

LIBRARIAN'S CORE COMPETENCIES EXPECTATIONS IN SERVICE DELIVERY: A COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION USING AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION (ALA) GUIDELINES IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

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Abstract

While technological advancements, changes in pedagogy, and evolving information needs have reshaped the demands on librarians, concerns arise regarding the adequacy of librarians' core competencies to meet these challenges. This study examined librarians' core competencies expectations in service delivery using American Library Association (ALA) guideline in selected university libraries. With the purpose of exploring the alignment between expected competencies and practical challenges faced in service delivery of the librarians. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. Total enumeration sampling technique was employed to select all the librarians. Data was collected using questionnaire. A total of 254 questionnaires were distributed and 203 were returned and found usable for the study. The data analysis was subjected to descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) and T-test. Findings revealed that the level of core competencies of librarians is high, while their major competencies are around lifelong learning and continuing education, technological knowledge and skills and so on. There was no significant difference in the core competencies of librarians in selected university libraries based on university ownership. The study concluded that the future of university libraries is firmly supported by the quality of librarians' key competences. It was therefore recommended that future librarians should be taught courses such as technological advancements that will integrate artificial intelligence and social media for library service delivery. The library management should implement regular assessment and evaluation of library services to ensure they continue to align with user needs and institutional goals.

Keywords: Librarians' core competencies expectations, Service Delivery, American Library Association, Academic Libraries, Nigeria

Introduction

As the world increasingly adopts digital technologies, librarians face growing demands. A growing demand to provide a wide range of services to support the teaching, learning and research endeavours of the members of the institutions. Librarians who exhibit a passion for assisting others and a willingness to embrace new learning opportunities will therefore be well-suited to thrive in this dynamic information landscape. This is because librarians will continue to perform crucial roles in facilitating access to information, fostering literacy, and supporting

lifelong learning in diverse communities including academic libraries to enhance learning (Nurasalimah & Ali, 2024). Also, as the landscape of information services evolves alongside technological advancements and changing societal needs, the competencies expected of librarians will also continue to evolve. By training, librarians possess a diverse range of essential skills that empower them to serve users effectively and fulfil their roles as information professionals.

These skills encompass information literacy, collection curation, providing reference and research aid, adeptness with technology, effective communication and collaboration, appreciation of intellectual freedom and privacy, and cultural competence etc. Librarians excel in educating and promoting information literacy, aiding individuals in developing skills to locate, assess, and utilise information effectively (Association of College & Research Libraries, 2021). In addition, by virtue of their professional training librarians are also adept at selecting and acquiring materials for library collections that aligns with ever evolving users' needs and preferences. As a result of the evolving user information needs and preferences, librarians are expected to be versatile, proactive, and responsive to the evolving needs of their user community, by providing high-quality services and resources to support teaching, learning, and research endeavours.

Consequently, several professional associations have outlined competency expectations for librarians, however only the American Library Association (ALA) has presented the most updated (2021) and comprehensive set of competencies for librarians as at the time of this study. The ALA serves as a leading organization advocating for the interests of libraries and librarians' globally, providing valuable resources, publications, and guidelines that are accessible to librarians and information professionals worldwide, hence the choice of using its guideline as competency expectations of librarians. The American Library Association Core Competences (ALACCs), introduced by the American Library Association (2021), therefore serves as a framework for empowering librarians to formulate objective and strategic plans. It is noteworthy that these competences are not confined to traditional librarians but encompass roles such as archivists, data scientists, and information specialists, acknowledging that the competencies are specific to libraries but hold relevance across various information-related professions (American Library Association, 2021). The ALACCs (2021) aim is to equip library professionals with

essential knowledge and skills that spans diverse areas, such as gateway knowledge, information resources, lifelong learning and continuous education, management and administration, organization of recorded knowledge and information, reference and user services, research and evidence-based practice, social justice, and technological knowledge and skills.

The ALACCs emphasise the importance of continuous learning, responsible financial planning, effective supervision, human resource management, assessment and evaluation of library services, research skills, and cultural awareness to empower their communities. As succinctly put by Itsekor and Ugwunna (2014) that the ALACCs constitute fundamental knowledge and skills acquired through Library and Information Science (LIS) education, onboarding, and ongoing professional development during the early stages of a librarian's career. These competences are fundamental for library professionals working across diverse settings, including schools, academic institutions, public libraries, special libraries, and governmental libraries. Additionally, Idhalama, Aiyebilehin, and Okobo (2020), asserts that librarians with these core competencies should surpass the specified standards and consistently engage in lifelong learning to acquire specialised and advanced knowledge.

As described by Soutter (2016), librarians with core competencies actively contribute to their organization's objectives and foster an environment conducive to critical thinking. They participate in effective information gathering and decision-making processes, excel in time management, and deliver work punctually. Moreover, they support the growth of others, offer and receive training and coaching, and adeptly handle organisational politics, conflicts, and challenging colleague behaviours. The effectiveness of libraries in the fast-evolving contemporary landscape relies heavily on librarians demonstrating essential actions and competencies, as emphasized by Soutter (2016). These core actions align with the mission and vision statements of their respective organizations, playing a critical role in delivering top-notch library services to users. Thus, it is imperative to cultivate core competences that establish benchmarks for job descriptions, fostering cognitive abilities, interpersonal effectiveness, and managerial skills (Manu, Shashikumara, Asjola, Chaudhary & Muduli, 2018).

However, do librarians actually possess these competencies for effective service delivery? Through a review of ALA's guidelines and empirical investigations in various library settings, this study intends to analyse the practical implications of these competencies and

identify emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities in librarians competency development. Hence, the need for this study to examine Librarian's core competency expectations in Service Delivery using American Library Association Guidelines in Academic Libraries in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The role of librarians in institutions of higher learning has grown more intricate and multidimensional in the changing context of higher education. This is as a result of expectations placed on librarians arising from changes in scholarly communication practices, rapid advances in technology, shifts in pedagogical approaches, and the ever-evolving information need of students, faculty members and researchers. While ALA provides comprehensive guidelines outlining the core competencies expectations of librarians, there is limited empirical research examining the alignment between these established competencies and the practical realities of service delivery by librarians in academic libraries in Nigeria. Also, limited research between traditional expectations of librarians and the evolving demands of the contemporary academic library environment such as literacy instruction, data management support, and scholarly communication advocacy etc.

There is also a pressing need to investigate the extent to which librarian competency expectations outlined by ALA guidelines resonate with the multifaceted nature of service provision in the academic library context. In reality, concerns have also revolve on whether librarians have the expertise needed to properly assist a variety of academic subjects due to the dynamic nature of higher education, now characterized by interdisciplinary research, digital scholarship initiatives, and diverse student populations etc. Guided by this, this study therefore examined librarian's core competencies expectations in service delivery using American Library Association Guidelines in Academic Libraries in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The stated research question guided this study.

- (i) What are the core competencies of librarians in academic libraries in using ALA's competency expectation in Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

The stated research hypotheses was tested in this study

H0₁: There is no significant difference in the core competencies of librarians using ALA's guideline based on university ownership in Nigeria.

Literature Review

In response to the dynamic landscape of information and technology, there has been an increasing recognition of the pivotal role librarians play in facilitating access to knowledge and fostering information literacy among diverse user communities. Central to this evolving professional landscape are the American Library Association's (ALA) Core Competencies of Librarianship, which serve as a foundational framework for defining the essential skills, knowledge areas, and professional behaviours expected of librarians in various library settings. Studies have therefore been conducted to ascertain these competencies.

In a study on the Continuing Professional Development opportunities in Information and Communication Technology for academic librarians at the Durban University of Technology the study found out that Continuing professional development is an important part of librarianship, that maintaining professional knowledge and competence requires regular revision and renewal, especially in a profession that is constantly evolving (Moonasa and Underwood, 2018). In a related study that examined the application of ALA core competencies in collection development practices among academic librarians, findings revealed that while librarians possess foundational competencies in selection, acquisition, and assessment of library collections, there is a need for additional training and resources to address emerging trends such as electronic resources management and open access initiatives (Sowards, & Smith, 2018). Similarly, in a study that explored the application of ALA core competencies in non-traditional library roles, such as information architecture, user experience design, and digital content management. Findings suggest that while the core competencies provide a foundational framework for library practice, librarians in non-traditional roles may require additional specialised skills and knowledge areas to effectively meet the demands of emerging information environments (Harmon & Sjostrom, 2020).

In another study that examined the role of library leaders in championing organisational change and innovation based on ALA core competencies. Findings highlight the importance of leadership competencies, such as strategic planning, advocacy, and staff development, in driving organisational excellence and fostering a culture of continuous improvement within library

settings (Duinkerken & Kern, 2019). In another study on self-knowledge and use of information resources by librarians in universities in South-West, Nigeria, the study found out that librarians self-knowledge of information resources was high (Ikegune & Omoike, 2016). Yakubu, Priti, Baluwami, and Athulang (2017) conducted a study exploring the essential skills and competencies needed by academic librarians in the era of the internet. The findings revealed that librarians in developed countries require proficient skills and competencies in internet usage to offer effective library services. Conversely, academic librarians in developing countries, particularly in Africa, were found to lag in internet skills and competencies necessary for efficient information services within the library. The study concluded that despite the transformative impact of the internet, gaps persist in how library services are provided due to inadequate internet knowledge, skills, and competencies among academic librarians.

Also, Idhalama, Aiyebelehin, and Okobo (2020) investigated the competencies of librarians as a factor affecting information service delivery in Delta State University (DELSU) library and Federal University of Petroleum Resources (FUPRE) library. The findings of the study revealed that the majority of respondents possessed a high level of ICT skills, customer-service competency, and competence in interpersonal communication. Amoah and Akussah (2017) conducted a study on the service provision of academic librarians and emphasized the necessity for informed staff regarding upcoming changes in the library environment. This understanding should be followed by comprehensive staff training to ensure commitment and capacity to deliver effectively in the digital era.

In a study on Librarians' ICT skills and service delivery, the study found out that the librarians have acquired basic ICT skills and were versatile in its application for internet searches, information retrieval, social communication and Microsoft-office related activities with the exception of programming skills (Ilesanmi, 2023). In a related study on librarians and information service delivery in Nigeria during Covid-19, the findings revealed that librarians provided Current Awareness Services (CAS), online Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) services and Electronic Document Delivery Services, which are delivered majorly through social media platforms, emails and library websites (Alabi & Sani, 2021).

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The target population consisted of librarians in university libraries in South-west Nigeria. There are 49 university libraries in South-west Nigeria. This geopolitical zone accommodates the highest number of universities in Nigeria according to the National universities commission. However, out of the 49 universities, 18 libraries were selected based on their year of establishment; three from each state which comprised of one federal, state and private university libraries. The questionnaire was the main research instrument. This was pre-tested at Lagos State University of Science and Technology (LASUSTECH) and from Lagos State University of Education (LASUED) using twenty-two librarians. A Cronbach alpha value of 0.97 was obtained for the Librarians' Core Competencies Scale. The researcher, accompanied by eleven trained research assistants, visited each of the selected universities within a two-week period to administer the questionnaire. Total enumeration sampling technique was used to capture all 254 librarians from the selected academic libraries in South-west Nigeria. Consequently, out of a total of 254 questionnaires distributed, and 203 were successfully completed and found useful for the study. The data collected were then analysed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation), and T-test.

Results

Table 1: Distribution of sample population

S/N	Name of University/Location	Owner ship	No. of Librarians
Ogun			
1	Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Ogun state	Federal	23
2	Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun state	State	12
3	Babcock University, Ilishan, Ogun state	Private	28
S/N	Oyo State		
4	Kenneth Dike library, University of Ibadan, Oyo state	Federal	30
5	Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Olusegun Oke Library, Oyo state	State	22
6	Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo state	Private	10
S/N	Osun State		
7	Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife	Federal	23
8	Osun State University, Osogbo	State	4
9	Bowen University, Iwo, Osun state	Private	6
S/N	Lagos State		
10	University of Lagos, Lagos state	Federal	12
11	Lagos State University, Ojo	State	25

12	Caleb University, Lagos state	Private	4
S/N	Ekiti State		
13	Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti state	Federal	8
14	Ekiti State University	State	16
15	Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti state	Private	9
S/N	Ondo State		
16	Federal University of Technology, Akure, Ondo state	Federal	12
17	Adekunle Ajasin Akungba University	State	5
18	Elizade University, Ondo state	Private	5
	Total Sample		254

Source: Librarians' Office

Analysis of the Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the core competencies of librarians in selected university libraries in South-West, Nigeria?

Table 2: Core competencies of librarians: Gateway knowledge

Gateway knowledge: I have foundational skills and understanding to:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Std. Dev
Apply the ethics, values, and foundational principles inherent to the library profession.	115 (56.7%)	73 (36.0%)	4 (2.0%)	11 (5.4%)	3.44	.78
Uphold democratic principles and advocate for intellectual freedom, encompassing freedom of expression, thought, and conscience.	92 (45.3%)	96 (47.3%)	7 (3.4%)	8 (3.9%)	3.34	.73
Acknowledge the historical context of libraries and librarianship, understanding their roles within society.	85 (56.7%)	93 (45.8%)	17 (8.4%)	8 (3.9%)	3.26	.77
Acknowledge and preserve the history and dissemination of information in its various forms, recognizing its impact on libraries.	96 (47.3%)	89 (43.8%)	10 (4.9%)	8 (3.9%)	3.34	.75
Recognize the different types of libraries (school, public, academic, special, etc.) and related	119 (58.6%)	72 (35.5%)	4 (4.9%)	8 (3.9%)	3.49	.73

information agencies like museums, archives, and galleries.

Identify relevant social, public, information, economic, and cultural policies and trends that significantly influence the library and information profession at local, regional, national, and international levels.	97 (47.8%)	83 (40.9%)	11 (5.4%)	12 (5.9%)	3.31	.82
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Comprehend the legal framework within which libraries operate, including laws regarding copyright, fair use, privacy, freedom of expression, equal rights (e.g., the Americans with Disabilities Act), open access, and intellectual property.	106 (52.2%)	79 (38.9%)	10 (4.9%)	8 (3.9%)	3.39	.76
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Advocate effectively for libraries, librarians, other library staff, patrons, and services, particularly in terms of marketing, fundraising, and outreach efforts.	15 (44.8%)	90 (44.3%)	7 (3.4%)	15 (7.4%)	3.27	.84
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Apply techniques to identify, systematize, and analyze intricate problems, developing suitable and collaborative solutions within library environments.	107 (52.7%)	78 (38.4%)	10 (4.9%)	8 (3.9%)	3.40	.76
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Demonstrate adeptness in employing effective verbal and written communication methods, including electronic means like video, live chat, and email.	98 (48.3%)	77 (37.9%)	17 (8.4%)	11 (5.4%)	3.29	.84
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Average Mean					3.35	.78
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Decision rule: It has been adjudged that criterion mean score of 2.50 and above is Significant.

Result in Table 2 revealed that the librarians had the foundational skills and understanding to advocate effectively for libraries, librarians, other library staff, patrons and services particularly in terms of marketing, fundraising and outreach efforts ($\bar{x} = 0.84$).

Table 3: Core competencies of librarians: Information resources

Information resources: I have foundational skills and understanding to:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Std. Dev.
Reflect on matters concerning the lifespan of recorded knowledge and information, spanning from inception to various phases of utilization, while considering material formats and genres.	94 (46.3%)	91 (44.8%)	10 (4.9%)	8 (3.9%)	3.33	.75
Utilize the principles, concerns, and strategies of collection management, encompassing the lifecycle of materials from assessment to enduring preservation and other remedial processes. This includes activities such as acquisitions, selection, procurement, storage, and de-selection)	94 (46.3%)	91 (44.8%)	7 (3.4%)	11 (5.4%)	3.32	.78
Encompass evolving formats and genres of informational resources, comprehending their potential convergence with and representation of the varied cultural needs of information communities through proficient collection management	83 (40.9%)	92 (45.3%)	20 (9.9%)	8 (3.9%)	3.23	.78
Average Mean					3.29	.77

Decision rule: It has been adjudged that criterion mean score of 2.50 and above is Significant.

Result in Table 3 revealed that the major core competence of librarians in the area of information resource is in utilising the principles, concerns, and strategies of collection management, encompassing the lifecycle of materials from assessment to enduring preservation and other remedial processes ($\bar{x} = 0.78$). Also the librarians understand core competencies in information resources Encompass evolving formats and genres of informational resources, comprehending their potential convergence with and representation of the varied cultural needs of information communities through proficient collection management ($\bar{x} = 0.78$).

Table 4: Core competencies of librarians: Lifelong learning and continuing education

Lifelong learning and continuing education: I have foundational skills and understanding to:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Std. Dev.
Engage in and taking the lead in continuous professional development to enhance service to their communities.	114 (56.2%)	65 (32.0%)	16 (7.9%)	8 (3.9%)	3.40	.80
Acknowledge the library's function in continuous education and initiatives in promoting lifelong learning.	123 (60.6%)	65 (32.0%)	7 (3.4%)	8 (3.9%)	3.49	.75
Utilize various approaches to cater to diverse learning preferences, fostering a culture of lifelong learning.	110 (54.2%)	72 (35.5%)	13 (6.4%)	8 (3.9%)	3.40	.78
Grasp both established and contemporary learning theories, critical and inclusive pedagogy principles, instructional methods, and the assessment of	99 (48.8%)	82 (40.4%)	14 (6.9%)	8 (3.9%)	3.34	.78

learning outcomes.

Average Mean

3.41 .78

Decision rule: It has been adjudged that criterion mean score of 2.50 and above is Significant.

Result in Table 4 revealed that the major core competence of librarians in the area of lifelong learning and continuing education is in engaging and taking the lead in continuous professional development to enhance service to their communities ($\bar{x} = 0.80$).

Table 5: Core competencies of librarians: Management and administration

Management and administration: I have foundational skills and understanding to:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Std. Dev
Apply sound fiduciary planning and oversight principles responsibly.	67 (33.0%)	100 (49.3%)	14 (6.9%)	22 (10.8%)	3.04	.91
Utilize effective and equitable supervisory practices, human resource management, training, and development.	87 (42.9%)	101 (49.8%)	7 (3.4%)	8 (3.9%)	3.32	.72
Implement methodologies and approaches to evaluate and assess library services and their resulting outcomes.	96 (47.3%)	82 (40.4%)	17 (8.4%)	8 (3.9%)	3.31	.79
Cultivate and advocate for inclusive and fair partnerships, collaborations, networks, and other organizational structures involving stakeholders, consortia, and the communities being served.	102 (50.2%)	76 (37.4%)	7 (3.4%)	18 (3.9%)	3.29	.90
Apply the principles, issues, and methodologies concerning principled, transformational, and	96 (47.3%)	86 (42.4%)	13 (6.4%)	8 (3.9%)	3.33	.77

change management leadership, along with other leadership philosophies.

Efficiently strategize, manage, execute, and conclude projects employing various leadership methods.	108 (53.2%)	73 (36.0%)	7 (3.4%)	15 (7.4%)	3.35	.86
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Engage in strategic communication with colleagues throughout the organization and the community.	113 (55.7%)	72 (35.5%)	7 (3.4%)	11 (5.4%)	3.41	.80
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Average Mean					3.29	.82
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Decision rule: It has been adjudged that criterion mean score of 2.50 and above is Significant.

Result in Table 5 revealed that the major core competence of librarians in the area of management and administration is engaging in strategic communication with colleagues throughout the organisation and community ($\bar{x} = 3.41$).

Table 6: Core competencies of librarians: Organization of recorded knowledge and information

Organization of recorded knowledge and information: I have foundational skills and understanding to:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Std. Dev.
Grasp the fundamental principles, systems, current trends, and objectives related to the organization and representation of recorded knowledge and information.	119 (58.6%)	69 (34.0%)	4 (2.0%)	11 (5.4%)	3.46	.79
Apply skills encompassing development, description, analysis, and evaluation, crucial for effectively organizing recorded knowledge and information.	97 (47.8%)	82 (40.4%)	13 (6.4%)	11 (5.4%)	3.31	.82
Sustain the frameworks concerning cataloging, collection, metadata, indexing, and classification standards, utilizing methodologies for applying, generating, and locating recorded	118 (58.1%)	64 (31.5%)	10 (4.9%)	11 (5.4%)	3.42	.82

knowledge and information.

Acknowledge how cultural biases affect and shape the collection and depiction of recorded knowledge and information.	101 (49.8%)	66 (32.5%)	11 (5.4%)	25 (12.3%)	3.20	1.01
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Average Mean

3.35 .86

Decision rule: It has been adjudged that criterion mean score of 2.50 and above is Significant.

Result in Table 6 revealed that the major core competence of librarians in the area of organisation of recorded knowledge and information is applying skills encompassing development, description, analysis, and evaluation, crucial for effectively organizing recorded knowledge and information ($\bar{x} = 0.82$). Also, in sustaining the frameworks concerning cataloging, collection, metadata, indexing, and classification standards, utilizing methodologies for applying, generating, and locating recorded knowledge and information ($\bar{x} = 0.82$).

Table 7: Core competencies of librarians: Reference and user services

Reference and user services: I have foundational skills and understanding to:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Std. Dev
Utilize methods for uncovering, retrieving, assessing, and amalgamating information from a wide array of sources, catering to diverse user demographics and information contexts.	106 (52.2%)	79 (38.9%)	7 (3.4%)	11 (5.4%)	3.38	.80
Prioritize problem-solving abilities to identify informational requirements during the reference interview procedure.	105 (51.7%)	74 (36.5%)	13 (6.4%)	11 (5.4%)	3.34	.81
Implement fundamental principles, ideas, and methods to comprehend and appraise a community's information necessities.	102 (50.2%)	80 (39.4%)	10 (4.9%)	11 (5.4%)	3.34	.81
Participate in evaluating and appraising programs, services, and partnerships, seeking input from the community being served.	61 (30.0%)	111 (54.7%)	20 (9.9%)	11 (5.4%)	3.09	.78
Adhere to cultural humility when strategizing, providing, and evaluating library reference and	95 (46.8%)	77 (37.9%)	14 (8.4%)	14 (6.9%)	3.25	.88

user services.

Average Mean

3.28 .82

Decision rule: It has been adjudged that criterion mean score of 2.50 and above is Significant.

Result in Table 7 revealed that the major core competence of librarians in the area of reference and user services is in adhering to cultural humility when strategizing, providing, and evaluating library reference and user services ($\bar{x} = 0.88$).

Table 8: Core competencies of librarians: Research and evidence-based practice

Research and evidence-based practice: I have foundational skills and understanding to:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Std. Dev
Explore, interact with, and amalgamate existing research in the field utilizing interdisciplinary approaches concerning a range of information matters.	88 (43.3%)	100 (49.3%)	4 (2.0%)	11 (5.4%)	3.31	.76
Acknowledge the ethical and suitable utilization of fundamental research methods, methodologies, and structures within the field.	82 (40.4%)	96 (47.3%)	7 (3.4%)	18 (8.9%)	3.19	.87
Comprehend the guiding principles and evolving aspects associated with research. s application to professional practice	82 (40.4%)	100 (49.3%)	10 (4.9%)	11 (5.4%)	3.25	.78
Recognize the significance of involvement in research foundations and scholarly communications to facilitate ongoing professional growth, knowledge acquisition, and knowledge sharing.	79 (38.9%)	109 (53.7%)	4 (2.0%)	11 (5.4%)	3.26	.75
Average Mean					3.25	.79

Decision rule: It has been adjudged that criterion mean score of 2.50 and above is Significant.

Result in Table 8 revealed that the librarians strongly agreed that their major core competence of in the area of research and evidence-based practice is acknowledging the ethical and suitable utilisation of fundamental research methods, methodologies, and structures within the field ($\bar{x} = 0.87$).

Table 9: Core competencies of librarians: Social Justice

Social justice: I have foundational skills and understanding to:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Std. Dev
Grasp one's own cultural identity, encompassing positionality concerning power, privilege, and oppression, and comprehend how these aspects influence interactions within the community and with decision-makers.	90 (44.3%)	89 (43.8%)	16 (7.9%)	8 (3.9%)	3.29	.78
Identify, question, and transform established practices, services, and initiatives that have perpetuated dominant systems while marginalizing certain groups.	98 (48.3%)	90 (44.3%)	7 (7.4%)	8 (3.9%)	3.37	.73
Foster an organizational environment that promotes, endorses, evaluates, and acknowledges efforts contributing to social justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion.	83 (40.9%)	99 (48.8%)	13 (6.4%)	8 (3.9%)	3.27	.75
Integrate social justice and inclusion into professional conduct through active engagement and collaboration with diverse groups and communities, enhancing inclusive collections (acquisition, categorization,	87 (42.9%)	95 (46.8%)	13 (6.4%)	8 (3.9%)	3.29	.76

and description), staff, initiatives, and service

Equitably allocate library personnel, collections, and facility resources across all user communities.	88 (43.3%)	88 (43.3%)	13 (6.4%)	14 (6.9%)	3.23	.85
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Pursue continuous professional growth to heighten awareness and formulate strategies to address issues related to power, privilege, and oppression.	84 (41.4%)	95 (46.8%)	13 (6.4%)	11 (5.4%)	3.24	.80
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Average Mean					3.28	.78
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Decision rule: It has been adjudged that criterion mean score of 2.50 and above is Significant.

Result in Table 9 revealed that the major core competence of librarians in the area of social justice is in equitably allocating library personnel, collections, and facility resources across all user communities ($\bar{x} = 0.85$).

Table 10: Core competencies of librarians: Technological knowledge and skills

Technological knowledge and skills: I have foundational skills and understanding to:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Std. Dev
Recognize suitable technologies and applications that enhance accessibility and provision of library services and resources.	125 (61.6%)	60 (29.5%)	7 (3.4%)	11 (5.4%)	3.47	.80
Comprehend and adeptly handle ethical and cultural considerations, understanding their influence on library practices and the community when integrating technology into library services and resources.	102 (50.2%)	70 (34.5%)	20 (9.9%)	11 (5.4%)	3.30	.86
Consistently assess both established and emerging technologies, gauging their effects on library services and resources in terms of accessibility, feasibility, sustainability, and efficacy.	102 (50.2%)	73 (36.0%)	14 (6.9%)	14 (6.9%)	3.30	.87

Average Mean

3.36 .85

Decision rule: It has been adjudged that criterion mean score of 2.50 and above is Significant.

Result in Table 10 revealed that the major core competence of librarians in the area of technological knowledge and skills is consistently assess both established and emerging technologies, gauging their effects on library services and resources in terms of accessibility, feasibility, sustainability, and efficacy ($\bar{x} = 0.87$).

Result in Table 2-10 further revealed the core competencies of librarians and the result showed an average mean of ($\bar{x} = 3.32$) which is greater than the criterion mean score ($\bar{x} = 2.50$), the result indicates that the level of core competencies of librarians is high, while their major competencies are in the area of lifelong learning and continuing education, technological knowledge and skills, gateway knowledge, and organization of recorded knowledge and information.

Test of Hypothesis

Research Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the core competencies of librarians in selected university libraries based on university ownership

Table 11a: T-test Analysis of Research Hypothesis One

Core competencies	University Ownership	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean
Gateway knowledge	Public Uni.	3.36	.72	.06
	Private Uni.	3.25	.79	.13
Information resources	Public Uni.	3.35	.74	.06
	Private Uni.	3.28	.79	.13
Lifelong learning and continuing education	Public Uni.	3.42	.79	.06
	Private Uni.	3.33	.84	.13
Management and administration	Public Uni.	3.31	.78	.06
	Private Uni.	3.31	.83	.13
Organization of recorded knowledge and information	Public Uni.	3.43	.81	.06
	Private Uni.	3.38	.88	.14
Reference and user services	Public Uni.	3.38	.77	.06
	Private Uni.	3.36	.90	.15
Research and evidence-based practice	Public Uni.	3.21	.86	.07
	Private Uni.	3.10	.91	.15
Social justice	Public Uni.	3.30	.75	.06
	Private Uni.	3.21	.77	.13
Technological knowledge and skills	Public Uni.	3.49	.78	.06
	Private Uni.	3.38	.91	.15

Table 11a shows the core competencies of librarians in selected university libraries based on university ownership. For gateway knowledge, the mean of public university ($\bar{x} = 3.36$) is higher than private university ($\bar{x} = 3.25$); for information resources, the mean of public university ($\bar{x} = 3.35$) is higher than private university ($\bar{x} = 3.28$); for lifelong learning and continuing education, the mean of public university ($\bar{x} = 3.42$) is higher than private university ($\bar{x} = 3.33$). The result further revealed that for technological knowledge and skills, the mean of public university ($\bar{x} = 3.49$) is higher than private university ($\bar{x} = 3.38$). Hence, the core competencies of librarians in public university are higher than private university in south-west, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The study showed that the major core competence of librarians in the area of gateway knowledge is advocating effectively for libraries, librarians, other library staff, patrons and services, particularly, in terms of marketing fundraising and outreach efforts. The major core competence of librarians in the area of information resource is utilising the principles, concerns and strategies of collection management, encompassing the lifecycle of materials from assessment to enduring preservation and other remedial processes. The major core competence of librarians in the area of lifelong learning and continuing education is acknowledging the library's function in continuous education and initiatives in promoting lifelong learning. This is consistent with the findings of Moonasa and Underwood (2018) that maintaining professional knowledge and competence requires regular revision and renewal, especially in a profession that is constantly evolving.

The study also found out that the major core competence of librarians in the area of management and administration is in engaging in strategic communication with colleagues throughout the organization and the community. The major core competence of librarians in the area of organization of recorded knowledge and information is in understanding the principles, systems, trends, and goals involved in the organization and representation of recorded knowledge and information. The major core competence of librarians in the area of reference and user services is employing techniques used to discover, retrieve, evaluate, and synthesize information from diverse sources for use by varying user populations and information environments. This also affirms the findings of Alabi & Sanni (2021).

Furthermore, the study showed that the major core competence of librarians in the area of research and evidence-based practice is discovering, engaging with, and synthesizing existing research from the field using multidisciplinary approaches to various information issues to align relevant findings to one's own professional development and/or institutional needs. The major core competence of librarians in the area of social justice is recognizing, challenging, and changing practices, services, and programmes that have traditionally replicated dominant systems and marginalized others. The study further showed that the major core competence of librarians in the area of technological knowledge and skills is in identifying appropriate technologies and uses that support access to and delivery of library services and resources. The study showed that the level of core competencies of librarians is high, while their major competencies are in the area of lifelong learning and continuing education, technological knowledge and skills, gateway knowledge, and organisation of recorded knowledge and information. The study showed that there is no significant difference in the core competencies of librarians in selected university libraries based on university ownership.

Conclusion

This study has highlighted the high level of core competencies demonstrated by librarians in university libraries, particularly in the areas of lifelong learning and continuing education, technological knowledge and skills, gateway knowledge, and the organization of recorded knowledge and information. These competencies are critical for meeting the dynamic demands of contemporary library services, ensuring that librarians remain pivotal in supporting academic success and institutional goals. The findings further suggest that while librarians are already well-equipped in these key areas, there are opportunities to further enhance their expertise through targeted professional development, advanced technological training, and innovative approaches to information organization.

By continuing to invest in the growth and recognition of these competencies, universities can ensure that their libraries remain at the cutting edge of information services, capable of adapting to emerging challenges and advancing the academic mission. Moreover, this study underscores the importance of aligning librarians' competencies with evolving user needs and

institutional priorities. As the landscape of higher education continues to change, the role of librarians will become increasingly complex and integral to the success of universities. Therefore, ongoing assessment and strategic enhancement of librarians' skills are essential to maintaining high standards of service delivery and ensuring that libraries continue to thrive as centers of knowledge and learning.

In conclusion the future of university libraries is firmly supported by the quality of librarians' key competences. Libraries may remain essential and dynamic resources for their academic communities by providing professional development, innovation, and institutional support strategically.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. While librarians possess strong technological knowledge as found out in the study, it is crucial to keep pace with emerging trends. The university library management should offer specialized training in areas like artificial intelligence tools, machine learning, big data, and digital humanities. This will enable librarians to stay ahead in the rapidly evolving technological landscape.
2. Given that librarians already excel in lifelong learning, universities should continue to support and expand these opportunities. This could involve partnerships with other professional organizations, offering more advanced courses, and encouraging participation in international conferences and seminar.
3. Since librarians are already competent in organizing recorded knowledge and information, further investment in cataloging and metadata standards training is recommended. This could include workshops on linked data, semantic web technologies, and the use of advanced cataloging tools to ensure that the organization of resources is efficient, accurate, and accessible.
4. Departments training future librarians should integrate courses and modules on social justice, technological advancements such as the integration of artificial intelligence and social media for library service delivery, and evidence-based practices into library and

information science curricula to ensure that future librarians are well-equipped with the necessary skills.

5. Given the increasing reliance on digital tools and platforms in library services, it is crucial for librarians to be actively engaged in ongoing professional development, particularly in areas identified as essential competencies, such as social justice, technology utilization, and evidence-based practice, to remain at the forefront of their field.

6. Librarians' expertise in gateway knowledge (helping users navigate and access information resources) should be further developed through training in new discovery tools, digital library services, and advanced search techniques. Enhancing their ability to further guide users in accessing a wide array of digital and physical resources will improve overall service delivery.

7. The library management should implement regular assessment and evaluation of library services to ensure they continue to align with user needs and institutional goals. Hence, librarians should be equipped with the skills to conduct user surveys, analyze feedback, and adjust services accordingly to meet the ever-changing user needs.

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