

EXPLORING CAPACITY BUILDING NEEDS OF LIBRARIANS FOR DIGITAL INFORMATION SERVICES IN THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR POLICY AND STRATEGIC STUDIES, KURU LIBRARY, PLATEAU STATE

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Abstract

In a rapidly evolving digital landscape, the capacity of library staff to effectively manage and provide digital information services is critical for meeting the demands of modern research and policy-making. This study explores the capacity-building needs of librarians at the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS) in Kuru, Plateau State, specifically in relation to digital resources, computer literacy, and artificial intelligence (AI) skills. The findings revealed key challenges faced by library staff, such as lack of regular training on digital services, absence of a formal knowledge transfer policy, and staff reluctance towards mentoring. The study identifies a pressing need for targeted skill development in digital information services, which can significantly enhance the quality of library services. To address these challenges, the study recommends the implementation of a specialized, ongoing training program in digital resources, computer skills, and AI, in addition to the establishment of a comprehensive mentorship and knowledge transfer policy. These recommendations aim to equip library staff with the tools and knowledge necessary to navigate the digital transformation, improve service delivery, and foster a culture of continuous learning within the library. Ultimately, the study underscores the importance of investing in human capital to ensure that libraries remain relevant and effective in supporting the research and strategic needs of policy makers in the digital age.

Keywords: Capacity-Building, Digital information, Services Provision, Librarians, Skills

Introduction

The rapid evolution of technology has transformed the landscape of library services worldwide, ushering in a new era of digital information provision. Libraries are no longer confined to their physical collections but have expanded their scope to include resources, digital repositories, and online service platforms (Bello & Adepegba, 2023). This shift is crucial for ensuring that libraries remain relevant and effective in meeting the dynamic needs of users in the digital age. The way library users seek information and their information needs have significantly evolved. This shift is largely driven by the global digital revolution, which has transformed how information is created, shared, and accessed. The increasing diversity in

information formats and user demands has pushed libraries to undergo digital transformation, leading to the emergence of modern libraries with updated holdings and services.

Digital transformation has been conceptualized as "a process aimed at enhancing an entity by driving substantial changes to its characteristics through the integration of information, computing, communication, and connectivity technologies" (Vial, 2019). In the context of academic libraries, digital transformation manifests in two primary forms: the transformation of products and the transformation of services. The digital transformation of products involves the conversion of physical resources into digital formats, such as digitizing entire collections to create digital books or archives (Zhang et al., 2020). On the other hand, the digital transformation of services refers to the adoption of digital systems and tools to enhance user access to information resources, streamline service delivery, and improve overall user experience (Bawden & Robinson, 2020). These transformations are essential for academic libraries to remain relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of their users in an increasingly digital world.

As libraries increasingly adopt digital technologies to meet the evolving needs of their users, the role of library staff has expanded beyond conventional responsibilities. Today, they are expected to navigate complex digital systems, manage electronic resources, and provide innovative services that enhance user experience (Zhang et al., 2020). However, this transformation has also exposed significant gaps in the skills and competencies of library personnel, highlighting the urgent need for capacity building to ensure effective service delivery.

Capacity building, defined as the process of equipping individuals with the skills, knowledge, and tools necessary to perform their roles effectively, has emerged as a critical strategy for addressing these gaps (UNDP, 2009). This process is designed to enhance employees' skills, attitudes, behaviors, experiences, and access to information, thereby fostering improved performance and productivity (Cohen & Prusak, 2001). The overarching objective is to align individual and organizational goals, ensuring the successful attainment of both. This process typically involves technical training, the procurement of essential resources, and the development of competencies necessary for providing high-quality digital information services (UNDP, 2009). For library staff, this involves not only technical training but also the development of digital literacy, problem-solving abilities, and adaptability to new technologies (Bawden & Robinson, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

The National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS) in Kuru plays a pivotal role in supporting the information needs of policy makers, researchers, and scholars. As a repository of strategic knowledge and a facilitator of policy development, the library must adapt to technological advancements to maintain its relevance and effectiveness. However, the transition to digital services presents challenges, including inadequate technical skills among staff, limited access to resources, and the need for robust infrastructure.

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of digital transformation, limited research exists on the specific capacity-building needs of library staff in institutions like NIPSS. Addressing these needs is essential for ensuring that the library can meet user expectations and support the institute's mission of advancing policy and strategic research. This study explored the capacity-building needs of staff at the NIPSS Kuru Library to identify gaps and propose strategies for enhancing their ability to provide digital information services effectively. By doing this, the research will contribute to the existing knowledge on digital capacity building in libraries and support the strategic objectives of NIPSS in the digital era.

There is, however, limited research on the specific capacity-building needs of library staff in the context of digital information services. Understanding these needs is essential for designing targeted training programs, acquiring relevant resources, and fostering a culture of continuous learning within library institutions. By identifying the skills gaps and challenges for professional development, the study aims to provide actionable insights that can guide libraries in their digital transformation journey. Ultimately, empowering library staff through targeted capacity-building initiatives will not only enhance service quality but also ensure that libraries remain relevant and responsive in an increasingly digital world.

Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives of this study:

6. To explore the specific capacity-building needs of library staff for effective digital service delivery.
7. To examine the challenges faced by library staff in adapting to digital transformation and providing digital information services.

Literature Review

The review highlights the critical role of capacity building in enhancing the skills and competencies of library staff to meet the demands of digital transformation. Ranagattimath and Naik (2017) emphasized the need for well-structured capacity-building programs in university libraries, identifying significant skills gaps among library professionals and insufficient ICT infrastructure. Their study revealed that while library professionals exhibited positive attitudes toward ICT applications, most training programs were accessed post-employment, underscoring the need for integrated training during formal education. Similarly, Isong et al. (2024) explored the relationship between ICT tools and capacity building in Nigerian public university libraries, finding a positive correlation between internet services, social media platforms, and staff capacity building. However, the study noted weak correlations with tools like OPAC, recommending comprehensive ICT training to improve service delivery.

Nurdin and Purna (2023) expanded the discourse by examining capacity building in the context of governance transformation and policy implementation in the digital era. Their study identified challenges such as skill deficiencies, regional disparities in information access, and barriers like budget constraints and infrastructure readiness. They proposed strategies such as

enhancing digital skills, fostering organizational culture change, and reforming institutional structures to support sustainable digital transformation.

At the institutional level, Nwofor et al. (2023) investigated capacity-building methods at the Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library, revealing that workshops, seminars, and job rotation were effective in improving service delivery. However, challenges such as financial constraints and lack of administrative commitment hindered progress, necessitating increased funding and policy frameworks. Edewor (2020) further demonstrated the impact of professional associations' capacity-building initiatives, showing that librarians who participated in digital skills training introduced innovative services aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Akintola et al. (2022) explored career development challenges among library personnel in Nigerian federal universities, finding that while management was committed to capacity building, programs were often insufficient. They recommended more comprehensive training initiatives and adequate funding to enhance service delivery. Adunni and Omolara (2023) reinforced these findings, highlighting the positive relationship between capacity-building training and job commitment among academic library personnel in Ogun State. They advocated for capacity-building activities focused on education, leadership, and collaboration to improve service quality.

The studies by Liu, Huang, and Wang (2024), Muslim (2024), and Gholap and Sontakke (2024) all highlight how digital technologies have significantly expanded access to information, improved user experiences, and necessitated strategic changes in library operations across various library contexts (public, academic, and private university libraries). Across all studies, there is agreement that digital transformation is not merely a technical shift but a systemic change that requires policy support, ongoing investment, and user-centered design. While Liu et al. and Muslim identify funding and training as recurrent issues, their primary focus is on institutional strategies and policy recommendations to overcome them.

In contrast, Gholap and Sontakke center their analysis on practical and operational difficulties, such as copyright management, budget limitations, and the intricacies of digital resource acquisition, offering collaborative and policy-driven solutions tailored to private institutions. Tolmach (2022) offers a more foundational critique by emphasizing digital competence as the cornerstone of successful digital transformation, arguing that without a skilled workforce, even the best technological interventions may fall short. This view shifts attention from infrastructure and policy to the professional development of librarians, advocating for digital literacy frameworks and continuous skill assessment. Thus, while all scholars acknowledge the opportunities and challenges of digitalization, their emphasis varies from institutional innovation and strategic planning to individual capacity building and grassroots implementation.

Research Methodology

This study adopted the qualitative research methodology and a case study research design. This methodology is the empirical technique that is used when research is aimed at

exploring, describing and evaluating the nuanced and different meanings of participants of a study regarding a phenomenon in a naturalistic setting (Van Maanen, 1979; Merriam, 2009). The Olusegun Obasanjo Library, National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru, Plateau State was the study area. Three Unit heads were purposively sampled for the study. Qualitative content analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews with participants of this study.

Results

• Specific Capacity-Building Needs of Library Staff for effective Digital Service Delivery

The study found that the specific capacity-building needs were tailored towards: (i) Skills for the Digital resources and services of the library (ii) Computer Skills and (iii) Artificial Intelligence Skills.

Skills for the Digital resources and services of the Library: The Library adopted KOHA library System and has an Institutional Repository.

“...specifically the staff in my unit need training on the cataloging module and general data entry onto the KOHA system. However, they do not even have access to modify the Institutional Repository since it is domiciled with the e-library unit of the Library” Participant 2

“...we need training on data entry onto the KOHA system and how to navigate and use resources on the Institutional Repository...” Participant 3

The need for librarians to possess skills related to digital resources and services has been widely acknowledged in the literature. As libraries increasingly transition to digital formats, librarians must be adept at managing and utilizing these resources efficiently. Thirupathi (2024) opined that librarians play a critical role in guiding users to digital information, necessitating a strong understanding of available digital resources. Effective capacity building in this area can enhance user engagement and resource accessibility.

Computer Skills: The skills to navigate and use the computer for library services delivery also emerged as a capacity building need of the participants of this study.

“...the skills needed to work on the computer is also a vital area of target for training as everything and most of our resources are online even as we have physical resources in the library. Users are required to use the KOHA system to borrow books” Participant 3

“ Computer skills are a most in this generation as everything has now migrated and transformed into the computer, every gadget is now made smart to include computing capabilities...” Participant 1

“ Computer Skills are so important that in every organization, it has become a necessary qualification for employment, it has become an indispensable skill in the workspace...” Participant 2.

Computer skills are fundamental for librarians in today's digital environment. As digital information services become more sophisticated, librarians must not only have basic computer skills but also advanced knowledge in using various software and online platforms. A study by Makhdoom et al. (2021) highlights that librarians with strong computer skills are more effective in addressing user needs and providing quality services. Training programs that enhance these skills can lead to improved confidence and service delivery among library staff.

Artificial Intelligence Skills: This theme emerged as a capacity-building need from the narratives of participants of this study.

"...These days and in this generation there is the need for librarians to be abreast with information provision using generative AIs like ChatGPT and ChatPDF, these help librarians to provide services like research-based resources and services for participants conducting their individual research projects in the institute" Participant 1

"...Librarians should also have the skills to manipulate Artificial intelligence tools that are available on line for information searching and retrieval for participants..." Participant 2.

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in library services is becoming increasingly relevant. Librarians equipped with AI skills can develop and manage innovative services such as chatbots, data analytics, and personalized information retrieval systems (Hayatu & Isyaku, 2024). A study by Raju (2020) highlighted the importance and necessity of AI training for librarians to adapt to new trends in information management and user interaction. This not only enhances service quality but also prepares libraries for future technological advancements.

By implication, focusing on skill development in these critical areas, libraries can improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their digital information services. This can lead to better user satisfaction, as librarians will be more equipped to assist patrons in accessing and utilizing digital resources. Similarly, the emphasis on these capacity-building needs can guide the strategic planning processes within libraries. Decision-makers can allocate resources more effectively to training initiatives that address identified skill gaps, ultimately leading to a more capable workforce and better service outcomes.

Understanding these specific needs can also be leveraged for advocacy efforts to secure funding and resources. By presenting data-driven insights on the importance of training in digital resources, computer applications, and AI, library leaders can make a stronger case for investments in capacity-building initiatives.

- **Challenges faced by library staff in adapting digital transformation and providing digital information services**

This study found the following challenges faced by library staff in adapting to digital transformation and providing digital information services: i) Lack of regular training particularly on digital information services provision ii) lack of a policy addressing knowledge transfer in the library iii) Attitude of staff towards mentoring.

Lack of Regular Training, Particularly on Digital Information Services Provision: A lack of regular and ongoing training, particularly in digital information services, is a key obstacle in the adaptation of library staff to digital transformation. In an era where technology evolves rapidly, regular training is essential to keep librarians updated on new tools, platforms, and trends in digital information provision. Participants of this alluded to this challenge in their narratives.

“ *Since the adoption and implementation of the KOHA library software and the institutional repository, regular training have not been conducted, the only training the staff got was once and since then nothing has been done in the form of training*” Participant 1.

“*...The last time we were trained for digital resources and services provision was when KOHA was installed in 2020*” Participant 2.

“*... We never received any training for the IR and Duraspace...*” Participant 3.

By implication, without proper training, librarians may struggle to effectively manage digital resources, navigate digital platforms, and assist users in accessing and utilizing digital content. This can lead to a decline in the quality of services provided to patrons, especially in research-intensive environments like NIPSS. Moreover, without knowledge of the latest technologies and trends, library staff may fail to meet the evolving needs of their users, which can reduce the relevance and impact of the library.

Lack of Policy to Address Knowledge Transfer in the Library: The absence of a formalized policy for knowledge transfer is another major challenge. Knowledge transfer refers to the process of sharing skills, expertise, and knowledge between staff members, particularly from experienced staff to newer or less experienced colleagues.

In this study setting, participants reiterated the challenge of lack of a policy that will entrench knowledge transfer between staff. This, they lamented as being one of the serious issues regarding training for the institutional repository.

“ *there was no policy for training even though it was a part of the recommendations for the implementation of the institutional repository in the institute but since there is no policy, to date only the head of the e-library uses the IR...*” Participant 1.

This implies that without a clear policy, valuable knowledge within the library—especially digital information handling skills and best practices may not be passed on effectively (Nwofor et al. 2023). As a result, institutional memory is lost, and newer staff members may struggle to acquire the practical knowledge needed for their roles. This lack of knowledge transfer can also lead to inefficiencies, as each librarian might have to "reinvent the wheel" when confronted with digital tools or strategies that others already know how to use. Over time, this can create a cycle of under-performance, technophobia and frustration.

Attitude of Staff towards mentoring: The attitude of staff members towards mentoring can be a significant challenge to knowledge sharing and capacity building. Some staff may be reluctant to

engage in mentoring relationships due to various reasons such as lack of time, perceived irrelevance, or personal attitudes towards peer support.

“ some staff believe they acquired the knowledge on their own and so whoever wants to know should also go to school and learn” Participant 3.

A negative attitude toward mentoring can hinder the growth of a collaborative and supportive learning environment. When experienced staff members are not open to mentoring, the dissemination of important skills and knowledge slows down. This reluctance can also perpetuate a culture where staff feel isolated in their professional development, reducing morale and job satisfaction (Ola, 2023). Moreover, staff may miss out on the opportunity to learn from one another, especially in the context of rapidly changing digital services.

Conclusion

These challenges of lack of training, absence of a knowledge transfer policy, and staff reluctance toward mentoring are common barriers to successful digital transformation in libraries. Together, they create an environment where staff may not be fully equipped to provide the cutting-edge services required for a digital-first world. Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach, including regular and targeted capacity-building training, the establishment of knowledge transfer systems, and fostering a culture of collaboration and mentorship.

By tackling these challenges head-on, the library can improve its digital service offerings, enhance staff capabilities, and ensure a more robust and sustainable digital information service provision for its patrons.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are necessary for the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS) Library to address the identified capacity-building needs and challenges:

1. Implement a Specialized and Regular Training Program Focused on Digital Resources, Computer Skills, and Artificial Intelligence (AI): NIPSS should develop and implement a comprehensive, tailored training program that addresses the specific capacity-building needs of library staff, focusing on digital resources and services, computer skills, and AI-related competencies. The training should be designed to be ongoing and progressive, ensuring that staff stay updated on emerging technologies and tools in the library and information services field.

Action Steps:

Computer Skills: Provide staff with foundational to advanced computer skills training, covering topics such as using office software, troubleshooting, network management, and other essential IT competencies that support digital services.

AI Skills: Introduce basic training on AI technologies, such as AI-powered search engines, chatbots, and other AI applications in libraries, with an emphasis on practical applications for improving library services and user engagement.

Regular Updates: Establish a schedule for refresher courses and workshops every 6–12 months to ensure staff continues to develop their skills in alignment with the latest technological advancements in the library field.

- Establish a Knowledge Transfer and Mentorship Framework with Clear Policies and Support for Collaborative Learning: NIPSS library should create a formalized knowledge transfer and mentorship policy that encourages sharing expertise between staff members. The policy should focus on facilitating collaboration, with an emphasis on supporting staff in developing digital competencies, mentoring relationships, and a positive attitude towards knowledge-sharing practices.

Action Steps:

Mentorship Program: Set up a structured mentorship program that pairs experienced staff members with those in need of developing specific skills, particularly in digital resources, computer literacy, and AI applications. Include clear guidelines and expectations for mentors and mentees.

Knowledge Transfer Policy: Draft and implement a policy that formalizes the process of sharing knowledge, with designated time for mentoring and skill-sharing within the library. Include mechanisms for feedback and monitoring to ensure the program's success.

Incentivize Participation: Provide recognition and rewards for staff who actively engage in mentoring and knowledge-sharing activities. This can be integrated into performance appraisals, with a focus on staff development contributions.

Peer Learning and Collaboration: Organize regular peer learning sessions where staff can share new insights or skills they have learned, creating a culture of collaborative learning and continuous improvement.

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