

REVIEW ARTICLE

Cataloguing competencies: An overview of the cataloguing knowledge required by librarians in Nigerian university libraries

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ABSTRACT

Cataloguing is paramount in Nigerian university library services and purely a technical process requiring specialized knowledge and skills, application of standards and protocols, use of technical tools and software, focus on organizing and processing library materials, and emphasis on accuracy, consistency, and quality control. This paper on cataloguing competencies, focuses on overviewing the cataloguing knowledge competency required by librarians in Nigerian university libraries. Fundamentally, librarians need knowledge of foundational cataloguing and metadata principles which involves understanding the historical foundations that shape contemporary metadata practices and this encompasses knowledge of identity management and authority control, as well as the principles underlying controlled vocabularies. It also includes familiarity with various classification structures and the capacity to recognize major classification schemes. Additionally, it involves knowledge of conceptual models as well as systems and technologies that support metadata functions, including indexing, database structures, authorized text strings, and unique identifiers for effective retrieval. Some of the challenges hindering librarians' competencies include inadequate tools and technologies required for bibliographic control practices, and lack of implementation of Resource Description and Access (RDA). Some recommendations were made which among others include that constant training and retraining of librarians in order to improve their cataloguing knowledge and that the university libraries should provide adequate cataloguing tools with which the librarians can master the art of cataloguing.

KEYWORDS

Librarians, Cataloguing, Cataloguing Competencies, Cataloguing Knowledge, Nigerian University Libraries.

1. Introduction

Quality control of bibliographic information resources is the hallmark of Nigerian university library services. Nigerian university libraries are also known as academic libraries and are central to the universities' objective of promoting research and scholarship (Soledad, Jasmina, and Torre, 2024). They are primarily set up to meet the teaching, learning and research needs of their student population, staff, visitors or members of the local communities in which the libraries are located; with adequate information resources. Hence, university libraries are regarded as the backbone of the intellectual system of the university, which aim at providing excellent services to its users and ensure that their patrons have access to quality information, handy information resources and timely services. Any library is adjudged to have achieved the mandate of excellent services when its users are satisfied with the services offered to them and in order to achieve such goal, Nigerian university libraries, usually acquire large number of

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information materials ranging from books to non-book materials, which can sometimes, run into hundreds of thousands and millions. Such collections of university library materials will most certainly be in a state of chaos and difficult to access by any intending user, if not well organized. In fact, as Ekere and Mole (2014) pointed out, a collection of books, large or small, does not even become a library until it has been organized for efficient use; with due emphasis on speed and ease of access. As they further said, it is the organization that makes the difference because without it, one may just wallow aimlessly and come out of the library frustrated and conclude that there is nothing of use to one in the library. Therefore, the whole essence of organizing library materials is to easily identify locations of such materials, save time and space (Adedibu et al, 2012) and such process of organizing refers to cataloguing.

Cataloguing therefore, is the professional terminology for describing the technical processes of organizing library materials and it has till date, remained the heart of all library services. According to Nwosu (2012), it involves all the processes required to prepare library information resources for the shelves, files or databases or make entries for the catalogue or on-line catalogue or web catalogue. This definition encompasses both the conventional and online aspects of cataloguing. Conventional cataloguing refers to the traditional or manual method of processing library materials for the shelves and catalogue. It has two broad stages involving the descriptive and subject cataloguing stages and requires mastery of a set of rules such as the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rule 2 (AACR2) or other cataloguing rules as well as the use of certain cataloguing tools for processing library materials. Online cataloguing on the other hand is a current trend in cataloguing practice, which is the use of the internet for processing library materials and involves searching and locating data through online cataloguing databases which gives the librarian cataloguer access to unlimited number of bibliographic data online (Gwarzo, 2023). Obviously, the task of cataloguing is usually carried out by librarians who are also trained as cataloguers. Librarians in university libraries are also known as academic librarians and are well trained in librarianship, especially in cataloguing. These librarians are made up of men and women with diverse skills, knowledge, and abilities.

Due to the present obvious and rapid paradigm shift from the traditional cataloguing practice to technological cataloguing; involving the use of computers, which has also redirected the present structure of most library organization; it has become imperative that librarians in Nigerian university libraries, who are also known as academic librarians and are supposedly well trained in librarianship, should be profoundly grounded in the basics of cataloguing so as to be able to keep pace with the evolving cataloguing trends. Notably, most university libraries in Nigeria are gradually joining their counterparts in the developed countries in the use of computers for processing library materials. However, except the librarians are adequately accustomed to the very rudiments of cataloguing, it will most certainly be a roll-up-hill attempt in keeping abreast with the current technological cataloguing advancements. The mastery of cataloguing, from the traditional to the online, undoubtedly follows a logical progression in which the practical foundational knowledge and skills stem from the traditional method, which also is remarkably the origin of any level of cataloguing today. It is therefore, expected of university librarians to be proficient in cataloguing because all careers in librarianship includes work in cataloguing which is always understood to be a major part of library function (Marcum, 2006) and more so because cataloguing holds a remarkable position in the curriculum of library schools (Luther, 2010). Simply put, cataloguing is the core of the Library and Information Science profession.

Hence, a librarian who possesses a degree or degrees in Library and Information Science is a professional and as such, should be competent and possess an in-depth knowledge of a set of cataloguing rules such as the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rule 2 (AACR2) and others as the need may be as well as how to use appropriate cataloguing tools to catalogue library materials; in line with internationally acceptable standards. This implies that librarians' academic qualification(s) seems to have a bearing on their ability to adequately carry out library technical services like cataloguing. Librarians' academic qualification(s) refers to the education

attained by librarians at various levels. Adamu et al (2021) concurred that librarians obtain educational training at various library schools in universities, polytechnics, and other formal institutions across the world. These include Doctorate (Ph.D.), Masters (MLIS, MLS), and Bachelor's Degrees (BLS, BLIS). Although Yanseen (2023) pointed out that a number of literature review demonstrated conflicting conclusions about the connection between educational attainment and expertise in job performance, he further maintained that other research suggested that higher levels of education positively influence the performance of core tasks, creativity and constructive behavior in employees. The latter makes it believable that the higher the education qualification of the librarians, the higher their skills or expertise of delivering cataloguing services. This may be part of the reasons academic librarians in Nigeria are required to have a master degree (MLS, MLIS) in addition to the basic library degree.

Cataloguing competency is dependent on professional knowledge which is both theoretical and practical; involving technical ability, skill and the understanding of work practice and standards. According to American Library Association's Core Competencies for Cataloguing and Metadata Professional Librarians (2017), cataloguing competency includes knowledge, skill and behavioral competencies, and they went further to discuss each of these components as follow: Knowledge competencies encompass background and context for cataloging and metadata work. These competencies include understanding conceptual models upon which standards are based, and the structure of basic cataloging tools and encoding standards. Competencies fall under three main areas: principles, systems, and trends. Principles are comprised of standards for containers and content of bibliographic data. Systems encompass ways to manage bibliographic data. Trends include emerging tools and standards, as well as understanding how cataloging fits into the larger library world. In view of this, it is understandable that librarians take courses in librarianship in order to acquire requisite knowledge in the profession. Otherwise, any instance of inadequacy in such knowledge, quackery becomes the order of the day. David-West (2018) observed that inadequate knowledge of cataloguing and classification rules results to poor interpretation of such rules which is why in some cases, some librarians seem not to have an in-depth understanding of the contents of the Anglo American Cataloguing Rules 2 (AACR2) as well as that of the Library of Congress List of Subject Headings, Library of Congress Classification Schedules; which are the universally acceptable cataloguing tools for academic libraries as well as the Cutter-Sanborn Three-Figure Table.

Skill or ability competencies translate to the application of conceptual frameworks, standards, and principles within a bibliographic system. The basis for competent cataloguing is not only the ability to master individual principles and skills but to synthesize these principles and skills to create cohesive, compliant bibliographic data that function within local and international metadata ecosystems. Thus, university librarians in adherence to stipulated cataloguing rules should be capable of systematically identifying and describing the physical features of each library information material, based on the information provided in each of the given material as well as classifying such according to their respective subject areas but surprisingly, some librarians fall short of this technical procedure as some seem not to be able to appropriately assign access points to books using AACR2 guidelines, identify books that have catalogue-in-prints, assign appropriate punctuation marks in descriptive cataloguing, assign specific subject heading (s) to complex titles using LC subject headings, assign class marks using the LC classification schemes and so on. Again, David-West (2018) noted that inadequate knowledge of cataloguing and classification rules results to poor application of these rules and with these lapses, the librarians will neither be able to bring about excellent and quantitative bibliographic records nor provide easy and timely access to the bulk of existing library materials to intending library users.

Behavioural competencies describe both personal attributes that contribute to success in the profession and ways of thinking that can be developed through coursework and employment experience. These behavioural competencies include interpersonal communication, public

service orientation, initiative and adaptability, professional curiosity and problem-solving. Unfortunately, Muhammad, Baffa and Garba (2018), observed that librarians show lack of commitment and dedication to cataloguing which is why they seem not to pay attention to details, or even to establish and maintain conducive work environment and relationship with colleagues and other library staff. Since competency is the ability to execute or do a job or task that is based upon knowledge, skills as well as supported by the attitude of work demanded by the job, Spencer and Spencer (2000) cited in Gamal and Soelistya (2019), the acquisition and possession of these competencies by university librarians becomes essentially imperative.

Statement of the Problem

The success of the university libraries depends largely on how well these libraries meet the information needs of their users through records of organized bibliographic information materials which in turn, hinges on the cataloguing competencies of the librarians who undertake such responsibilities. Librarians are professionals who have spent ample time in librarianship both at their undergraduate and postgraduate levels in conjunction with the mandatory six months industrial training at each level. With all these years of education and industrial training, it is expected that the librarians should exhibit adequate competencies in cataloguing, since the fact remains that cataloguing is the core in librarianship.

Sadly, the researcher from years of experience working in the cataloguing unit and interacting with fellow librarians, has observed that a reasonable number of librarians seem not to possess the expected cataloguing knowledge as majority seem unable to exhibit knowledge of established cataloguing standards and protocols and lack understanding on how to use the cataloguing tools and software. For instance, many seem not familiar with the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules 2 (AACR2), Library of Congress List of Subject Headings (LCSH) and Classification Schemes (LCC). This seeming lack of cataloguing knowledge competency among librarians in Nigerian university libraries is probably the reason a good number of them do not even like to be posted to the cataloguing unit. In fact, this has even led to an obvious shortage in the number of cataloguers and has resulted to low work output. This is what has necessitated this study, “cataloguing competencies: an overview of cataloguing knowledge required by librarians in Nigerian university libraries”.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study was to have an overview of the cataloguing knowledge required by librarians in Nigerian university libraries. The specific objectives of this study are to:

- examine the cataloguing knowledge of librarians in Nigerian university libraries;
- examine librarians’ knowledge of existing cataloguing tools in Nigerian university libraries;
- Identify the challenges hindering cataloguing knowledge competency in Nigerian university libraries.

Literature Review

Librarians

Librarians in Nigerian university libraries are a diverse group of professionals comprising male and female librarians who are also known as academic librarians. They are usually required to have a master’s degree in the profession. So undoubtedly, these are librarians who have acquired their master’s degree in the field of Library and Information Science and some of them even have some additional educational qualifications. Educational qualification refers to the certificates or degrees earned through formal education such as primary school leaving certificate, secondary education certificate, bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, doctor in philosophy (Ph.D.) and so on. So, librarian cataloguers in Nigerian public university libraries typically have a bachelor’s degree (BLS, BLIS) and master’s (MLS, MLIS) degrees in library and information science. Additionally, some may have a Ph.D. in the profession or related

fields, especially in senior positions. Others may further acquire some professional certificates like the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) and through trainings in cataloguing standards like AACR2, MARC, or RDA. Haven spent quite some years acquiring the requisite formal education/trainings in the profession, they are known to possess in-depth knowledge in cataloguing which is the reason they are also called cataloguers. Although, there may be some variations in their level of additional knowledge, gained from years of work experience as some may be more experienced than others, by reason of the number of year(s) they have worked in their various institutions. To this, Ugwu and Ugwu (2017) agreed that librarians in academic libraries have varied years of work experience. The number of years of work experience may be an added advantage to some of the cataloguing librarians. Often times, these librarians are referred to as Information Specialists as they are responsible for helping the university community understand how to research and analyze information.

In tandem with the basic functions of the Nigerian university libraries, librarians usually shoulder the responsibility of identifying, selecting, acquiring, organizing and providing information resources in the right formats for immediate dissemination at all times to their library users. In fact, they are the brain behind the placement of such information resources on the shelves of the libraries (David-west and Angrey, 2018) and are likened to as gatekeepers who take decision on what to be included in the libraries (Oyelude and Bamigbola, 2012); who also ensure that library users have easy and quick access to the library resources. Alire (2024) acknowledged that one of the numerous functions of librarians in university libraries is to choose, arrange and promote access to information in various formats. Promoting such access to the bulk of library materials can only be feasible through cataloguing.

Cataloguing

In librarianship, cataloguing refers to a technical process in libraries which has to do with creating metadata that stands for information resources like books, sound recordings, moving images and so on. Oyelude and Bamigbola, (2012) described it as the way and manner in which library materials are organized and arranged within the library so as to make the access to these library materials easy for the library patrons while Ekere and Mole (2014) saw it is the process of describing each of the books and information materials that a library has with a view to determining its bibliographic attributes. Similarly, Rafiu and Nwalo (2016) reiterated that cataloguing is the process of describing books and other information materials, indicating bibliographic details like author, editor, publisher, series, tracing and other access points. To Ajani, Sulyman, Amzat and James (2023) cataloguing is the process of classification and describing information resources based on the bibliographic details, arranging them into various subjects or disciplines for easy identification. Perennial talent (2024) affirmed that cataloguing is the process of creating and maintaining bibliographic and authority records of the library resources for easy accessibility to the library users and Haider (2024) gave credence to the above avowal and insisted that cataloguing which is also referred to as library cataloguing deals with the generating and retaining of bibliography and authority records of the library catalogue, the database of books, serials, sound recordings, moving images, cartographic materials, computer files, e-resources among others that belong to a library. The authors further added that the process of cataloguing involves two key activities namely; descriptive cataloging and subject cataloguing. In other words, cataloguing involves two major stages which are descriptive and subject cataloguing. These two stages also have two methods which include conventional and online. Conventional is the traditional or manual method of cataloguing while online cataloguing as the name implies, involves the use of computers and internet in processing library materials and has to do with searching and locating cataloguing data through online cataloguing databases which gives the cataloguer access to an unlimited number of bibliographic data online.

Descriptive cataloguing as the name implies, gives a detailed description of the physical features of each of the library resources such as the name of the creator(s), contributor(s), title(s), edition statement, date of publication, ISBN number, series statement and so on and is the first stage in the cataloguing process. Mole (2010) affirmed that it is the systematic description of the physical attributes of library materials as an item in order to pull together all the significant data about that material and to distinguish it from other items. It is also known as preliminary cataloguing because it precedes the original or subject cataloguing and actual classification of the material. When the acquired library materials are dully processed in the Acquisition Unit of the library, they are usually transferred to the Cataloguing Unit where the cataloguer begins to elicit from and input necessary information on the selected material resources for easy identification. This process, according to Ihekwoaba and Okwor (2019), requires the mastery of a set of rules such as the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules 2 (AACR2); for traditional cataloguing and Resource Description and Access (RDA); for online cataloguing. These rules are very detailed and they properly illustrate most of the information sought after during the descriptive cataloguing which can be found from the title, verso, and cover pages or back of the book and the rules must be strictly adhered to in order to arrange the bibliographic information according to internationally acceptable standards. The identification and description of the library materials is dependent on the available information that are provided in each of the materials and such among others include the author, title, edition, imprint, collation, ISBN, series. This process leads to the second stage of cataloguing which is known as subject cataloguing.

Subject cataloguing involves the assigning of subject(s), class mark, and call numbers to an item in the library collection using appropriate tools like Library of Congress list of Subject Headings (LCSH), Library of Congress Classification scheme (LCC), and Sanborn Three-Figure Cutter Table. This stage of cataloguing according to John-Okeke (2019) is the most difficult and requires cataloguer's judgements to be able to provide and not to misdirect access to the items being catalogued. Sung (2013) concurred to this assertion by saying that in assigning subject headings, many issues arise, causing uncertainty and ambiguity and thus, requiring good judgement. However, Mole (2010) somehow simplified the seemingly difficult process by pointing out that at this point, two questions a cataloguer could consider are: (1) what is this about? And (2) where will the users expect to find this? This implies that it begins with carefully studying each of the information materials so as to bring out the subject(s) covered by the materials and determining the caliber of users each of such material will be relevant to which will in turn determine where the materials will be shelved for quick and easy access. In other words, after determining the subject of an information material, the next thing is to assign a class number to it which accurately portrays its subject content and determine its shelf location. The steps involved in achieving this process, as further elaborated by the author include:

1. Examine the work in question by reading the title, table of contents, introduction, preface, author's/editor's foreword, publisher's blurbs and reviews.
2. Consult the list of subject headings being used in the library to establish the appropriate term for the subject matter so predetermined and to ensure uniformity and consistency.
3. Read the scope note that sometimes accompanies a subject matter in the list to satisfy one's self that the subject is adequate. Also, check if the subject may need geographical or other forms of subdivision.
4. Examine the "NT", "BT", and "RT" (in LCSH) and other terms that describe the book more adequately and accurately.

The major purpose of subject cataloguing is to bring all the information materials in a library collection on related subject matter together which is what makes the search for library information materials less cumbersome and pleasurable. The materials when dully catalogued are well labeled; in most cases, using a stylus pen, and assigned other necessary properties before taken to and properly shelved in the open reading halls. Usually, during the period of

cataloguing work-in-progress, both at the preliminary and subject cataloguing stages, a template cataloguing worksheet as well as items such as pencil, ruler, eraser, and sharpener is used to carry out the cataloguing activities after which the data generated on the worksheet are transferred to a 3x5 catalogue card which are eventually filed alphabetically in their designated catalogue cabinet; which is the end-product of cataloguing. In other words, the library catalogues are generated through adequate cataloguing activities usually carried out by the professional librarians.

The librarian cataloguers work behind the scene to ensure that library materials are organized and labeled accordingly for easy access to the users. They study books, and research databases available in the library and provide useful details of either the online or offline that makes for access point for both other library staff and the end-users. This, the cataloguer achieves through proper classification which generates a call number that is usually positioned at the spine of the book, showing that that particular information could be gotten on the shelves and after which an access point is created. Such access point is provided through a gateway known as the library catalogue. University libraries make use of both card catalogue and Online Public Access Catalogues (OPACs) through which users access the library holdings. So, in order to provide the all-important ease of access to the pool of library holdings, an organized index or list of available materials in the collection must be maintained and such principal index or list is known as the library catalogue which is generated through cataloguing processes. The library catalogue does the following:

- a) Describes what the library owns
- b) Tells you where the items are and
- c) Shows you how to get the items.

Librarians ensure that the library catalogues are equipped to deal with the principal channels of enquiry. The purpose of the catalogue is:

- a) To enable a person find a book of which either the author or organization having intellectual responsibility is known, title is known, subject is known, category is known.
- b) To show what the library has by a given kind of literature or form of material, on a given subject, by a given author or organization.
- c) To assist the user in the choice of a book as to its edition, content, physical form.

Notably, the quality and efficiency of the library catalogue depends on whether the cataloguing processes of such resources were adequately carried out and this in turn depends on the competencies of the librarians who carry out the cataloguing processes. Since it is the primary responsibilities of the university librarians to prepare bibliographic records to represent items acquired by the library and to provide efficient access and retrieval point for library users even without supervision, and the process being purely technical in nature, it becomes imperative for these librarians to actually possess fundamental knowledge of how to discharge these professional responsibilities.

Cataloguing Tools

Cataloguing cannot be carried out without some technical tools. The classification tools are numerous and all depend on what type of library is using them. Some tools are used across all libraries while others are used in some specific libraries. Ogunniyi, Olubiyo, and Okedele (2023) posited that descriptive cataloguing requires Anglo American Cataloguing Rules II (AACR2) and Resource Description and Access (RDA), while Sears List of Subject Headings (SLSH) and Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) are the tools used in classification. They added that general classification tools include Bliss, Dewey Decimal, Colon, Universal Decimal, and Library of Congress classification schemes etc. and that Moys, Library of Medicine, and Oxford classifications are specialized subject-based classification schemes. AACR2 and RDA specify rules and instructions for bibliographic description of resources while SLSH and LCSH give subject term describing the content treatment of the information resource. Cutter Table is another tool for classification. It contributes to

providing identification of information resource amidst others. It forms part of the mixed notation that make up the call mark. Chollom and Daniel (2013) corroborated that cutter table is an alpha-numeric device that substitute words and numbers by using one or more letters followed by one or more Arabic numerals decimally. They provide distinctive identification for information materials. Thesaurus and dictionary are also tools used when cataloguing and classification. They are used to help cataloguers grasp the meaning of a term. It helps the cataloguers to establish the “aboutness” of the information resource in question before searching the subject heading.

Cataloguing Competencies

Generally, competencies refer to the knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal characteristics that enable individuals to effectively perform specific tasks, duties/roles. Employee competencies as a concept, according to Ley and Albert (2003) cited in Hanafi and Ibrahim (2018), has generally been viewed through two main approaches and are defined as the capabilities that a person has which predict superior performance which is why Spencer and Spencer (2000) cited in Soelistya and Gamal (2019) described these as basic characteristics of a person, namely: character, motives, self-concept, knowledge and skills that can influence behavior and ability to produce workforce performance and job satisfaction. They are usually seen to include a person’s knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours which expect competent performance in certain job (Hanafi and Ibrahim, 2018). Roche (2018) explicitly pointed out that competency = knowledge + skills + behavior; where knowledge refers to what is known in a particular field, facts and information; skill, being the ability to do something well; and behavior, being the way in which a person acts in response to a particular situation or stimulus, particularly. Ley and Albert further stated that in knowledge management approaches, competencies imply employee’s technical or professional knowledge.

Deducing from the above descriptions of competencies, cataloguing competencies could be said to refer to the knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal characteristics that enable librarians to effectively perform specific cataloguing tasks, duties or roles. Put differently, it can refer to librarians’ technical or professional knowledge obtained over the course of their career. Sung (2013) concisely averred that no competence is more important in cataloguing than professional knowledge and in agreement, Iyishu (2020) maintained that this is the principal competence required of cataloguers to perform optimally in their job. He further maintained that these competencies include theoretical background as well as technical skills for cataloguing. Bamise, Oluwaniyi, and Igheneghu (2019) observed that cataloguing processes have witnessed a pragmatic change in the guiding rules and tools and Sung acknowledged that knowledge of cataloguing tools and rules are a must-have and the cataloguer must keep abreast of the latest changes and updates since cataloguing tools and rules change regularly to reflect or accommodate changes or new developments in knowledge. Bamise, Oluwaniyi, and Igheneghu posited that cataloguing competency represents the distinct services needed to provide high quality professional support to users of bibliographic records, hence, competencies in cataloguing are distinct and peculiar to cataloguers. Cataloguers are librarians who are sizeable in number but are indispensable in providing important but veiled services to libraries and library users (Bahmann, 2007).

Part of their primary responsibilities is to prepare bibliographic records and provide access for easy retrieval of information resources in the library. In other words, they play the sole role of cataloguing library materials to ensure easy accessibility of such materials. These tasks cannot be done successfully without applying specific rules and standards (e.g., AACR2, RDA, MARC21), creating accurate metadata, effectively using cataloguing tools and software, staying updated on cataloguing trends and best practices, and collaborating with colleagues on cataloguing processes. American Library Association described cataloguing as a process performed repeatedly and demands that cataloguers return to an earlier point in the process, revising the information creation approach such that the basic rules are followed. In this purely

technical process, cataloguing competencies are displayed in knowledge creation across diverse disciplines. Although, Bamise, Oluwaniyi, and Igweneghu further pointed out that with the tremendous advancement in various disciplines, the great challenge for cataloguers in academic libraries is keeping pace with the knowledge and technological expertise necessary for packaging and creating accurate bibliographic record of the accelerated growing information. By possessing the necessary competencies, librarians can excel in their roles, make success, and grow professionally.

Cataloguing Knowledge Competency for Librarians

It is said that “knowledge is power” which boils down to the fact that knowledge equips and empowers the human mind with all the vital ingredients it needs to thrive in every sphere of life, particularly in a given profession like Library and Information Science. Knowledge describes facts, concepts and information typically acquired through experience or education. It refers to both theoretical and practical understanding of a subject such as cataloguing. Sung (2013), described it as professional knowledge and professional knowledge according to Mortier and Anderson (2017) is a collective term encompassing the explicit and tacit knowledge needed for effective practice. Lapaige (2010) identified five types of knowledge – (1) factual knowledge “know what”, (2) contextual knowledge “know why”, (3) procedural knowledge “know how”, (4) social knowledge and (5) pragmatic knowledge; all of which are essential for the development of any given discipline. Alexander et al (1991), cited in Alexander (2023) acknowledged two forms of knowledge in professional development– “domain” and “topic” knowledge. Domain knowledge represents the scope or breadth of declarative, conceptual, and procedural knowledge associated with that field whereas topic knowledge pertains to the depth of knowledge one possesses about particular objects, ideas or experiences specific to the profession.

Cataloguing knowledge competency encompasses background and context for cataloguing and metadata work and these include understanding of conceptual models upon which standards are based as well as the structure of basic cataloguing tools and encoding standards (American Library Association’s Core Competencies for Cataloguing and Metadata Professional Librarians, 2017). Librarians are believed to be custodians of knowledge as they are usually well trained in the field of Library and Information Science to undertake the professional duties of acquiring, processing, and organizing library information materials so as to enable potential users of such information materials have easy and timely access to them. Saddled with such professional responsibilities, librarians working in university libraries are supposed to possess in-depth professional knowledge for cataloging in order to be able to function efficiently. Such in-depth professional knowledge as further elaborated by American Library Association’s Core Competencies for Cataloguing and Metadata Professional Librarians (2017) include the following:

Knowledge of foundational cataloguing and metadata principles which involves understanding the historical foundations that shape contemporary metadata practices, including Ranganathan’s Five Laws of Library Science and Cutter’s objectives of bibliographic control. It encompasses knowledge of identity management and authority control, as well as the principles underlying controlled vocabularies, such as synthetic structures and the advantages and disadvantages of pre-coordinated and post-coordinated terms, with the ability to identify vocabularies currently in use. It also includes familiarity with various classification structures and the capacity to recognize major classification schemes. Furthermore, it requires understanding data standardization through content standards (e.g., RDA, AACR2, DCRM, DACS, CCO), structure standards (e.g., Dublin Core, MODS, MARC, RDA Element Sets, BIBFRAME, EAD, VRA Core), data encoding and exchange standards (e.g., MARC, XML, Turtle), and value standards (e.g., LCSH, LCGFT, LCMPT, LCC, DDC, RDA Value Vocabularies). Additionally, it involves knowledge of conceptual models such as FRBR and RDF, as well as systems and technologies that support metadata functions, including indexing,

database structures, authorized text strings, and unique identifiers for effective retrieval. Competence further extends to familiarity with library services platforms and digital repository systems such as Sierra, Alma, Symphony, Koha, WorldShare, CONTENTdm, Islandora, and DSpace, alongside cooperative bibliographic databases like OCLC WorldCat and SkyRiver. It also includes understanding methods and tools for metadata creation, editing, analysis, and transformation, such as OCLC Connexion, Oxygen XML Editor, MarcEdit, OpenRefine, XML Notepad, and XSLT. Finally, it requires awareness of current trends and professional developments in cataloguing, including linked data initiatives, the Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC), LC-PCC policy statements, and the work of the RDA Steering Committee, as well as an appreciation of how cataloguing and metadata practices contribute to the broader library and cultural heritage context by enhancing user access and supporting core library services.

All these stipulated aspects of cataloguing knowledge will ever be relevant in Nigerian university libraries and as such, remains a necessity among the librarians because a deficit of such knowledge is a critical factor that can pose a negative impact on the libraries' bibliographic record output. Wagner (2021) observed that knowledge deficit is a lack of information needed for something. Thus, pertaining to cataloguing, knowledge deficit implies a lack of information needed for thorough understanding of cataloguing processes and the causes of such deficit as further pointed out by Wagner include among others, misunderstanding of information, complexity of information, lack of access to learning resources and refusal to learn. Everybody knows the saying, "little knowledge is dangerous", thus, knowledge deficit has some consequences which according to Kurdgarz (2019) include inefficiency, poor decision-making, lack of confidence, vulnerability, narrow-mindedness, mistakes and errors.

Therefore, the unique competency of the librarians remains in-depth knowledge of both print and electronic information resources in management of information services that meet the strategic information needs of the individual group being served. In line with this, Park and Camei's (2009) job description study in selected journals between 1999 and 2000 revealed that knowledge on cataloguing and classification standards was the most frequently required qualification in job description. Similarly, Hall (2006) cited in Bello and Mansor (2012), observed that a survey of 266 public, private and academic libraries showed that employers across all types of libraries do not only require an accredited degree for new cataloguers but in addition an understanding of cataloguing code (AACR), rule interpretations, classification, subject analysis, authority control and integrated library system operation. In the same view, Hider (2006) cited in Bello and Mansor (2012) reported that over 70 percent of the libraries predominantly indicated the need for what was defined as core cataloguing skills and knowledge.

On this note, being a good cataloguer requires a deep sense of knowledge and involves a lot of creativity. Anything short of this amounts to inadequate knowledge and in turn, amounts to knowledge incompetency. This is because it could lead to waste of time and effort, as the librarians will most likely struggle to understand and interpret established cataloguing rules, codes, and standards as well as find it difficult to understand how to use standard cataloguing tools. Whitwell (2009) identified a good grasp of specific subjects and a thorough knowledge of standard cataloguing codes as well as demonstration of conceptual skills as a depiction of cataloguing knowledge competency while Murray (2010) stressed that cataloguers get to figure out: (1) "what this thing is", (2) "who might find it useful", and (3) "how to make sure they find it." Thus, university librarians need to know not only the rules but in addition, the trick in knowing which rule to use, when and how to apply them thoroughly too to even bizarre items acquired in the library (Bello and Mansor, 2012). In a nutshell, the possession of this cataloguing knowledge most certainly translates to the measure of cataloguing skills the librarians will display as one cannot demonstrate a skill unless one has the knowledge and willingness because knowledge is an enabler of skills.

Challenges Hindering Librarians' Cataloguing Knowledge Competency

The professional tasks of cataloguing and classification of books and other forms of record are without challenges. Istifanus, Amiel, Yusuf and Ibrahim (2023) in their study "Cataloguing and classification practices and the challenges of cataloguing in digital age: the case of public libraries in Northeast zone, Nigeria" found out that some challenges bedeviling cataloguing and classification are inadequate tools and technologies required for bibliographic control practices, and lack of implementation of Resource Description and Access (RDA). In another study, Muhammad, Baffa and Garba (2018) noted that unavailability of Cataloguing in Publication (C.I.P.) is one of the challenges facing cataloguers and classifiers. Ajani et al., (2022) in their study on cataloguing and classification for quality service delivery by library professionals in Kwara State found that determining the subject content of material at hand was one of the difficulties classifiers are facing. This is a serious challenge because if the subject content of any material is not determined properly the material is as good as lost.

Conclusion

Cataloguing knowledge competency remains a fundamental necessity among librarians in Nigerian university libraries and as a matter of emphasis, a deficit of such knowledge stands to pose a negative impact on the libraries' bibliographic record output. It is therefore, imperative that librarians make committed efforts to equip themselves with such all-important professional competency for greater proficiency. Based on the study, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. The management of the Nigerian university libraries should offer more opportunities for training of technical staff in the areas of cataloguing.
2. Librarians should specifically be trained to understand the use of the different cataloguing tools.
3. The Management of the libraries should put measures that can curb the challenges hindering librarians' cataloguing knowledge competency.

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