Whither Evidence Based Librarianship: A Comparative Reflection On the Practices in Some University Libraries in Nigeria, UK and USA.

Ayo Onatola
&
Abiodun I. Ibraheem
What is Evidence-Based LIP About?

- EBLIP: dependable, reliable and relevance to users’ needs
- Indicative of the adequacy of the library facilities
- Cost-effectiveness and sustenance of libraries for continuing operations
- Creativity and productivity of the LIS professionals in satisfying users’ needs
- EBLIP: impacts of library services delivery on the expectations of the target customers
- Ensuring funds availability for the library to fulfil its statutory roles.
The Problems

- Seeming inconsistent standards of librarianship practice across all economies - developed or developing.
- Controversy over MLS as a terminal degree – for faculty status
- Non-preparedness of MLS holders, for faculty status demands
- Inertia of LIS professionals to research and publication as promotion criteria
- Librarians involved in information literacy (teaching) and professional routines
- Yet, limited materials on the subject, librarianship
- Lack of application of LIS research outcomes for service improvement
Purpose

- This study examines Library and Information Science (LIS) practices in 15 selected universities in Nigeria, UK & USA
- Studies set to make comparative reflections on university librarianship practices across continents
- Seeking to explore the implementation of standards in LIS practice
- Determine research capability of librarians and how users’ needs are met
- To justify evidence-based nature of LIS research and practice
- Assess the relevance of LIS professionals in the fulfillment of the academic aspirations of those institutions.
Methodology Overview

- A two-part questionnaire was administered to 150 LIS practitioners by the investigators.

- The respondents were from 15 university libraries in Nigeria, United Kingdom and the United States of America.

- The questionnaire administration was at the venue of 2009 IFLA Congress held in Milan, Italy.

- Another fifty (50) sampled population LIS practitioners were randomly interviewed.
Librarians and Faculty Status

- Must hold professional LIS degree and dual-natured appointment - for professional and academic roles
- Tenure or other conditions of service of LIS practitioners equivalent to other faculties’
- Faculty status for academic librarians - similar contract, same privileges and reward system with teaching colleagues
- Affords librarians’ team work with teaching faculty and roles in the institution’s governance
- Compelling research work/collaboration with colleagues from teaching faculties
- Librarian’s knowledge of the researched subject deepens, earn patrons’ respect and improve library services’ quality
Challenges faced by Librarians within the Academic Community

- Performance evaluation of librarians by non-LIS academics
- Misconception by faculty that librarians are only service-oriented
- Promotion and tenure exercises rigorous for librarians
- Librarians’ scholarships not effectively communicated
- Alleged non-usage of appropriate research methodology
- Non-reliability of research outcomes for service improvements
- Incessant budgetary cuts/vialling which affect stock development
Impact of Research Evidence on the LIS Practice

- Time saved in information retrieval and dissemination
- Ideas’ expression, data sharing and wider exposure facilitated
- Research interest, credentials and personal confidence of librarians enhanced
- Helps libraries in decision making, policy formulations and service improvements
- Empowers LIS organisations e.g. IFLA to embark on meaningful advocacies to boost the profession’s image.
Disparity in Standards of LIS Practice

- Provision of traditional library routines and professional tasks
- In Nigeria, UK and USA: differing criteria for measure of effectiveness of LIS professionals in academic libraries
- In US and Nigeria: the productivity of an academic librarian hinges on impressive service and publications
- In US: Mandatory for school librarians to be trained teachers
- In Nigeria and US, the practice seems more evidence-based: publications by librarians now a vital part of library collections/promotion criteria
- In UK university libraries: librarians, as academic support staff, publications de-emphasised
Justification for Evidence-based LIS Practice

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EBLIP: A Reality or Myth

- Universality of standards is vital for EBLIP accomplishment in academic libraries
- In Nigeria and US: ‘publish’ or ‘perish’ is evident - for promotion or tenure status
- In UK: extensive inquiry & minimal research, scholarship and professional advancement
- Yet, opportunities for capacity building/CPD abound
- Redundancy of LIS professionals due to automation and inadequate funding – a blow to EBLIP! (advance technology study in the curriculum)
- In UK: influx of non-professionals probably adds to marked disparity LIS practice/standards
Results

- 120 copies (=80% response rate) of duly completed questionnaires were returned and analysed.
- Unlike UK, many LIS professionals in Nigerian and American university libraries are accorded faculty status.
- Published works required by LIS practitioners for career progression in many Nigerian and American university libraries.
- The research findings indicated that the teaching of “information literacy skills” and “use of library” is common to all.
- Service quality improvement by UK LIS practitioners linked to personal experience, not research outcomes.
- Many LIS practitioners process books for library users, yet they rarely read to update their professional knowledge.
- Many university libraries’ shelves are scantily stocked with materials on librarianship.
Conclusions

- The strategy for application of EBLIP to all routines and specific needs in all library types should be broad enough.
- A global debate on adoption of EBLIP is timely.
- Reflection on current library practices, users’ needs, research outcomes and effecting desired change canvassed.
- Consultation of local data to make decisions which positively impact on LIS systems is canvassed.
- Neighbourhood practice advocated - UK and Nigeria to have teacher-librarians in schools, just as in US.
- Without the foregoing, the concept of evidence-based library and information science practice may be a sheer “advocacy concept.”


Best, Rickey D. and Jason Kneip (2010) Library school programs and the successful training of academic librarians to meet promotion and tenure requirements in the academy College & Research Libraries 2010, v. 71, no 2
Questions/Discussions

You Ask.............

We answer........

Thank you.