

Full Length Research

# Assessment of the Publication Output of Librarians in Academic Libraries

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## Abstract

The study assesses the publication output of librarians. As a result of the status accorded librarians a “publish or perish” syndrome a hallmark of career progression in the academia hangs on them in the face of multifarious duties of teaching, research and provision of information. The study discusses librarians publication output, the foreign or local category by which librarians publish, and the challenges encountered in their publication effort. Considering the demand on librarians to research and publish alongside the enormous duty of provision of information in the era of information explosion, librarians are faced with dual responsibility of publishing alongside their daily administrative duties. This study therefore assesses the publication output of librarians in academic libraries in Delta state. A total of 71 librarians drawn from 7 academic libraries in Delta state constituted the population of this study, however out of the 71 copies of the questionnaire distributed 55 were returned. The number of respondent was 55(64.7%). The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire, with section A and B, section A for personal data and section B for the research questions. The data obtained from questionnaire were analyzed using frequency count and simple percentage. The findings of the study revealed that librarians in spite of their demanding job activities have published a great deal; librarians have over 97.9% of their works published in local publications. Some challenges that affect the quantity of publication output by librarians were highlighted and recommendations were made.

**Keywords:** Assessment, Publications output, Librarians, Libraries and University

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## INTRODUCTION

The development of libraries and the librarianship profession in Nigeria cannot be separated from the tremendous growth of universities in the country. The historical account of librarianship profession dates back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when universities were just being established. Academic libraries and librarians are vital part of the academic institutions, librarian employed in university, polytechnic and college libraries are regarded as academic librarians. Academic librarians are professionals who hold a first degree in Library and Information Science or a first degree in any subject field plus a Master's Degree in Library and Information Science from a recognized University. Administrative responsibility, professional degree, titles nor skills qualify members of the academic community for academic status, but their teaching and research role. Therefore, the function of the librarian as participant in the teaching and research role is one of the essential criteria for academic status.

In the past librarians were not always categorized as academic staff; they were recognized more as administrative staff. Librarians were either academic or administrative staff based on the structure of the individual institution (Edem, 2004). In colleges, polytechnic and universities where librarians were classified with administrative department research

and publications were deemphasized, as they needed only three requirements for promotion: 3 years since the last promotion, availability of vacancies; and satisfactory performance. Edem (2004) further stated that in that era, librarians working in academic libraries were not required to publish the same number of articles as their teaching counterparts, because as at that time emphasis was not placed on publication before promotion. Notwithstanding, librarians' career advancement in such academic institutions was faster, librarian did not have the rights, privileges, rank, title and benefits equivalent to their teaching counterparts, hence many librarians preferred to have academic status in order to benefit like their teaching counterparts. The status though it has many benefits, however comes with challenges, such as publishing to earn promotion.

As a follow up the above development, Adomi and Mordi, (2003) states that publishing is recognized all over the globe as an integral part of academics. In academic publishing, a paper is an academic work that is usually published in an academic journal, it contains original research results or reviews. Such a paper also called an article will only be considered valid if it undergoes a process of peer review by one or more referees (who are academics in the same field) in order to check that the content of the paper is suitable for publication in a journal. Publishing is a vital element because it determines whether or not a candidate can move up in the academic hierarchy. This makes it imperative that all librarians be involved with the functions that are traditionally associated with the profession which is the provision of information alongside publishing. The all-embracing and encompassing role of librarians in handling information explosion, information technology coupled with the varied roles of teaching, research and provision of information to staff and student has over the years saddled the academic librarians with a lot of responsibilities because they are expected to play key roles in utilizing these 21<sup>st</sup> century opportunities. There is no doubt that the demands for information provision in the era of information explosion and the use information communication technology for processing and making information readily available is enormous and challenging for librarians in academic libraries. Being confronted with increased administrative, technological and academic activities along with rendering effective information services, librarians in academic libraries face numerous challenges, which has direct or indirect bearing on their publication output. It is a combination of all these expectations and challenges that tends to impact negatively on the output of the academic librarians.

## **Purpose of the Study**

Specifically the study sets out to:

1. Determine the publication output of librarians in academic libraries.
2. Determine the category of publication (foreign or local) in which librarians publish more.
3. Identify the challenges encountered by librarians in their publication effort

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the publication output of librarians in academic libraries?
2. In which category of publication (foreign or local) do librarians in academic libraries publish more?
3. What are the challenges to publication output of librarians in academic libraries?

## **Review of Related Literature**

The literature related to the subject of this study is reviewed under the following sub-headings;

### **Publication Output of Librarians**

According to Oni (2009), Publication of librarians in universities is conceptualized as a way in which research results, speculation, criticism, intellectual enquiry and creative effort of individual are fulfilled. It is accepted generally that career advancement and promotion decision of academic staff including librarians are influenced stupendously by the quality and quantity of articles published (Nkerekwen, 2005). Agboola and Oduwole (2005) opined that it is imperative getting librarians in Nigerian Universities to publish so as to justify their status. It is an undisputed fact that a publication is recognized globally as an integral part of academic profession and has become an essential requirement for career advancement and promotion. As a result of the mandate and the academic status accorded librarians, they have been

doing all within their ability to see that they meet up with the publication requirements confronting them. In Nigeria academic institutions, the value of academics is weighed by their academic publication and contribution to scholarship.

Gregory and Medford (2006) maintains that academic librarians would also benefit a great deal from publishing because it allows them to maintain their academic status, obtain promotion and gives them the opportunity to add to the body of knowledge that goes into creating our literature. As with most professional degrees, librarians have the duty of contributing to their profession through research writing, publication, attendance and participation at professional conferences. Publishing is a major criterion for librarians to defend the academic status accorded them, maintain equal rights as their teaching counterparts, advance in their career, identifies one's contribution to knowledge, enrich the teaching learning process, serves as a determinant to institutional prestige and contributes to the wealth and economic growth of a nation (CALA, 2008). Mabawonku (2005) carried out a bibliometric study on the trends in library and information science research in Africa from 1999 - 2002; reported that 59 (49.2%) out of 120 of the research work were by Nigerian authors. The study revealed that Nigeria authors still constitute the highest percent of single producer of library and information science works. The study concluded that despite the challenges of research and publication, librarians are doing their best to publish in order to advance in their career.

### **Foreign / Local Category of Librarians Publications Output**

As a result of the "publish or perish" syndrome hanging on the necks of librarians, there has been great emphasis on the quality of publication output not only the quantity. According to Adomi and Mordi (2003) publication output which is the number of publications alone is no longer sufficient as evidence of publication output, but the quality of publication is of great significance. The author stated that the quality of publication is interpreted as publishing in internationally recognized, peer review journals. Mabawonku (2005) stated that the librarians are motivated to publish in foreign journals, to enhance their visibility and satisfy the needs of the employer. In Nigeria, some universities have made it lucid for all academic staff, that for your publication to be considered for appraisal exercise, it must be published in foreign journals. According to Adomi and Mordi (2003), the University of Benin overtly insisted on foreign publications to get to a senior academic rank. These authors are of the view that librarians who publish with local journal must also publish in foreign journal to ascertain the credibility of their work. A number of authors stated that academic institutions have made it imperative for all academic staff, that for their publication to be considered for appraisal exercise, it must be published in foreign/international journals. A study by Oni (2009) carried our descriptive survey on publication output of librarians in some university libraries in Edo and Delta States of Nigeria with 55 respondents, the study showed that about 75% of respondents published in foreign/international journals within Africa, while about 25% of the respondents published with other international countries. Fox (2007) carried out an empirical study on scholarship of Canadian research university libraries and reported that of 467 returns, only 13% of this sample, librarians could be regarded as active scholars in foreign journal, while 29% were above average, 46% below average and 11% showed very low scholarly output in international journals. This study reveals that publishing in foreign journals is seen to be low. A descriptive survey carried out by Idiodi and Bozimo (2010), on the research productivity of librarians in university librarians in south-south of Nigeria using questionnaire for collection of data states that of the 143 respondents close to 52 (15.6%) of librarians admitted to not having any publications in a foreign journal, while a slightly fewer number 48 (42.1%) have between 1 to 5 publications in foreign journal. This study reveals that the respondents publish most of their works in local journals.

### **Challenges of Librarian's Publication Output:**

Librarians always complain that some problem need to be addressed if they are to publish smoothly and regularly. Research and publication is very crucial to librarians with academic staff status. For quite some time now librarians have been documenting their views on the barriers against them if they are to perform their professional duties and also carry our research and publication activities (Olorunsola and Ibegbulam, 2003).

Some librarians' emphasized on the issue of "Lack of Time" as one of the factors militating against their publication output. Lecturers have research interest and they build this into their teaching program, but the librarian do not have this type of opportunity (Ochai and Nedosa, 2004). These scholars went on to add that the combination of professional duties with the difficulties of research and publishing journal articles, books and workshops proceeding was the greatest obstacle and challenge to career advancement.

Work schedule in libraries is often cited by some librarians as a barrier to research and publication. How is one expected to carry out research and publish when required to work every day, 40 hours a week for a years? (Olorunsola & Ibegbulam, 2003). They went further to stress that, librarianship as an 8am to 4pm job in Nigeria requires constant job

presence severely limits the librarians ability to meet promotion and tenure expectations. Librarians in their pursuit of career advancement have encountered a number of problems in their research and publication effort. A descriptive survey by Oni (2009) on publication output of librarians in universities in Edo and Delta using questionnaire for data collection with 55 respondent showed the gender responses to problems faced by librarians in publishing, where 30(54.5%) males and females agree that work schedule is a major problem affecting librarians publication output. This showed that a majority of male and female respondent face the challenge of insufficient time to research and publish. They complained that the librarians work schedule demand that the librarian must be at his desk all through workings 8am – 4pm attending to his clientele. This commitment to be at their job rob them of ample time into research endeavors. From the same study, the issue of low funding as it affects librarians publication output with 43(78.2%) males and females agreeing to the issue of low funding is one of the challenges of librarians publication output.

A descriptive survey by Idiodi (2010) on constraints on the research productivity of librarians in selected university libraries in Nigeria using questionnaire for data collection with 114 respondents showed that 64% of respondent found it difficult to allocate adequate time for research. The study revealed that time was one of the major challenges faced by librarian in their publication effort. Also the study showed that 78.1% of the respondents agree that inadequate finance is a constraint on their research productivity. The study revealed that lack of funds pose as problem to the publication effort of librarians. This study revealed that lack of time and lack of funds is a challenge to librarians' publication output.

## METHODS

This study employed a descriptive survey design to investigate the publication output of librarians in academic libraries in Delta State. Academic libraries located in Delta State were used for the study. The population of this study consisted of 71 librarians from 7 academic libraries in Delta State and the researcher used the entire population because the population under study is not large. The research instrument employed for data collection was questionnaire. The instrument was designed by the researcher in line with the purpose of the study. The questionnaire was used because it is capable of gleaning data from the respondents (it gives the respondents ample time to think about the items before responding, it elicits meaningful answers which will be analyzed and it also ensures confidentiality of responses). Data was collected through the administration of questionnaire, as researcher personally administered some of the questionnaire to the respondents. The researcher also employed the services of a research assistant (staff) in library to assist in administering and collection of the questionnaire. A total of 71 copies of questionnaire were distributed but 55 were successfully retrieved, which was used to analyze the data. The data obtained was analyzed using simple percentage and frequencies to answer the research questions. Simple percentage and frequency was used to analyze the research questions 1 and 2, while a four point rating scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree), SA, A D, and SD (4, 3, 2 and 1) was used for analyzing research question 3 with a rating scale point of 2.50 response and above as strongly agree and below 2.50 response as disagree.

## Discussion of Results and Findings:

### Research Question 1: What is the publication output of librarians in academic librarians in Delta state?

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics on Publication Output of Librarians in Delta State

State	No of Publication	Freq. of Publication	Percentage
Delta	0.00	7	12.7
	1.00	3	5.5
	2.00	9	16.4
	3.00	8	14.5
	4.00	6	10.9
	5.00	6	10.9
	6.00	3	5.5
	7.00	1	1.8
	8.00	1	1.8
	9.00	2	3.6
	11.00	1	1.8
	12.00	1	1.8

Continuation of **Table 1.**

	13.00	2	3.6
	16.00	1	1.8
	17.00	1	1.8
	18.00	1	1.8
	24.00	1	1.8
	25.00	1	1.8
Total	299	55	100.0

**Summary of Table 1**

Number of Publication	No of Lib	Mean of Pub	Standard Deviation	No of mean of standard					
				0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-26	26- above
Delta 299 (49%)	55	5.77	5.75	39	7	4	3	2	0

Table 1 shows that librarians in academic libraries in Delta State had a total of 299 number of publications output, where 39 (70.9%) of respondents have published between 0.00-5.00 publications, 7(12.7%) of respondents have published between 6.00-10.00 publications, 4(7.2%) respondents have published between 11.00-15.00 publications, 3(5.4%) of respondents have published between 16.00-20.00 publications, 2(3.6%) of respondents have published between 21.00-25.00 publications, 0.00(0.0%) respondents have published 26 and above publications. This reveals that librarians in academic libraries in Delta states have a good number of publications to justify their academic status. The publication output of librarians in academic libraries in Delta State as found out from this study revealed that librarians have been responding to the research and publishing demand placed on them after obtaining academic status. Librarians have been seen to research and publish for appointment, promotion and to maintain academic status. This finding is in line with that of Wirth, Kelly and Webster (2010) who report a general upward trend in peer reviewed articles over a period of time. This implies that research and publication is important to librarians and is part of their job to facilitate their career advancement and to maintain their academic status.

#### **Research Question 2: In which category of publication (foreign or local) do Librarians in academic Libraries in Delta States publish more?**

**Table 2.** Category of Publication (Foreign and Local) by Librarians

Publication Category	State
Foreign	23(5.6%)
Local	276(88.4%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>299(100%)</b>

Table 2 shows that most of the publications by librarians in academic libraries in delta state were in local publications, as indicated 276(88.4%) of the 299(100%) publication were published in local outlets. analysis shows that 23 representing 5.6% were published in foreign outlet and 276 representing 88.4% were published in local outlet by librarians in academic libraries in delta states. the study reveals that librarians in academic libraries in delta state publish their works majorly in local publications outlet. this is in agreement with Mabawonku (2005) who states that librarians are seen to publish more with local publishers and motivated them to research and publish articles that will be of appeal to foreign publishers. it therefore implies that librarians in academic libraries in delta state should embrace publishing in foreign outlets. this is necessary because it will give them international recognition, enhance their visibility and increase their readership.

**Research Question 3: What are the challenges to the publication output of librarians in academic libraries in Delta State?**

**Table 3: Mean Responses to Challenges of Publication Output**

Challenges to publishing		
	N	Mean
Work schedule as obstacle to publishing	55	3.55
Lack of time to research and publish	55	3.61
Lack of funds to carry out research	55	3.58
Limited local journals to send articles to	55	2.22
High Publication charges	55	3.44
Limited Local book publishers	55	2.46
Demand for further degree	55	3.62
Delay in journal acceptance or rejection	55	2.53
Lack of facilities for research	55	3.11
Limited databases for research	55	2.46
Lack of incentives for research	55	2.76
Fear and anxiety of paper rejection	55	2.78

Table 3 shows that of the 12 challenges listed, 10 were endorsed by librarians as the challenges they face in their publication output. The mean of these challenges is 2.50 and above which stands for Agree. These include; work schedule, lack of time, lack of funds, high publication charges, demand for further degree, delay in journal acceptance or rejection, lack of facilities, limited databases, lack of incentives and fear and anxiety of paper rejection with a mean response of 3.55, 3.61, 3.58, 3.44, 3.62, 2.53 and 3.11 respectively. The challenges that were not endorsed by librarians as their mean is below 2.50 are limited local journals to send articles to, limited local book publishers and limited database for research with a mean response of 2.22, 2.46 and 2.46 respectively. The study reveals that librarians in academic libraries Delta State are faced with various challenges in their publication effort. The challenges faced by the respondents are work schedule, lack of time, lack of funds, high publication charges, demanding for further degree and lack of facilities. This is in agreement with fox, (2007) who stated that finding time for research and publication output is a major challenge. Lack of adequate finance is identified as a major problem of librarian's publication output, this is in line with Fosu (2001) who stated that low funding has been a major problem hindering activities of research. Work schedules was also identified as a problem, this is in consonance with Olurunsola and Ibegbulam, (2003) who avers that the librarianship profession is an everyday work activity, working 40 hours a week throughout the year. This implies that librarians do not have access to all the resources that will facilitate qualitative and quantitative publication output.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study, it could be concluded that the status accorded librarians in academic libraries is deserved as they have been seen to have researched and published to a great extent to maintain academic status, appointment and promotion. The use of local publication dominates the use of foreign publication by librarians. The problems librarians encounter majorly in their publication effort are work schedule, lack of time, lack of fund, high publication charges, demand for further degree, and lack of facilities, however the following recommendations were made based on the findings

1. Librarians in Academic libraries in Delta States should make frantic efforts to write on topics that would be of appeal to foreign publishers; this will facilitate their works being accepted by foreign publishers, also it would show that the

- woks are of quality and high standard.
2. Work schedules challenges should be structured by the management of the academic institution in such a way that librarians have free time such as the stipulated 26 days annual research leave to carry out research and publication.
  3. Lack of time as a challenge to librarians in their research and publication effort should be organized by the management of the institution by providing “release time” to enable them carry out research work. “Release time” is the time made available within the working hours of librarians in other to enable them engage in research.
  4. Regarding high publication charges for publishing works, librarians should engage in collaboration. Two or three librarians could collaborate and research on a work then they all take up the financial responsibility of the publication, this will go a long way in tackling the issue of high publication charges.
  5. Demand for higher degree as a challenge to librarians should be tackled by giving them sufficient time to pursue higher degree and also engage in research and publishing.

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