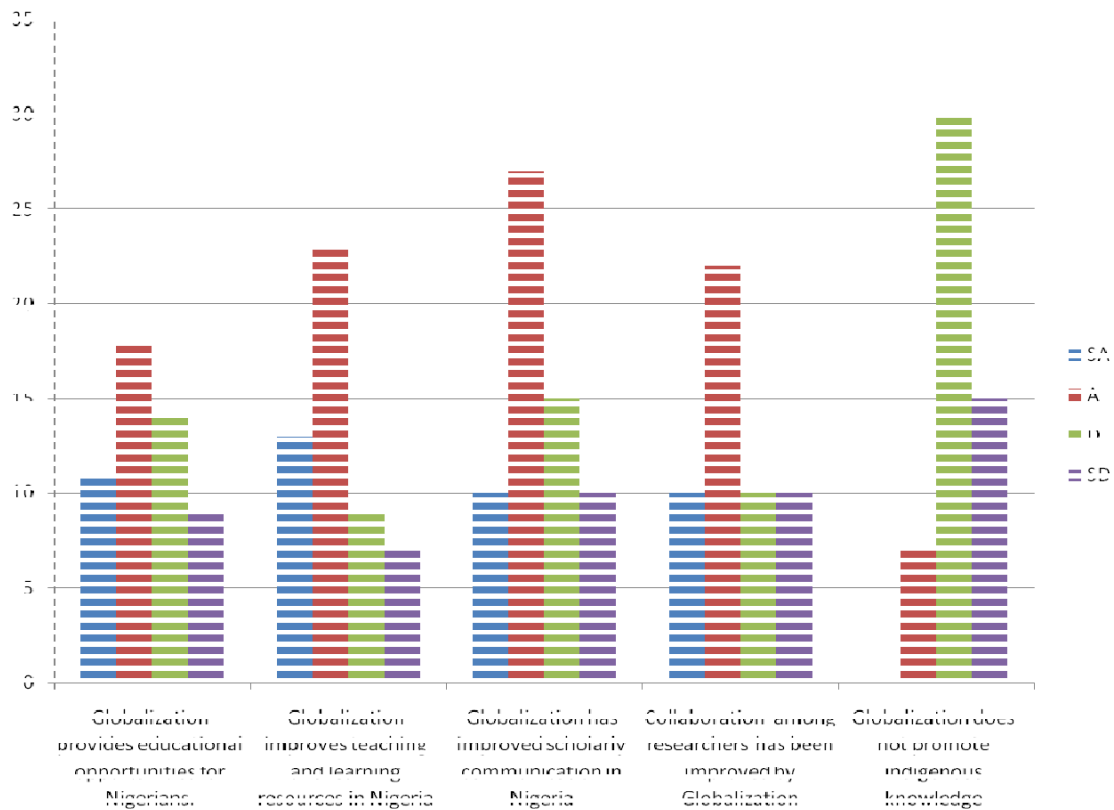


Figure 1. A bar chart showing the Influence of globalization on Higher Education in Nigeria.

Table 2. Impact of information revolution on Nigeria Higher Education.

Impacts of information revolution	SA	A	D	SD	(X)	Rank	Decision
Information revolution has encouraged shift from traditional method of teaching and learning.	7	27	10	8	2.63	6	+
Information revolution has created opportunity for computer assisted instruction CAL.	6	29	14	3	2.73	3	+
Access to Information has improved remarkably through Information revolution.	15	23	10	4	2.94	1	+
Internet is an important tool in accessing information prominent.	6	31	9	6	2.71	4	+
Web visibility of Nigeria scholars is becoming more prominent.	8	24	12	8	2.61	7	+
Communication and collaboration among Nigerian researchers are becoming more effective.	9	25	10	8	2.70	5	+
Electronic information storage and retrieval has improved teaching and learning.	14	24	8	6	2.84	2	+

Criterion means = 2.50, N = 52

paradigm shift in the way books are collected, classified and made available to users in libraries. This has created greater opportunities for computer assisted learning in higher education in developing countries. This was ranked third in the table, depicting that there is a greater movement from the tradition way of teaching and learning.

The study shows in Table 2 that internet is an important

tool for accessing information in higher institutions in Nigeria. This finding was corroborated by the work of Geleijnse (1994). He found that since the advent of internet service at the Tilburg University, Netherlands, students were regarding the library as workplace and database software and communication facilities were used extensively by staff and students.

Today, there is more communication through the use of

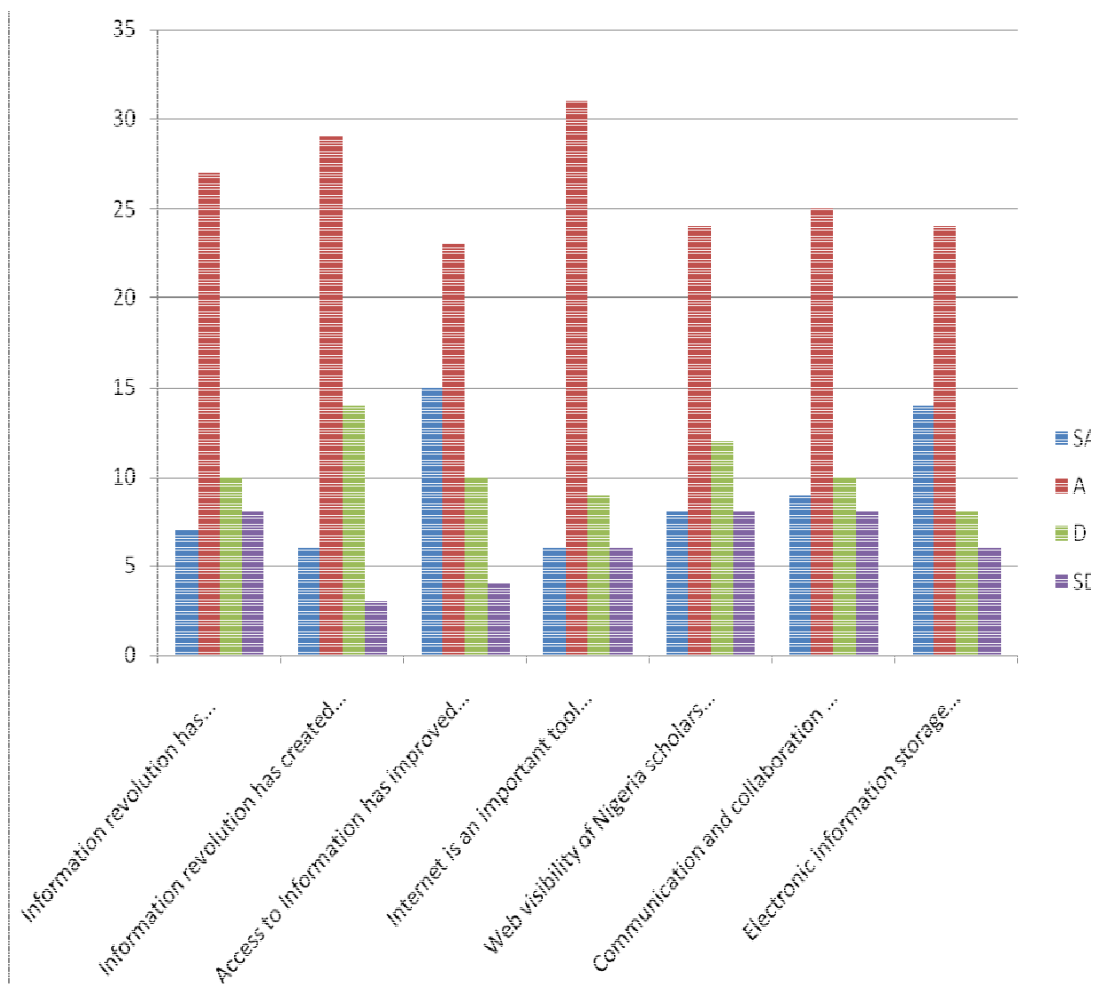


Figure 2. A bar chart showing the impacts of information revolution on higher education in Nigeria.

telecommunication technologies and the internet for research collaborations. This study has revealed that information revolution has encouraged shift from traditional method of using chalk-board and other local instructional aids to facility teaching and learning and since then web viability of Nigerian scholar is becoming more prominent. This is an improvement from studies of Corgburn and Adeya (1999), Mutala (2002) and Yau (2005).

Table 3 and Figure 3 is the result of the finding on the roles of Library Professionals in information provision for higher education in Nigeria. They show that all the items were rated positive. This means that librarians should as a matter of necessity, acquire knowledge in basic ICT for effective information provision for higher education in the country. Information delivery should be based on the ability to generate or acquire process, analyze and disseminate information and make it available to users.

This result approves that the roles of library professionals are to be that of creating more awareness about available information not only in the library but also on the internet. This role is ranked 3rd with item mean score (x) of 2.96. On the internet, documents can be simultaneous-

ly accessed online by numerous readers in a networked library in Nigeria 24 h. Figure 3 summaries these findings.

Ranked 4th in the table with item mean of 2.78 was that librarians should emphasize access to information resources rather than acquisition. This was scored high because the ability of librarians to determine the needs of the users in higher education is much more important than the high volume of collections that are difficult to access. That is, the rational for ranking that librarian should provide access tools or database for information retrieval and accessibility 5th with item mean (x) of 2.73. The sixth in the ranking is that academic Librarians should be involved in consultancy services with faculty members and students.

Table 4 and Figure 4 present the result of strategies for effective library services for higher education in Nigeria. The result shows that every item was rated positive with item mean above the criterion mean. In their highest ordering, the strategies for effective library services delivery include that librarians should be involved in electronic networking, user analysis should play key role in library

Table 3. Roles of library professionals in information provision.

Role of library professionals	SA	A	D	SD	X	Rank	Decision
Librarian should create awareness about available information.	17	23	5	7	2.96	3	+
Librarians should provide databases for information retrieval and accessibility.	12	29	6	5	2.73	5	+
Librarians should be involved in consultancy services with faculty members and students.	9	27	5	11	2.65	6	+
Librarians should acquire basic knowledge of ICT for effective information provision.	20	18	10	4	3.07	1	+
Information delivery should be based on the ability to analyze information.	21	17	8	6	3.01	2	+
Librarians should emphasize access to information rather than acquisition.	19	11	13	10	2.78	4	+

N = 52

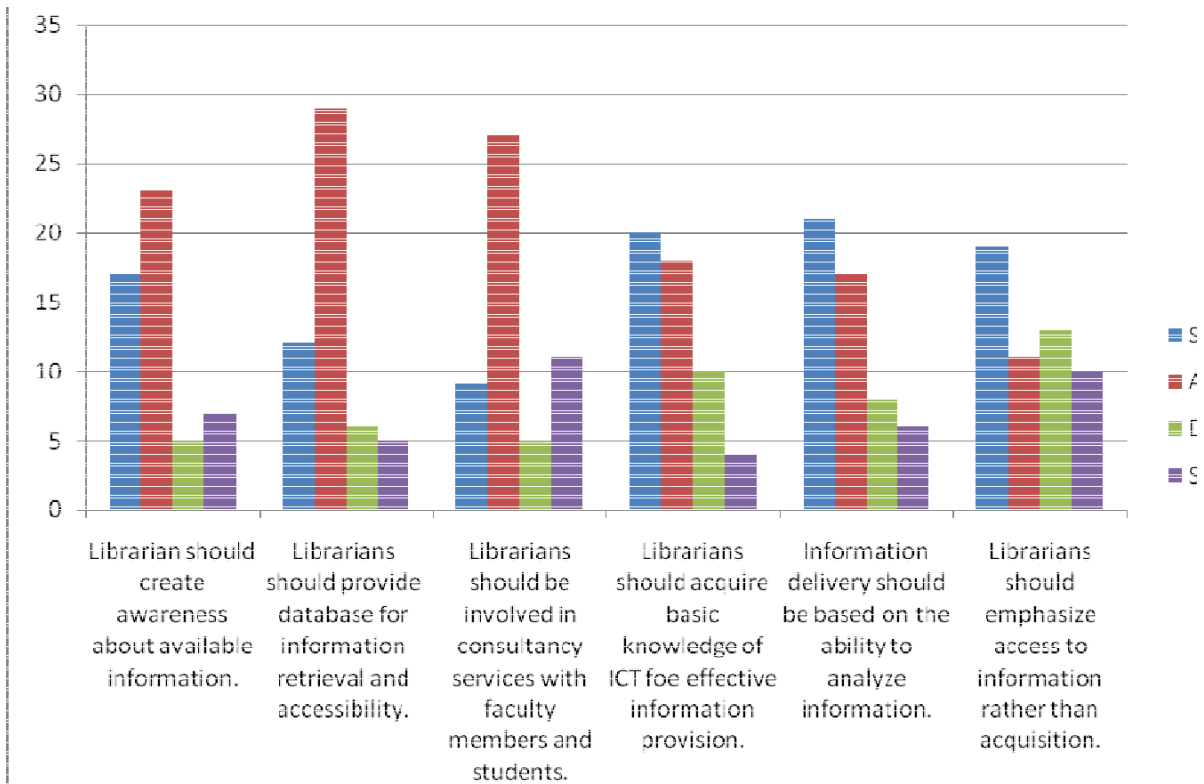


Figure 3. A bar chart showing the role of Librarians in information provision.

Table 4. Strategies for effective services delivery.

Strategies for service delivery	SA	A	D	SD	- (X)	Rank	Decision
Librarians should be involved in electronic information networking.	11	26	10	5	2.82	1	+
User analysis should play key role in services delivery.	11	24	13	4	2.80	2	+
Selective dissemination of information should be adopted in service delivery.	6	24	14	8	2.53	4	+
E mail services should be used for effective services delivery.	13	20	11	7	2.71	3	+
Librarians should assist users in internet search.	11	19	13	9	2.50	5	+

N=52

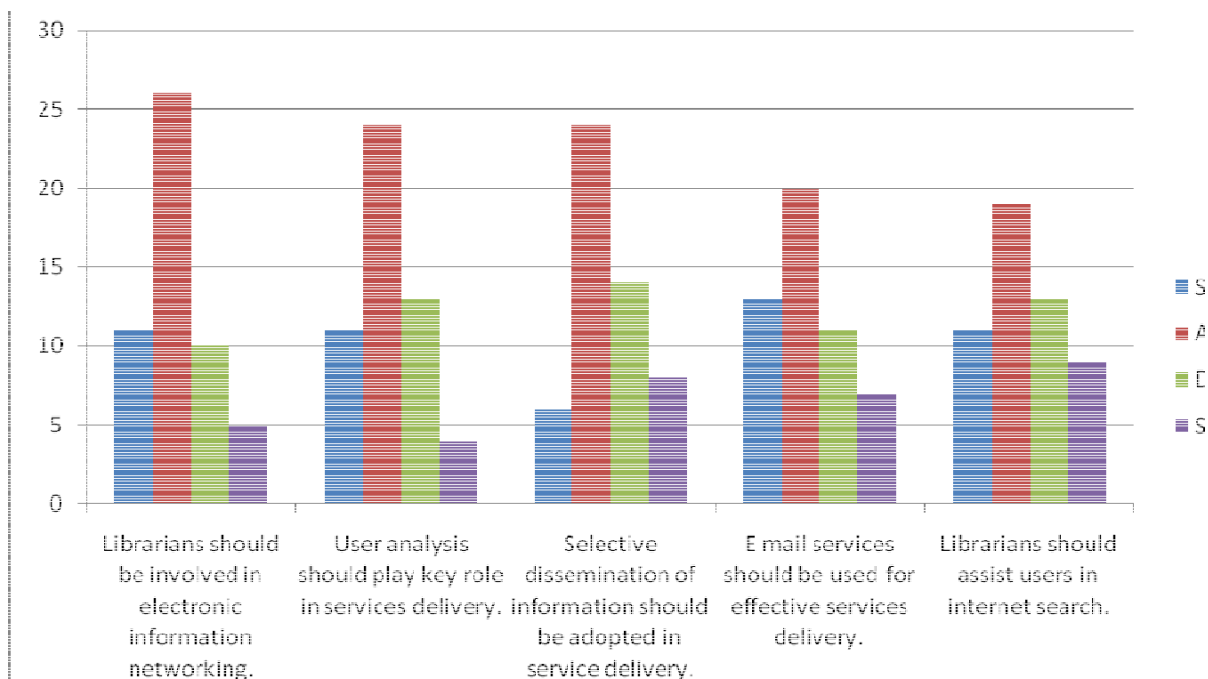


Figure 4. A bar chart showing strategies for service delivery.

services. E-mail services should be used for effective service delivery. Selective dissemination of information should be adopted in services and librarians should assist users in internet search.

Conclusion

There is a paradigm shift in learning process in higher institutions in this millennium. The paradigm shift is that the society and libraries are no longer situated in the physical environment, but on virtual, online, electronic or cyberspace.

Globalization and information revolution is increasingly changing the learning process in higher education. Globalization has caused librarians and higher institutions in Nigeria and developing countries to face new type of learning involving the use of ICT infrastructures to improve educational resources.

Library Professionals in this environment therefore, have greater roles to play because they are the interface between information and the users in the new revolution. This has changed the needs and uses which readers in higher institutions in Nigeria make of library resources and therefore, affects librarian priorities for service delivery. It affects also the tools and system with which library professionals operate and therefore, impacts on the structures by which library services are delivered. It changes the context and format of the resources which librarians have at their disposal and therefore challenges the approach of library professionals in response to the contemporary situation.

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