

# Assessment of Innovative Skills and Librarians Services Delivery in University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of the study was to assess the influence of innovation skills on Librarians service delivery in the University Libraries in the South-South Nigeria. In particularly, the study seeks to determine the impact of innovative skills in the area of emerging technology in service delivery in academic library. A descriptive research design was adopted for the study to investigate the views of librarians on innovative skills on service delivery in the University libraries. The researchers used questionnaire as the main instrument for data collection from 218 librarians in the study area, and four academic libraries involved in the study. The data collected was analyses using mean and standard deviation to answer research questions and simple linear regression analysis to test the hypothesis at .05 level of significance. The findings reveals that innovative skill play a vital role in service delivery and also reveals that digital literacy skills significantly play a vital role in services delivery in the University libraries, as it account for 81.2% on service delivery. This underscores the important of innovative skills in service delivery in the contemporary age. Implication: The results of the study will help academic libraries and librarians to appreciate the critical role which innovation and digital skills play in effective and efficient service delivery in academic libraries to sustain good patronage.*

**Keywords:** innovative skills, services delivery, academic libraries, South-South Nigeria

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Professionalism is the hallmark of effective service delivery which ensure availability and accessibility of information resources to their users. The modern university library services demand certain levels of professionalism to meet the teeming population of users who are not limited by geographical location, time and distance. In this modern society, the processes of library service delivery are also changes to necessitate the basic professional skills (Aboyade 2016). University libraries are service oriented as such service delivery of any library cannot be complete without professional librarians who ensure that required information are available and accessible by users who acquired it to satisfy their information needs. Libraries must acquire sufficient information resources for the staff to carry out their duties, and information resources represent a major source of knowledge for any existing library, that is why they are called depository of knowledges. Therefore, libraries need to handled and properly manage information resources for effective and efficient service delivery.

Martins and Ledimo (2016), referred to service delivery as where, when and how a service product is delivered to the customer, whether fair or unfair. Service delivery in this study can be referred to as the ability of university library to provide the needed information to users at the time of request in order to satisfy the expectation of users and improve their knowledge of learning. Service delivery can also be seen as the ability of the university library to provide information need of patrons as required in a timely manner in order to satisfy the user's expectation.

To foster service delivery to clients in the academic library, librarians should provide timely information services in the form of print and non-print materials to its users in a timely manner (Akpan, 2018). Therefore, service delivery within the academic environment requires additional training for information technology based (IT) skills. To be able to provide the needed and relevant services to their users, it is imperative for library to carefully explain their services for patrons to understand what to expect and what not to expect as they patronize the library.

Chukwudum and Dika (2017), noted that the place of library and information services cannot be ignored, because access to information is a critical factor in decision making for economic, human and nation development. Quality and timely information service delivery is one of the most important factor that drives the library profession, which is in consonant with the fifth Law of Ranganatan that says "save the users' time". Therefore, it is important to note that service delivery is geared basically towards meeting the information demands and needs of users at the right time when the need arises.

Irrespective of erroneous impression of some library staff contributing to poor service delivery in Nigerian university libraries, observation shows that staff attitude has hindered quality service delivery in Nigerian university libraries. In this library staff should improve their service delivery for quality information services towards teaching, learning and research, while doing so it will

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK promote and actualize the institutional goals. To achieve this, requires effective leadership in the library. Popoola and Zaid (2017), maintain that effective delivery of services in the context of Nigerian university libraries has a functional relation with availability of resources. Thus, the concern to Nigerian university library managers is the need to provide a variety of resources to users and to support institutional programmes.

The essential professional skills for librarians in the digital age, include but limited to innovative skills, digital library skills, information literacy skills, marketing skills, collaboration skills, and cataloguing and classification skills (Jarvelin & Wilson 2016). Innovation is crucial for librarians to adapt to the changing information environment. Librarians must be adept at embracing new technologies, implementing creative solutions to enhance user experiences, and developing novel services to meet the evolving needs of their communities. Moreover, the ability to think critically and adapt to emerging trends is essential for librarians to remain relevant in an increasingly digital world (Jarvelin & Wilson 2016).

With the proliferation of digital resources, librarians must possess a strong foundation in digital library skills. This includes proficiency in managing electronic resources, understanding digital preservation techniques, and ensuring seamless access to online databases and e-books. Additionally, librarians should be familiar with digital curation practices to effectively organize and maintain digital collections, ensuring their long-term accessibility and usability (Madukoma, et al. 2021).

### **Statement of the problem**

Libraries in universities play a pivotal role in supporting the academic mission by providing resources and services essential for teaching, learning, and research. The effectiveness of library services is closely tied to the skills and competencies of the professional librarians responsible for managing these resources. Despite the crucial role of professional librarians in university libraries, and implication of the effectiveness of library services to skills and competencies of the professional librarians, there exists a gap in understanding the specific skills required for effective service delivery in the South-South region, where several universities are located. There is therefore a growing need to assess and enhance the skills of professional librarians to ensure optimal service delivery; given the evolving landscape of information management, technological advancements, and changing user expectations. These are the issue that provides impetus for a thorough examination of the skills possessed by professional librarians and their impact on service quality.

### **Purpose of the study**

1. Investigate the relationship between innovative skill and service delivery in University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria.
2. Ascertain the relationship between digital literacy skills and service delivery in University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

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**Research questions**

1. To what extent does innovative skill relate with service delivery in University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria?
2. To what extent does digital literacy skills relate with service delivery in University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria?

**Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant relationship between innovative skills and service delivery in University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant relationship between digital literacy skills and service delivery in University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Innovative Skills in Library Service Delivery**

The survival of any organization in a society characterized with competition lies solely on the innovation and creative ability of such organization. To gain competitive advantage, it is imperative that individual organizations, including the library, engage in innovative activities.

Madukoma, et al (2021) carried out a study titled “Survey of Innovative Practices among Librarians in Nigeria”. The study investigated the innovative practices among librarians in Nigeria. Survey research design was used in this study. Population comprised 165 practicing librarians that attended the 2018 Nigerian Library Association Annual General Meeting held at Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library, Abeokuta, Nigeria. Self-structured questionnaire was used to collect data and hundred percent return rate was achieved from the participants’ Descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used for data analysis. Major findings from the study showed that provision of research tools and provision of online search tools were the major types of innovation/innovation practiced among librarians in Nigeria. The result also revealed that librarians always use their experience to invent new things that add value to library service. However, the study further revealed that lack of support from the administration and lack of installation of modern technologies in the library were the major hindrances to the practice of innovation/innovation among librarians in Nigeria. The study concluded that librarians in Nigeria have a great extent practice innovation.

A study by Emezie (2018 on innovative library services and practices in a Federal university of technology Owerri (FUTO). According to the author, Innovative services and practices are the buzzwords in today’s libraries. Changes brought about by the electronic environment has impacted on libraries and caused a transformation in services and practices. Consequently, the library of the Federal University of Technology Owerri (FUTO) has keyed into this paradigm by changing its conventional approach. This article explored various innovative services and practices in FUTO library. The study also discovered that the extent of innovative services and practices in the library was high in various areas such as: library visibility (Mean=3.54), library patronage (Mean= 3.45), dependence on the library for research (Mean=3.27), longer hours by patrons (Mean=3.05), more followers on social media (Mean=3.00), and discovered some challenges hindering effective

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innovative services and practices. It was discovered that constant electricity coupled with inadequate funds were major roadblocks.

Zaid and Adetoun (2016), pointed out that there have been important developments in library and information services for a long time although innovation seems to be neglected in the library and information science profession. However, with modern librarianship, there is a general shift in emphasis. According to Obasi (2016), Electronic systems usage in libraries focuses on the level of appreciation of digital knowledge and accompanying practical skills added in an electronic environment. Egwim, Edom and Nnadozie (2016), add that electronic library activities are aimed at projecting a good image for the library and marketing its resources and services to attract patronage. Smith (2016), cautions that online library sites require page update on a regular interval. Also, changes in areas of teaching and learning influenced and enabled by technology, as remarked by Ifidon (2016), have impacted academic libraries. With these changes in the library and information science field, there is a need for the acquisition of new skills by the library staff.

According to Daniel (2016), characteristically, the library and information professionals of the 21st century will assume different attributes and devise new approaches to library operations to fit into the 21st-century global audience. He further noted that librarians are expected to be innovative in the quest for information service delivery. Emeghara (2016) stressed that great and vibrant libraries are now measured by the level of automation, internet connectivity and accessibility to other libraries on a real-time basis, subscription to reputable online databases as well as the quality of the collection. Aina (2016) it also emphasized that knowledge preservation necessitates, ensuring the quality, integrity, and duration of digital research information; sustaining today's evolving digital service environments; bridging and connecting different worlds, disciplines, and paradigms for knowing, understanding and archiving research data in a data world.

### **Digital Literacy Skills and Service Delivery in University Libraries**

According to Zwimpfer (2019), the term Digital Literacy (DL) is increasingly being used to describe new competencies that equip individuals with the confidence and ability to effectively use digital devices and the internet to find, assess, generate new information and communicate. He further explains that to achieve this, one must have some understanding of digital technologies and possess some technical skills to use them. Digital Literacy, from the foregoing, refers to the mastering and use of a wide range of technological, cognitive and social competencies. University Libraries are the libraries attached to universities to support teaching, learning and research of the community (Igwela and Nsirim 2018). Igwela and Nsirim (2018), identified some library services according to the international standard to include; reference service, document delivery service, borrowing, renewing and reserving, computerized interactive search, technical services which is now possible due to application of digital literacy skills by library personnel in service delivery. ICT skills are necessary because ICT skills are a prerequisite for effective services delivery in the contemporary society.

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According to Nsirim (2021) ICT skills are those technological and or computer skills and knowledge required by librarians to be able to fully exploit information services in the wake of new technology. Oyedokun, et al, (2018), viewed ICT competencies of library staff to be those relevant skills and knowledge to be acquired by those working in the library to be able to fully exploit information search, retrieval, and delivery using electronic format. It is demonstrating the knowledge, skills, experience and attributes necessary to carry out a defined function effectively.

Zwimpfer (2019) noted that digital literacy is sorely focused on digital content in its various forms. It is the ability to use ICT to find, evaluate, create and communicate information requiring both cognitive and technical skills. These competencies include but not limited to the ability to effectively operate computers and navigate the net, manage huge volumes of information, evaluate its reliability and critically assess these technological tools. Again, Digital Literacy includes the ability to effectively collaborate in virtual learning environments to solve problems as well as communicate well in technologically mediated social participatory environments. Thus Digital Literacy is not limited to simply knowing the computer and internet operations and orientations but also involves a variety of knowledge theories and ethical issues due to the special nature of digital technologies. an educator or communication expert.

Daniel, et al, (2023) study on librarians' ICT skills and effective library service delivery in university libraries in Rivers State. The study investigated Librarians' ICT skills and Effective Library Service Delivery in University Libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria. The result revealed that librarians had web applications skills, library networking skills, cloud technology skills, and there is a significant relationship between web application skills, library networking skills and cloud technology skill, and effective library services delivery. The study recommended that library management should regularly organise training and retraining for librarians on ICT skills particularly web application skills, library networking skills and cloud technology skills.

Brown (2016) and Zwimpfer, (2019), stated that digitally literate people have the capabilities; to access digital technologies, like computers other mobile devices and the internet; to search the internet for information as well as verify the information sources; competently and efficiently use digital technologies for work; protect personal data while avoiding malicious websites; utilize technological communication channels such as emails, and social media to keep in touch with others.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research design adopted was ex-post facto design because essentially, the researcher does not have direct control of the independent variables because their manifestations have already occurred and cannot be inherently manipulated. The research area was south-south geopolitical zone, Nigeria. The South-South geopolitical zone is one of the six zones in Nigeria, The South-South geopolitical zone, encompassing a rich tapestry of natural resources and cultural diversity.

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The population of the study comprised 225 librarians in selected university libraries in south-south Nigeria, and census sampling technique is used to sampled all the population because it is small and manageable. The instrument used was a 4 point likert-type scale on Innovative Skills and Librarians’ Service Delivery Questionnaire (ISLSDQ) used for data collection and it was divided into section A and B. Section A sought demographic information while section B assessed Innovative Skills and Librarians’ Service Delivery. The instrument was validated using Cronbach Alpha reliability test. The reliability coefficient obtained for the 12 items in the studied variable was .98 which showed that the instrument was reliable enough to be sued. Data collected was analysed using mean(X) and standard deviation (SD). The hypotheses was tested using simple regression analysis and multiple regressively analysis.

**PRESENTATION OF DATA, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

This section deals with the result of the statistical analysis of data gathered for this study as well as findings and discussions. There are three main variables in this study. Innovative skills, digital literacy skills which are independents variables and service delivery which is dependent variable it influences services delivery in the University libraries in South-South Nigeria. The descriptive analysis of the mean and standard deviation of the variable is presented in table 1 and 2 to answer the research questions one and two.

**Research Question 1**

To what extent does innovative skills relate with service delivery in University libraries in South-South Nigeria.

**Table 1:** Descriptive Analysis of Mean and standard deviation of the influence of innovative skills on service delivery in University libraries in South-South Nigeria.

S/N	Variables	Mean	Std Dev.	N
1.	Innovative Skills	21.5780	1.59084	218
2.	Service Delivery	36.1009	3.12989	218

The Table 1 above shows that the variables in the study are innovative skills which is (independent variables) and service delivery by librarians which is (dependent variables) in the University libraries in South-South Nigeria. These variables are continuous, since they are human related variables, their normality was assumed. Consequently, parametric statistics were applied. The descriptive analysis of the mean and standard deviation is presented in Table 1. The interpretation can be inferred by comparing the calculated mean with the population mean of the instrument. The innovative skills in service delivery source have a mean score of 21.5780 out of a maximum of 281. If this value is compared with the expected mean of 36, the mean value is relatively higher than the expected mean. It can be thus inferred from the result that the innovative skills involved in service delivery is relatively higher. Meaning that, there is a significant influence of innovative skills on service delivery in the university libraries in South-South Nigeria.

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**Research Question 2**

To what extent does literacy skills relate with service delivery in University libraries in South-South Nigeria.

**Table 2:** descriptive Analysis of mean and standard deviation of the influence of digital literacy skills on service delivery in University libraries in South-South Nigeria.

S/N	Variables	Mean	Std Dev.	N
1.	Digital Literacy Skills	21.4954	1.62142	218
2.	Service Delivery	36.1009	3.12989	218

The Table 2 above shows that the variables in the study are Digital literacy skills which is (Independent variables) and service delivery by librarians which is (dependent variables) in the University libraries in south-south Nigeria. These variables are continuous, since they are human related variables, their normality was assumed. Consequently, parametric statistics were applied. The descriptive analysis of the mean and standard deviation is presented in Table 2. The interpretation can be inferred by comparing the calculated mean with the population mean of the instrument. The digital literacy skills in service delivery source have a mean score of 21.4954 out of a maximum of 21. If this value is compared with the expected mean of 36. The mean value is relatively higher than the expected mean. It can be thus inferred from the result that the digital literacy skills involved in service delivery is relatively higher. Meaning that, there is a significant influence of digital literacy skills on service delivery in the University libraries in south-south Nigeria.

**Hypothesis one:** There is no significant relationship between innovative skills and Service delivery in University Libraries in South-South Nigeria. The independent variable in this hypothesis is Innovative skills; while the dependent variable is Service delivery in University Libraries. Simple regression analysis was the employed to test this hypothesis.

**Table 3:** Simple Regression Analysis of Innovative Skills and Service Delivery

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj.R <sup>2</sup>	Std error	
1	.875(a)	.765	.764	1.51944	
Model	Sum of square	Df	Mean square	F-ratio	p-value
Regression	1627.102	2	1627.102	704.772	.000(a)
Residual	498.678	216	2.309		
Total	2125.780	217			

\*

Significant at .05 level.

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The result of the analysis is presented in Table 3 above. The simple regression analysis produced an adjusted R<sup>2</sup> of .764. This indicated that the Innovative skills account for 76.4% in variation of service delivery in University Libraries in the study area. This finding is a critical indication that innovative skills are relatively high in the area of the study. The F-value of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) obtained from the regression table was F = 704.772 which was significant at .05 probability level since p is less than .05; and the sig. value of .000 (or p < .05) at the degree of freedom (df) 1 and 216. On the basis of this result, hypothesis one is rejected, suggesting that innovative skills are a significant predictor of service delivery in University Libraries.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relationship between digital literacy skills and Service delivery in University Libraries in South-South Nigeria. The independent variable in this hypothesis is Digital literacy skills; while the dependent variable is Service delivery in University Libraries. Simple regression analysis was employed to test this hypothesis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Simple Regression Analysis of Digital Literacy Skills and Service Delivery in University Libraries

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	Std error	
1	.902(a)	.813	.812	1.35575	
Model	Sum of square	Df	Mean square	F-ratio	p-value
Regression	1728.760	2	1728.760	940.537	.000(a)
Residual	397.020	216	1.838		
Total	2125.780	217			

\* Significant at .05 level.

The simple regression analysis produced an adjusted R<sup>2</sup> of .812. This indicated that the Digital literacy skills accounted for 81.2% in variation of Service delivery in University Libraries in the study area. This finding is a critical indication that Digital literacy skills is relatively high in the area of the study. The F-value of the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) obtained from the regression table was F = 940.537 which was significant at .05 probability level since p is less than .05; and the sig. value of .000 (or p < .05) at the degree of freedom (df) 1 and 216. On the basis of this result, hypothesis two is rejected, suggesting that digital literacy skills are significant predictor of service delivery in university libraries.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The study reveals that innovative skills have a relatively high influence on service delivery in the University libraries in south-south Nigeria. An  $R^2$  value of .764 indicating that the innovative skills account for 76.4% in variation of service delivery in University Libraries in the study area. This implies that there is a significant relationship between innovative skills and service delivery in University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria. This assertion therefore means the more effective innovative skills the more the service delivery in University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria. The finding of this study is in consonance with Zaid and Adetoun (2016), that stated that innovation seems to be neglected in the library and information science profession in this era of information explosion. According to the authors technology continues to impact the delivery of information services, traditional academic library systems have continued to experience changes. These changes affect both the library and librarians. To the libraries, the age of information technology has brought about an information explosion which has resulted in a revolution in the entire library operations while on their part the librarians are now faced with challenges of being innovative, this is necessary if they are to remain relevant in the society. Zaid and Adetoun (2016), further pointed out that there have been important developments in library and information services for a long time although innovation seems to be neglected in the library services delivery in Nigeria. However, with modern librarianship, there is a general shift in emphasis. Daniel (2016), stated that characteristically, the library and information professionals of the 21st century will assume different attributes and devise new approaches to library operations to fit into the 21st-century global audience. Librarians are expected to be innovative in the quest for information service delivery.

Similarly, the finding of hypothesis two equally indicated that digital literacy is indeed significantly related to service delivery in University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria. An  $R^2$  value of .812 indicating that the digital literacy skills accounted for 81.2% in variation of Service delivery in University libraries in the study area. Subsequently, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that the more digital literacy skills, the more the effective service delivery in university libraries. Thus, the result of this analysis is in harmony with Zwimpfer (2019), that state that digital literacy is usually seen as the second phase of digital competency and that the first phase is digital awareness which is now the basics digital activities such as knowing what the computer is used for sending emails. While the second phase is digital literacy which involves skills for daily life, digital competency which is office/workplace skills, and digital expertise which help librarians to deliver effective and efficient service in their domain.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the study, it can be concluded that innovative skills and digital literacy skills are significantly related with service delivery in University libraries in South-South, Nigeria. Digital skills and information literacy programmes are important component of the University library system today

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK globally including those in the south-south Nigeria, hence it is a crucial role that libraries and librarians apply it appropriately to accomplished their daily tasks.

### Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Librarians working in the various types of libraries in the universities in Nigeria should embrace the use of online technologies to enhance effective information service delivery.
2. Librarians should be adequately trained and retrained with the necessary digital facilities due to emerging technology in the field of libraries for effective service delivery.
3. University authorities should ensure adequate funding for the provision of facilities and skills development opportunities for staff to acquire digital skills for effective service delivery.
4. Libraries should look closely at the services they provide from the consumers' point of view, hence, developing innovational services for effective service delivery.

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