

ASURVEY OF CATALOGUING PRACTICES AND JOB SATISFACTION IN NIGERIAN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

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Abstract

The paper presents a survey of cataloguers in Nigerian academic libraries. With the use of a questionnaire, it attempts to identify the cataloguers' demography and work practices. It then attempts to explain the result as inferred satisfaction. Tables of frequency and percentages were used for data presentation. Findings reveal that the respondents possess higher education, but despite accumulated years of work experience, they have fewer publications. They generally adopt work redistribution among other cataloguers. Sixty-one percent (61%) spend an average of three to six hours daily on cataloguing, classification and indexing. In general, the cataloguers expressed high job satisfaction.

KEYWORDS: CAREER ADVANCEMENT, ACADEMIC LIBRARIES,
PRODUCTIVITY, MOTIVATION, JOB SATISFACTION.

Introduction

A career in librarianship passes through three phases: formative, transitional, and definitive (Drake, 1993). The formative stage is crucial in the determination of a career path that is, type of Library and area of specialisation. Once "locked in," stressed Drake, it could be difficult to change direction. Thus, in this phase, solidification of personal ambition and leadership skills set in.

The transitional phase is characterized by a noticeable decline in career altruism, when librarians become cynical and even consider career changes. A period described by Drake (1993) as a retreat into indifference, mediocrity, or despair.

Librarians in the definitive phase tend to experience anxiety while planning for retirement; however they tend to be more relatively free of career pressures that plague those of early to middle phases. Drake's remark on career progression is that the rewards of librarianship as a career lie not in the pay or prestige but often - in the tangible sense of satisfaction gained from helping others. He emphasised that while the help or services offered may not be appreciated, or even recognised the altruism factor prompts us to continue.

On job satisfaction, Ezeolor and Adeniji (2004) reported that Regina Onourah, a qualified nurse in the fifties, lost the joy of the nursing profession barely a year after graduation and retrained as a librarian. Onourah believed that "a worker should give consideration to job satisfaction than to the attention and money that goes with a profession." Even though she expressed high regards for the medical profession because it saves lives, yet she said she got bored and uninterested with the nursing profession. "It dawned on me that though I had every thing it takes to be a successful Nurse, I was more of a square peg in a round hole. Since I was not really getting job satisfaction." She had no regrets quitting that "noble profession" for another profession many would regard "with less respect". They further remarked that Onourah's decision in its entirety turned out to be full of wisdom as her time and life revealed. For ten (10) years, she managed the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research Library in Ibadan, Nigeria. For eleven years, she worked with USIS (Whitney Young Junior Information Resources Centre) and on retirement established a private library service dedicated to promoting reading habits and reading culture in the youth.

The literature reviewed revealed a scanty assessment of the degree of cataloguers' job satisfaction. In view of this and the significant role job satisfaction plays in the life of professionals and even individuals who are self-employed, this study attempted to examine the satisfaction of working cataloguers. Furthermore, cataloguers by virtue of their position and role in university libraries complement the University's objective by organizing and creating access to all forms of information and knowledge materials acquired by the parent organization.

Rotimi (2004) was of the opinion that it is not a rare occurrence to find people in the wrong job or profession because they love the social attributes, or are on the job because they have failed to get anything better. While many others begin their work history with the first job they get and just stay in it forever, the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health listed librarianship in a group of ten (10) least stressful jobs in U.S., while a study by Life Insurance Company revealed that librarians, curators and community leaders enjoyed the longest of life (Smith & Nelson, 1983). They observed that librarians in general seem to be well satisfied with their profession. Leung's research, according to Fisher (1990) however reported that technical service librarians indicated that they lived hectic lives. Available literature has not assessed the degree of on the job satisfaction for library cataloguers. Smith and Nelson's (1983) study, however reported some correlation between degree of stress experienced by full time academic and reference librarians and certain selected factors. Nevertheless, is this an indication of job dissatisfaction? Thus, this study is an attempt to find out the level of on the job satisfaction of cataloguers in Nigerian academic libraries. It also explored the nature of their daily duties, for cataloguers spend many hours seated to do their work.

Methodology

A four-page questionnaire was used which identified possible areas of cataloguer satisfaction and the implication to the library and the cataloguers. Closed and open ended questions were both used. The first portion concerned background information and included questions about gender, marital status, educational qualification, and years of working experience. The second part identified work pressure, schedules, duty routines, and related factors as well as work habits. Thirty copies of the questionnaire were sent to the thirty federal universities in Nigeria to be filled by Heads of the Cataloguing Department. Of the 30 copies of questionnaire distributed, 21 (70%) were filled and returned. Out of the 21 returned copies of the questionnaire, 18 (60%) were found useable. These were analysed and discussed for degree of satisfaction expressed in areas of their work activities.

Discussion

Cataloguer Demography

From the responses, it was realised that more females (55.7%) head the Cataloguing Unit compared to their male counterparts who constitute 44.3%. This is in line with what was found in the literature in most of the developed world. Literature revealed that

females dominated librarianship in the Western World while in developing countries and indeed in Nigeria, librarianship is male dominated. This study appears to corroborate the gender population of librarians as revealed in the Western literature. This is, however, contrary to Bello's (1992) survey on trainee librarians in Nigerian school libraries. This study's results perhaps suggest that female librarians possess a keen zeal for the art of knowledge analysis and indexing, a role Harris (1993) described as a "house keeping service job", that women usually do in libraries. All the same, it is an indication that females equally possess the aptitude to organise information in a manner that makes it manageable and retrievable. They have the capability to assist to search, identify and articulate the information needs of the clients as well as increase the probability of locating materials relevant to their needs.

Table 1: Academic Qualifications

Qualifications	Frequency	Percentage
BA/BLS/BSC/ALA/HND	4	22.22
MA/MLS	11	61.11
PhD.	2	11.11
Others	1	5.56
Total	18	100

Source: Field survey, 2002

In Nigeria's university libraries, a master's degree and above are emphasised and required for professional practice. The result revealed that 13(72.22%) of the cataloguers possess the desired professional qualifications of Masters and PhD degrees. The proportion with the requisite qualification is of great advantage to the profession. Such highly skilled cataloguers would not only be fit for the job but would also likely perform with a high level of intelligence. It implies that qualified professionals head the units.

Table 2: Age Distribution

Age	Frequency	Percentage
25-30	2	11.12
31-35	1	5.56
36-40	3	16.66
41 & Above	9	50.00
No response	3	16.66
Total	18	100

Source: Field survey, 2002

Table 2 above gave the age distribution of the respondents as twelve (12) of the eighteen (18) head cataloguers representing 67 % are 36 years of age and above. Perhaps this age group demography might support quality performance on the job. In a demographic study this may be said to be early adulthood in life.

Table 3: Status

Ranks	Frequency	Percentage
Deputy Librarian	2	11.11
Principal Librarian	4	22.22
Senior Librarian	4	22.22
Librarian I	2	11.11
Librarian II	1	5.56
Assistant Librarian	2	11.11
No response	3	16.67
Total	18	100
<i>Source: Field survey, 2002</i>		

The hierarchical nomenclature of the respondents is as shown in Table 3 above. Five of the respondents occupy a low status yet appear to head the Cataloguing Unit. (Asst. Librarian / Librarian I). The on-job performance of these groups can rarely be assessed because they are inexperienced. It is only assumed that perhaps satisfactory experience to manage such a unit has been gained. On the other hand, perhaps they are holding fort for the head cataloguer. The general overall response is satisfactory as 12 of the 18 respondents are of Principal Librarian status and above. To attain such a level in a typical Nigerian University Library set up, a cataloguer would have put in at least 6 years post masters degree. This may either be in the same Library or in different libraries as in change of job.

Table 4: Working Experience

Work experience (Yrs)	1 – 5	6 –10	11 – 15	16 –20	21 & above
Total experience	1(5.56)	1(5.56)	5(27.78)	3(16.68)	6(33.33)
Experience in Library	1(5.56)	2 (11.11)	4(22.22)	3(16.68)	5(27.78)
Experience as Cataloguer	2(11.11)	7(38.89)	2(11.11)	2(11.11)	3(16.68)

Source: Field survey, 2002

Table 4 shows the work experience of the respondents. From the analysis of the respondents 14 of the head cataloguers have at least six (6) years work experience in the library. Similarly, 14 of the respondents have been working as cataloguers for six (6) years and above. Seven (7) of them had over ten (10) years work experience as cataloguers while three (3) have put in over 21 years of working experience in the Library. However two (2) of the respondents did not respond to this aspect of the questionnaire.

Table 5: Daily Quantity of Materials Catalogued.

Range of Qty of Materials	Frequency	Percentage
5 – 10	7	38.89
11 – 15	6	33.33
16 – 20	4	22.22
No response	1	5.56
Total	18	100

Source: Field survey, 2002

A cataloguer's productivity can satisfactorily be appraised in several ways. This is because by the nature of their work, it can be quantified. Thus, daily, weekly, monthly, and even yearly quantity of items processed (that is catalogued, classified, edited and indexed) can be quantified. Literature searches revealed 13 items as the average daily quantity of items to be catalogued and classified per day as satisfactory level of performance. This is in addition to other routines. Although this standard is pre- information technology application to library operations, analysis above showed that six (33%) of the respondents performed at optimal level while seven (39%) are below the benchmark. On the other hand another four (22%) reported daily output far above literature values. When this data is related to Table 4 (work experience) that in turn showed that seven (39%) of the cataloguers have ten years and above work experience as cataloguers, it may be inferred that the accumulated years of experience makes it easier or enable easy accomplishing the task of cataloguing. The respondents' rate of ten (56%), which attained the required quantity, may be an indication of derived satisfaction doing the job. In addition to being head of unit, cataloguing is a lofty duty, for which if one fiddles with material processing, the effect would manifest immediately (the result being backlog of materials).

Table 6 gives an indication of the number of hours devoted to cataloguing and classification each day by the respondents.

Table 6: Hours devoted to cataloguing and classification

Hours	Frequency	Percentage
1 – 2	1	5.56
3 – 4	5	27.80
5 – 6	6	33.36
7 – 8	3	16.68
No response	3	16.68
Total	18	100

Source: Field survey, 2002

Cataloguing is an academic mental activity that requires patience and thoroughness to the required subject description and classification. To meet set standards at least 40 – 50% of daily working hours need to be devoted to doing it. Going by the daily productivity reported above, it is not inappropriate to find a cataloguer processing an average of 15 items per day. Perhaps these are the experienced group. The other respondents (3) that spend over 6 hours are the young cataloguers as seen in the status table.

Table 7: Hours of the day devoted to cataloguing

Hours	Frequency	Percentage
8 – 11am	14	77.78
11a.m – 1p.m	2	11.12
1 – 3p.m.	1	5.56
3 – 5p.m.	1	5.56
Total	18	100

Source: Field survey, 2002

Cataloguing and classification being a task that requires concentration, it is assumed it would be a priority routine duty performed in early hours of the day. This is because during these hours in the tropic climate areas, the temperature is relatively low and work can better be performed comfortably. In Nigeria, power is unreliable to provide regulated temperature. Respondents reported that they carry out the art of cataloguing and classification between the hours of 8 and 11am in the morning, as eighty-nine (89%) of the respondents indicated. Though the weather conditions may be controlled but power supply in the country is infrequent and unreliable.

Table 8: Methods adopted during Cataloguing and Classification

Methods	Frequency	Percentage
Share out schedules	8	44.44
Schedules into subject groups	2	11.11
Only vet and correct	3	16.67
Single handed	2	9.09
All of the above	3	16.67
Total	18	100

Source: Field survey, 2002

The method adopted in the management of the unit is a reflection of attitude to work. The attitude adopted for management would be reflected in the staff carrying out the duties as reported by Stoakley (1982). Gellerman (1976) also emphasised that a work is more collaborative under supervisors or employee-centred style of supervision than under style that implies distrust and low regards. Eight (8) of the respondents indicated that they allocate work to other cataloguers; two (2) of the respondents adopted a subject groupings arrangement, while three (3) of the respondents on the other hand virtually practised all the different approaches. The result showed some level of participative management. The individual involvement, association, and fulfilment needed in an organisation is thus met. This, according to Stoakley (1982) translates into job satisfaction at a high level. He thus remarked one could then expect quality service at its best under such an environment.

Table 9: Level of Professional Satisfaction

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Very satisfactory	7	38.88
Satisfactory	11	61.12
Total	18	100

Source: Field survey, 2002

All the respondents expressed satisfaction with the professional practice. This analysis appears satisfactory and reliable. From Table 2 (age distribution) for instance 12(67%) of the respondents are over 36 years of age while status in Table 3, similarly showed that 12 (67%) are Librarian I and above. Furthermore, at least 12 of the respondents have worked as cataloguers for not less than 11years. The level of assessment of their career progression satisfaction could thus be relied on.

Table 10: Most exciting function

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Challenging	4	22.22
Busy schedules	3	16.67
Increasing in knowledge	4	22.22
All of the above	7	38.89
Total	18	100

Source: Field survey, 2002

Nature and environment are part of job enrichment, and these may interest one to keep on the job. Here seven (7) of the respondents found all the duties performed in the unit exciting. Therefore respondents are most likely to perform well eventually. Four (4 or 22%) of the respondents found cataloguing challenging and as a job that increases knowledge.

Table 11: Which other section other than cataloguing would you prefer?

Sections	Frequency	Percentage
Acquisition	5	27.78
Circulation	2	11.11
Reference	3	16.67
Serials	2	11.11
None	6	33.33
Total	18	100

Source: Field survey, 2002

Libraries reshuffle and redeploy staff as the need arises. Conversely, cataloguers in most cases especially the head cataloguers are rarely moved, perhaps due to their wealth of experience and for policy consistencies. The study thus sought to know given the opportunity, what other sections of the Library they would prefer to work other than the Cataloguing section. Six (6 or 33%) of the respondents indicated they would prefer no other section. Five (5 or 28%) preferred Acquisitions with three (3) other respondents indicating that they preferred Reference. Amazingly, the Serial section that contains research materials was least as choice of place to work. Considering the quality and quantity of publications, one would have thought they would have opted for the Serials section to fully access the research collection.

Table 12: Other sections once worked

Sections	Frequency	Percentage
Acquisition	2	11.11
Serials	3	16.67
Reference	4	22.22
Reader/circulation	6	33.33
None	3	16.67
Total	18	100

Source: Field survey, 2002

Table 12 above revealed that only two (2 or 11%) of the respondents once worked in the Acquisitions section. This probably explains why a significant percentage wanted to experience working in that section as shown in Table 11. In contrast three (3 or 17%) and four (4 or 22%) respondents had ever worked in the Serial and Reference sections respectively. On the other hand, six (6 or 33%) had worked in the Circulation section, collaborating the low percentage that expressed a desire for that section. The Circulation desk and eventually Reader Services is a busy section. It is the image of the Library and enables one to appreciate the problems of patrons such as the use of the different types of catalogue systems for locating, retrieval, and reference purposes. Nonetheless three (3 or 17%) of the respondents indicated they had never experienced work in any other section of the Library other than the Cataloguing section. It is desirable to study differences with these groups, as some useful findings may emerge.

Table 13: Library staff strength

Staff strength	Frequency	Percentage
11 – 20	6	33.33
21 – 30	8	44.44
31 and above	2	11.11
No response	2	11.11
Total	18	100

Source: Field survey, 2002

Ten (10) of the responding libraries indicated they have a staff strength of 21 and above. While six (6) have a staff strength of between 11 to 20. From this data, the size of the libraries may be said to be small to medium. Two (2) of the respondents did not however respond to the question.

Cataloguing staff strength

The table below shows the proportion of cataloguing staff to the entire Library staff.

Table: 14: Cataloguing Staff Strength

Cataloguing staff strength	frequency	percentage
1 – 3	1	5.56
4 – 6	4	22.22
7 - 9	4	22.22
10 and above	7	38.89
No response	2	11.11
Total	18	100

Source: Field survey, 2002

Eleven (11) of the universities indicated cataloguing staff strength range between six (6) and ten (10). It thus appears the sections in most Nigerian University Libraries are moderately staffed. However, it should be noted that response includes both professional cataloguers as well as Library assistants. If this assumption is correct, then productivity of the section should be expeditious. However, seven (7 or 39%) of the responding libraries indicated having ten (10) or more staff. The span of control appears a little high, as the number reporting to the head is enough to permit adequate supervision.

Communication is essential to effective management of an organisation particularly where staff strength is six (6) and above. Gellerman (1976) stressed that many organisational failures have been attributed to poor communication and that it seems almost trite to stress its importance. The problem he said is persistent and given its complexity, is likely to continue indefinitely, because effective communication demands endless sensitivity. One of the most effective means of communication is through regular meetings, where problems affecting the unit are discussed and solution(s) found to them as well as keeping every member of the unit up to date on the work in the section. It enables periodic briefing to all staff on how the Head Cataloguer regards major problems and what plans to do about them. It could equally prevent needless fear and misinterpretations.

Table 15: Frequency of Departmental Meetings

Period	Frequency	Percentage
Monthly	5	27.78
Quarterly	5	27.78
Irregularly	8	44.44
Total	18	100

Source: Field survey, 2002

From the responses in Table 15, five (5) of the university libraries hold monthly or quarterly meetings, while eight (8) representing 44 percent reported irregular meetings or as the need arises

Table 16: Working Relationship in the Section

Relationship	Frequency	Percentage
Cordial	8	44.44
Team/family like	8	44.44
No response	2	11.11
Total	18	100

Source: Field survey, 2002

A friendly relationship in an organization may tend to build confidence in the staff and create a feeling of belonging as well as accomplishment of work and indeed satisfaction. Table 16 gives the views of respondents in respect of their relationship with their colleagues in the Unit.

Eight (8) respondents representing 44% of the respondents reported that their relationship with colleagues is cordial or team/family like. This allows for excellent rapport with colleagues. This is essential in cataloguing to have desired productivity as well as for smooth administration of the unit. An organizational set up marred with resentment and an unfriendly atmosphere is most likely to create a strained relationship. The effect of such a feeling can better be imagined. It usually spills beyond the unit concerned and it perhaps may affect the entire Library. Two libraries (22%) on the other hand did not respond to the question.

Editing is essential in cataloguing. The time spent on editing is depicted by Table 17. Library material editing comes in various forms: records and bibliographic verification for accuracy; stencil editing; and even abstract and indexes editing. To the question on time spent on editing 13 (68%) indicated they do so as the need arises while four (4 or 21%) spend few hours daily editing. It may be implied that only 21% of the respondents have good records. When editing is irregular, many errors could get into their records out of oversight.

Table: 17: Material Editing

Material editing	Frequency	Percentage
As the need arises	13	68.42
Few hours daily	4	21.05
No response	1	10.53
Total	18	1000

Source: Field Survey, 2002

For growth and career development, all academic librarians are required to publish in learned journals. These could be articles on problem solving, on job experience relating to the profession etc. However, the method of assessment and number of publications vary with the individual universities. Whereas the conditions in the older universities are more stringent, the conditions in the younger universities are less rigorous. However ranking for librarians in the individual universities is at par with their teaching colleagues. Table 19 showed that publications per cataloguer are low especially in relation to status and years of experience. Only three (3) of the respondents had at least nine (9) published articles. Two had none at all, while 14 of the respondents had between one and eight published articles. It would be fascinating to know what is obtained in the developed world as basis for comparison. Perhaps the work schedules of cataloguers are attributable for their low publications. For in academic libraries, cataloguers are seldom idle year round. When there are few materials to catalogue; index or classify, there is always editing of stencils, cards, reports or another thing to do. This is in addition to administrative functions and attendance at meetings.

Table 18: Quantity of Publications

No of publications	Frequency	Percentage
1 – 2	3	15.79
3 – 4	3	15.79
5 – 6	4	21.05
7 – 8	3	15.79
9 and above	3	15.79
Nil	2	10.53
No response	1	5.26
Total	19	100:00

Source: Field Survey, 2002

Conclusion

The study is an attempt to explore cataloguer practices and job satisfaction. The demography revealed that more females direct the Cataloguing Department compared to their male counterparts. Fifty per cent (50%) of the respondents are over 40 years of age while 56% are senior librarians and above. The quantity of materials processed daily is appreciable. The respondents expressed satisfaction with their careers as cataloguers. Majority of them expressed no desire to work in other sections of the Library apart from the Cataloguing Department. However, the quantity of publications of the cataloguers is low compared to the years of experience. A comparison with their colleagues in other departments as well as colleagues in the developed world is worthwhile for investigation to compare standards.

Recommendations

From the study, there is the need to employ lower cadre staff. This would facilitate good succession plan for libraries, as well as promote and enhance the cataloguing process. In addition trainee cataloguers would become more familiar with the nature of the work.

Cataloguing as revealed by this study is best accomplished during morning hours. Thus it would be helpful to encourage cataloguers to make the best use of this period. Regular meetings of all staff promote a healthy working relationship which libraries irrespective of type may find useful.

However respondents' contributions/publications to the profession were reportedly low. This may affect the rate of promotion, consequently on job performance. Heads of libraries need to examine this problem if it is peculiar to cataloguers and attempt to address it.

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