QUANTITATIVE MEASUREMENT OF PUBLICATION OUTPUT AMONG LIBRARIANS IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Questionnaire method was used to determine the quantity of publication output among librarians in Nigerian universities over a period of 1985-1992. A total of 202 librarians were sampled from 22 out of the 35 university libraries in Nigeria. Empirical analysis shows that the quantity of publication output is low. Some factors which inhibit publication output such as, under-funding of education, high inflation rate, poor working and living conditions, lack of motivation and current information materials as well as lack of time and interest for research were uncovered. The paper suggests motivational incentives and job satisfaction as a step toward performance effectiveness to enhance high publication productivity among librarians in Nigerian universities.

INTRODUCTION

Between 1948 and 1989, there was a struggle for academic status by librarians working in university libraries. In 1990, the National Universities Commission (NUC) weilding the power conferred on it by Decree 16, legislated that librarians in all Nigerian universities would have academic status. (By Decree 16, the National Universities Commission was empowered to play a supervisory role in both the Federal and State universities). One of the clear implications of the new unambiguous academic status conferred on librarians was that they had to publish or perish [1].

Since the librarians are classified as academic staff, now they enjoy all the privileges which their counterparts - university lecturers have. These privileges include study leave with pay, research/academic allowances and the opportunity of proceeding on both research and sabbatical leave when due. Librarian's promotion in Nigerian university environment is based on publication output and the number of years served at a particular position. Promotion in the job enhances their status/rank and salary. Publication output also brings national and international visibility to the librarians or authors.

Research and citation studies conducted in recent years indicate that Nigerian students and scientists prefer to publish their research papers in overseas journals based in USA, UK and USSR to the local ones. Most third world countries have experienced this trend [1-3].

Olsgaard and Olsgaard [4] observed that the stock in trade in librarianship was communication and transfer of knowledge, yet little is known about the communication of ideas within the profession. The authors conclude that librarianship is sadly behind the disciplines of economics, psychology, and the sciences in determining the bibliometric nature of the professional literature. Writing in support of librarians; Redmond et al. [5] had earlier pointed out that librarians working in university libraries should see themselves as being involved in two information cycles - a "publication cycle" which involves the production of new knowledge, its formalization and its storage and use; and a "demand cycle", providing information to library users or clients. These scholars observed that by taking active part in the publication cycle, librarians could compete with their teaching counterparts in the university environment [5, p.13].

Similarly, Bloomfield [6] had noted that one of the characteristics of librarians was that not only they were the collectors of what other people write, but also they were the producers of a large body of literature relevant to their practice. This scholar urged librarians to use the information resources available to them in extending the frontiers of knowledge by publishing the results of research studies that they have conducted.
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Coughlin and Snelson [7] supported the lofty ideals of publication output among librarians in university libraries. They summarized by stating emphatically that librarians should be “adding to the store of new knowledge and maintaining their heritage by performing and reporting original research if they want to improve the management of their libraries, their performances and their collections”. Their advice is quite timely if librarians really want to hold their heads up among their teaching counterparts in university milieu.

Harrison [8] observed that librarians did not write much and those who write had something to say about libraries and librarianship. He noted that those who do not write, were firmly of the opinion that too much had been written by their colleagues in the profession. He criticized this poor attitude towards writing and urged them to see their roles in multi-dimensional perspectives as information professionals.

Similarly, on the local scene, Onadiran [9] observed that librarians had not written much while examining the place of research in professional library education. He noted that one of the reasons often given by librarians in university libraries against pursuing research in the field of librarianship was that “no original problems are left to investigate”.

Unomah [10] observed that writing and publishing gave a lot of satisfaction and increased one’s ego in an academic environment. He argued that publishing should not be seen as punishment for librarians, rather it should serve as correcting the erroneous impression that publishing is the monopoly of faculty. He observed that one of the practical difficulties militating against the librarians in publishing was the rigidity of his hours of work which makes it difficult for him to incorporate study and research into his usually crowded professional schedules. However, if the librarian must survive as an academic, then he must find time and write.

Many scholars have voiced against the idea of publication productivity among librarians. Prominent among them is Campbell [11] who argued that so far, there had been too much of emphasis on research and publication at the detriment of high quality library services to clients. Campbell finally warned that our services would be seriously affected if emphasis placed on publication output outweighs quality library services rendered. Similarly, Rayman and Goudy [12] observed that “university librarians, the task to publish will be a very difficult exercise”. Mitchell and Swieszkowski [13] and Kenny et al. [14] also held a similar view about these librarians because of the nature of their work. In the absence of a local empirical study to counter these assertions, this paper examines how much writing or quantity of publication are produced by Nigerian university librarians. Furthermore, it attempts to identify those factors which may aid or inhibit the research, writing and publishing among these librarians.

In this paper, survey statistics were categorised into two major dimensions, namely, academic publication output - journal articles, books, accepted or published conference/workshop papers and work related publication output - abstracts, indexes, bibliographies and in-house publications accepted or published by the librarians. Such academic and work related publications were assumed to have had local, national and international book/serial numbers of ISBN or ISSN.

METHODOLOGY

During the 1992-93 academic session, a stratified random sampling method was used to select 278 respondents or librarians working in 22 out of 35 university libraries in Nigeria. All the universities were categorized into five groups consisting of (a) Federal universities; (b) universities of agriculture; (c) State universities; (d) State universities of technology; and (e) Federal universities of technology. Their names or status were used as a major criterion for placing them in a group. Furthermore, for the study, a simple random sampling method was used to select universities from each of the five groups. However, the geographical location of universities was taken into consideration during selection. Finally, all the librarians found in the selected university libraries were given questionnaire irrespective of sex, age and status. The questionnaires were broadly worded to allow each respondent an opportunity to give as much of his/her viewpoint as possible.
202 respondents of librarians including 121 males and 76 females filled and returned their questionnaires correctly representing 72.66% response rate. 5 (2.5%) respondents refused to disclose their sex for reasons best known to them (Table 1).

Table 1
Classification of librarians by sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex of librarian</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>59.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>37.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response (Not disclosed)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents were requested to check on a six point scale to express their level of publication output within the past seven years - from 1985 to 1992 thus: (1) None; (2) 1-3; (3) 4-7; (4) 8-11; (5) 12-15; (6) 16 and above. Furthermore, quantitative values were given to the responses in the questionnaire as indicated above and the means of responses were computed for each publication output dimension.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

To determine the level of publication output among the university librarians a simple percentage was used and the results obtained are shown in Tables 2 and 3 below.

From Table 2, it appears that out of 195 librarians, 83 (42.6%) did not have any journal article to their credit; on the other hand 4 (2.1%) librarians have 16 or more number of journal articles to their credit.

Table 2
Level of academic publication output

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. no.</th>
<th>Academic publication output</th>
<th>Valid no.</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>1-3</th>
<th>4-7</th>
<th>8-11</th>
<th>12-15</th>
<th>16+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Journal articles</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(42.6%)</td>
<td>(25.6%)</td>
<td>(18.9%)</td>
<td>(6.26%)</td>
<td>(4.6%)</td>
<td>(2.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Conference/ workshop papers</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(60.3%)</td>
<td>(34.4%)</td>
<td>(4.8%)</td>
<td>(0.0%)</td>
<td>(0.0%)</td>
<td>(0.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Books</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(76%)</td>
<td>(12.5%)</td>
<td>(6.8%)</td>
<td>(1.6%)</td>
<td>(1.0%)</td>
<td>(2.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>342</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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KEY

y = Total Number of Respondents
x = Total Number of Academic and Work Related Publication Output.

—— = Level of Academic Publication Output

----- = Level of Work Related Publication Output

Scale = 2cm = 50 units on the Y-axis; 2cm = 1 unit on the X-axis.

Fig.: Graph showing the Levels of Academic and Work Related Publication Output among Librarians in Nigerian Universities
Similarly, as regards conference/workshop papers presented and/or published, out of 189 librarians, as high as 114 (60%) librarians did not have any conference/workshop paper to their credit; only 75 (40%) librarians have such publications. To our greatest dismay, out of 192 valid responses received about book publication, as high as 145 (76%) librarians did not have any book to their credit and only 5 (2.6%) librarians have published 16 or more number of books in librarianship and other subjects.

From Table 3 it is evident that there was a low quantity of work related publication output by the librarians.

From 125 valid responses received about the published bibliographies it appears that 50 (40%) librarians did not publish any bibliography, while 66 (52.8%) librarians published between 1-3 bibliographies and only 8 (6.4%) librarians have published between 4-7 bibliographies.

Similarly, 66 (76.7%) librarians did not publish any abstract. Only 17 (19.8%) librarians published between 1-3 abstracts and only 2 (2.3%) librarians published between 4-7 abstracts. Other's publications were practically insignificant.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Academic publication output</th>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>1-3</th>
<th>4-7</th>
<th>8-11</th>
<th>12-15</th>
<th>16+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bibliographies</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(40%)</td>
<td>(52.8%)</td>
<td>(6.4%)</td>
<td>(0.8%)</td>
<td>(0.0%)</td>
<td>(0.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Abstracts</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(76.7%)</td>
<td>(19.8%)</td>
<td>(2.3%)</td>
<td>(1.2%)</td>
<td>(0.0%)</td>
<td>(0.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Indexes</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(57.3%)</td>
<td>(35.0%)</td>
<td>(5.8%)</td>
<td>(1.0%)</td>
<td>(0.0%)</td>
<td>(1.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>In-house publications</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(56.0%)</td>
<td>(33.7%)</td>
<td>(5.4%)</td>
<td>(3.8%)</td>
<td>(0.5%)</td>
<td>(0.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>278</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A significant aspect of the survey is that 59 (57.3%) librarians did not index, 36 (35.0%) librarians between 1-3 indexes, while only 6 (5.8%) librarians between 4-7 indexes. Only 1 librarian each completed between 8-11 and 16 and above number of indexes in books.

A disappointing trend is that 103 (56%) librarians did not have any in-house publications out of 184 librarians who responded to this item. 62 (33.7%) librarians have between 1-3 in-house publications and 10 (5.4%) respondents have between 4-7, and 7 (3.8%) librarians have between 8-11 in-house publications to their credit. Surprisingly, only 1 respondent each have 12-15 and 16 and above number of in-house publications.

The data collected revealed other factors that affected or inhibited publication productivity. These factors were ranked as shown in Table 4.
80 (39.60%) librarians indicate that the greatest barrier facing publication productivity is underfunding of education. Surprisingly, 61 (30.20%) librarians feel that high inflationary rate is the greatest problem affecting their publication output. 40 (19.80%) librarians indicate that the greatest obstacle affecting their publication productivity is poor working and living conditions and 11 (5.45%) librarians opine that lack of motivation and scarcity of current information materials as the greatest barrier, while 10 (4.95%) librarians maintain that lack of time is the main barrier facing their publication productivity.

DISCUSSION

The study shows that there is a low level of publication output among university librarians of Nigeria. However, the barriers which inhibit publication output have been identified. The results are some-how strange and in conformity with the assertions made by previous scholars, like Olsgaard and Olsgaard [4], Rayman and Goudy [12], Harrison [8], Mitchell and Swieszkowski [13] and Kenny et al. [14] who held that librarians in university libraries even in developed countries would find it difficult to write and publish.

The results can be explained by the fact that in the 1960s and the 1980s, librarians were not expected to write and publish the same number of papers as their teaching counterparts. In fact, they were classified as "administrative/professional staff" and emphasis was not placed on research and publication before promotion. In the older universities, where they were classified as academic staff, some authorities did not adhere strictly to the publication requirements for promotion. It was Decree No. 16 of 1990 that mandated or empowered Nigeria Universities Commission (NUC) with a new guideline emphasizing publication requirements similar to that of lecturers for librarians before promotion. Generally, librarians are now classified and treated as academic staff in all Nigerian universities.

In the study, one would notice that librarians did a little better in the work related publication output than the academic publication output. This can be explained by the fact that librarians see work related publication as "feminine in nature" which does not take much time and rigor to produce. The academic publication output is seen as more rigorous and intellectually more challenging to produce. Consequently, it appears that librarians scarcely find time to do research and write papers unlike their teaching counterparts because of the nature of their job which is service oriented.

The study also shows the barriers which inhibit publication productivity. It is a truism that higher education programmes are grossly underfunded in Nigeria since the economic recession of the early 1980s. Workers productivity has been affected too because worker's needs are not met or satisfied. This has caused many strikes in recent times. Budget allocation appears to be
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grossly inadequate. For instance, the National Universities Commission (NUC) recently recommends or stipulates that every university should spend 10% of its recurrent budget allocation on its university library in particular. This recommendation is rarely adhered to as none of the university libraries in Nigeria gets this stated amount. Cuts and withholding of funds are arbitrarily decided upon by university administration and library funds are often an attractive source of funds to slash or from which to borrow. Consequently, this has seriously affected the acquisition of new information materials for students, lecturers and librarians to up-date their knowledge, research skills and to keep themselves abreast of the own development in their field.

Generally, there is a high rate of inflation caused by the global economic recession and weak Nigerian currency value. This harsh socio-economic environment affects every worker. Librarians are no exception. This high inflation rate has brought a lot of dissatisfaction among workers and has affected their productivity. One may not be astonished to observe that the harshness of socio-economic environment has affected librarian's publication output. It appears that the salaries paid hardly meet one's needs because of high cost of living, transport, high school fees and accommodation problem in urban areas.

Many librarians disclosed that poor working and living conditions hinder their publication output. For instance, no university library has fully computerized its major services while some are still contemplating the introduction of automated systems.

Some librarians indicated lack of time for serious research work because of the nature of their duties. Librarians in universities do evening shift/early morning duties. Most librarians confirmed that they observe strictly 40 hours of work per week beginning from 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. daily. This, they said affected their publication productivity because it does not give them enough time for research work and writing unlike their teaching colleagues who do not adhere strictly to daily working period of eight hours.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The introduction of staff/departamental seminar needs to be made compulsory for every academic staff in the library wherein he will have to present a paper in every session. Such a seminar could come from an original research work which could be constructively discussed and brushed up for publication in the form of a paper.

2. Joint and multiple authorships of research papers should be encouraged among librarians irrespective of age, status or salary position within and outside the library environment. Interdisciplinary researchers could equally be encouraged among librarians, archivists, information scientists and other field specialists.

3. Nigerian workers respond positively to monetary rewards as incentives to improve their morale, performance, service and publication output, in particular. Consequently, those librarians who publish required number of papers should not be mandated to stay beyond two to three years before promotion.

4. There are other factors outside the university environment which may aid publication productivity of librarians such as, personal - lack of interest for research/publishing, psychological, non-institutional factors e.g., high rejection rate of manuscripts sent out for publication and lack of job satisfaction and motivational factors (e.g. lack of job satisfaction) and motivational factors (e.g. lack of good working tools or facilities and poor working and living conditions caused by underfunding of education and high inflation rate). Nigerian university librarians need incentives like high wages and comfortable living conditions as well as good social system which could enhance research and publishing skills.

5. Both research and sabbatical leave periods could be made compulsory because during these periods, librarians, archivists and information scientists can jointly carry out research which can result in good papers for publication. Further, research grants and fellowships/sponsorships made available by institutions, bodies and organisations should...
be fully utilized whenever they are available because such facilities do influence publication productivity.

SUMMARY

With the results of the study, one can assert that the publication output among librarians in Nigerian universities is low. Five major problems that inhibit publication productivity have been identified and discussed. All these problems, i.e. underfunding of education, lack of time and interest for research, high inflation rate and poor working and living conditions require necessary attention and remedy, to increase the publication activity of the librarians.

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