

Administration of Academic Libraries in Nigeria in the 21st Century

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Abstract

The paper is about 21st century administration of academic library in Nigeria. Academic administrators are not declaring libraries as an anachronism. On the contrary, administrators see libraries as vibrant centers of learning. One intriguing attitude found among administrators was that they feel library directors should be more forceful advocates for their libraries, ready to provide evidence for funding that can be carried forward to the highest levels of the administration. The dynamics and structure of the academic library within the higher education community create complex environments for the library administrator attempting to navigate the myriad rules and regulations (state, federal, and institutional) that affect staff recruiting, hiring, processing, compensating, and related functions for library personnel. The paper recommends that libraries and librarians must step into new roles and take up different challenges, reimagining the ways they can be essential consultants in all the ways that students and faculty learn, discover, and share their work. The work concludes that libraries in colleges and universities should provide a challenging environment for the practice of human resource (HR) administration. Depending upon the complexities of the HR function in any academic library, there is need to designate an HR expert as a member of the library's administrative team.

Keywords: Academic Libraries, Administration, 21st Century, Nigeria

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to reflect on major issues and trends of academic library administration in the changing nature of academic libraries. Changing environment of academic libraries has impacted significantly on the knowledge, skills requirement and role of the library leaders, and how organizations can maintain and manage the changing nature of academic libraries as well as leadership. Library Administrators handle internal and external administrative matters for the Libraries, providing managerial leadership, strategic planning, resource management, development/fundraising, and direction of the overall operations of the University Libraries (University of Oregon,n.d). In this period of constant change, library managers should

know that they are in the business of communicating. They are responsible for management of ideas, beliefs, and information. Traditionally there are two components within the administrative structure of the academic library. The first is the collated information, i.e., in written, printed and electronic format (Okon,2005). The other component is the intellectual tool set: the skills such as cataloguing, indexing, and reference work. Librarianship is not managing collections; rather, there is a growing realization that other resources: human, technical, financial, and technological must to be managed effectively. This paper therefore examines 21st century administration of academic library in Nigeria.

Administration: Overview

The administration of an organization, whether it is a business, a non-profit organization like library, or a government body includes the activities of setting the strategy of an organization and coordinating the efforts of its employees (or of volunteers) to accomplish its objectives through the application of available resources, such as financial, natural, technological, and human resources. Running a business and Changing a business positively are two concepts that are used in management to differentiate between the continued delivery of information goods or services and adapting of goods or services to meet the changing needs of users. The term management may also refer to those people who manage an organization as managers (Wikipedia, 2021).According to Wikipedia, (2021) larger organizations generally have three hierarchical levels of managers in a pyramid structure:

- **Senior managers:** Senior managers such as members of a board of directors and a chief executive officer (CEO) or a president of an organization. They set the strategic goals of the organization and make decisions on how the overall organization will operate. Senior managers are generally executive-level professionals and provide direction to middle management, who directly or indirectly report to them. In library, these are the heads of libraries.
- **Middle managers:** Examples of these would include branch managers, regional managers, department managers, and section managers, who provide direction to front-line managers. Middle managers communicate the strategic goals of senior management to the front-line managers.
- **Lower managers:** Lower managers, such as supervisors and front-line team leaders, oversee the work of regular employees (or volunteers, in some voluntary organizations) and provide direction on their work.

In smaller organizations, a manager may have a much wider scope and may perform several roles or even all of the roles commonly observed in a large organization (Wikipedia, 2021). It is no secret that academic library administration and management are feeling the pinch in the global economic meltdown. Hard decisions are being made about collections, space, and services. Yet academic administrators are not declaring libraries an anachronism. On the contrary, administrators see libraries as vibrant centers of learning. One intriguing attitude found among administrators was that they feel library directors should be more forceful advocates for their libraries, ready to provide evidence for funding that can be carried forward to the highest

levels of the administration. Perhaps the final lesson one can take from hearing from administrators is that administrators look to librarians not just to make the case for libraries but to ride the wave of change. Libraries and librarians must step into new roles and take up different challenges, reimagining the ways they can be essential consultants in all the ways that students and faculty learn, discover, and share their work (Barbara, 2010).

Academic Library Administration

An academic library administration in the 21st century brings many changes to librarianship. It typically means leaving behind old job responsibilities while adopting a new set of challenges. Many librarians who have moved into administration from a traditional services position typically means giving up the reference desk and classroom for planning, budgeting and other management and leadership responsibilities. On the other hand, what if you really enjoy working at the reference desk or helping educate students to become better researchers? That is often why it is good to draw to academic librarianship in the first place. Does moving into an administrative position mean the end of those opportunities? Not always. It is, as they say, situational (Stephen, 2009).

If you choose to become the director at a college or small university library, particularly one with a small professional staff, it's quite likely that you will not only have the opportunity to continue performing in traditional services, but it will most probably be required. Any significant outreach effort involving active liaison duties, embedded librarianship, a proactive library instruction program and other efforts to extend beyond the walls of the library can be hard on a

small staff. The library director can't afford to sit behind a desk in their corner office – and why would he or she want to? More meetings and administrative tasks means less time for public service, but the college library director that wants to continue being involved should have ample opportunities (Stephen, 2009).

Leadership Skills of Library Manager in Academic Library

College and university libraries are facing numerous challenges and need strong, effective leadership to meet student needs. Higher education is in crisis and restructuring of organizational structures is commonly utilized for cost-saving purposes. Academic libraries are not exempt from organizational change due to limited or reduced funding. Library budgets have been severely reduced and these cuts impact library resources and personnel (Ly, 2014).

To take an assessment, there is the need to be acquainted with the basic principles of professionalism and skills. Skills are very essential for every professional, which help them to deliver services on time and in efficient manner to their users (Kumar, 2018). According to Mazumdar (2007), skill is an ability or proficiency in execution or performance, which is required for a person to plan and execute an action designed to achieve some goals or accomplish a particular task. A skilled person has the ability to perform any task successfully. The skill the person possessed can give the mind to face the challenges that occur in a particular profession because of the social, economic, educational and technological changes. Thus, in order to cope with the ever-changing library and information science profession, librarians must have the relevant skills to perform their professional functions effectively.

The roles of LIS professionals are very important in the library because they have the skills required to acquire relevant information resources for the library and are able to process them according to the library system. The LIS professionals are the bridge between information resources and the readers (Kumar, 2018). In the library, resources are acquired and processed based on rules and regulations of the profession. And these rules and regulations do not come in rosy way. They are acquired from the academic world to handle library information resources in a way that users can easily access them. The core skills traditionally associated with library/information science include: information handling skills - cataloguing, classification, indexing, enquiry work and user education training skills with facilitating skills and evaluation skills. (Hashim and Mokhtar, 2012).

Today's changing environment in library and information centres look for change in the professional skills besides the academic skill. The dramatic changes, largely the result of rapidly evolving information and communication technologies (ICTs), have impacted significantly on the knowledge and skills required for library and information science (LIS) professionals. The transformed landscape requires a new generation of LIS professionals to effectively and efficiently bridge it (Ravi, 2018). In addition, Ravi (2018) cited National Knowledge Commission (2007) while recommending the role of libraries as "gateways to knowledge" emphasized the skills required to fulfill the changing role of libraries as Library and Information handling skills, service orientation, ICT knowledge skills, communication and training skills, marketing and presentation skills, understanding of cultural diversity and knowledge mapping skills.

According to Ravi (2008), in order to cope with the ever-changing library and information science profession, the library professionals must be a skilled professional. The skills can be categorized as domain specific skills, essential skills - reading, writing, computer application, creative thinking, analyzing skills etc. As part of the skills, the profession requires managerial skills - planning, organisation, managing negative people, assertive skills and conflict management skills. Leadership Skills are part of the key skill that a librarian needs, to be able to arrive at the target of the organization. Leadership skills include goal setting, team building, motivation, risk taking, formulating vision and others. In the library, there are lot of sectional duties with its peculiarities and uniqueness, as such, contextual skills – operational skills in different environment or culture comes in, in order to achieve the organizational goals.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Libraries at colleges and universities should provide a challenging environment for the practice of human resource (HR) administration.

Depending upon the complexities of the HR function in any academic library, the organization may be best served by designating an HR expert as a member of the library's administrative team.

The traditional hierarchical administrative structure in academic libraries is in internal conflict with its own culture and is ineffective in dealing with a rapidly changing environment. This structure must become a more balanced type, a proposal for which is made here, based upon the literature in organizational behavior and leadership (Honea 1997).

The most challenging aspects of being an academic library leader were identified as trying to create awareness, lack of self-development culture and technological issues. The required leadership skills were communication, vision, social interaction, team building, organizational understanding and knowledge sharing.

In conclusion, the dynamics and structure of the academic library within the higher education community create complex environments for the library administrator attempting to navigate the myriad rules and regulations (state, federal, and institutional) that affect staff recruiting, hiring, processing, compensating, and related functions for library personnel.

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