# Involvement of non-professionals in cataloguing: a survey of practices in three academic libraries in Nigeria

**Felicia Yusuf** and **Christopher Nkiko**
Centre for Learning Resources,
Covenant University,
Km 10 Idiroko Road, Canaan Land, Ota
P.M.B 1023, Ota, Ogun State, NIGERIA
e-mail: yusuffelicia@yahoo.co.uk; chrismoj3@yahoo.co.uk

**ABSTRACT**

*The study examined the involvement of non-professionals in cataloguing practices in three academic libraries in Nigeria. Twenty five respondents comprising current cataloguers and those who had worked as cataloguers were used for the study. A descriptive survey method using a self-constructed questionnaire was used. Four research questions were posed and analysed using frequency counts and percentages. Results showed that the involvement of non-professionals in cataloguing is fast becoming a reality, with one university library depending more on non-professionals while the other two showed less dependence on them. Methods adopted by these libraries to ensure quality control include close supervision by professionals, training non-professionals in copy cataloguing, and designation of a librarian to constantly edit the catalogue for possible re-cataloguing. The use of prepared worksheets by librarians to be keyed in by non-professionals is the least used strategy. Other major findings include changes in cataloguing practices which comprise online cataloguing, cataloguing of Internet resources and electronic files, copy-cataloguing, different metadata structures, introduction of OPAC and the involvement of non-professionals in cataloguing practices. Outsourcing, procurement of ICT, employment of Systems Engineers as part of library staff, attendance of workshops and conferences among others were some of the strategies adopted to cope with these changes; however, the application of ICT was the most frequently used strategy. The study concluded that cataloguing practices in the libraries sampled have witnessed changes as a result of the application of ICT in organizing library materials which has in turn changed the role of cataloguers from merely providing bibliographic details of materials to that of supervision and other administrative functions, and in order to maintain relevance, librarians have been forced to build capacity in the area of ICT.*

**Keywords:** Organization of information; Cataloguing; Library non-professionals; Library para-professionals; Academic libraries

## INTRODUCTION

Cataloguing is the hallmark of librarianship. It serves as the hub around which librarianship revolves. It helps to remedy the chaos that would have been the case in libraries. It also serves as a means of organizing knowledge according to their various subjects while also providing the physical description of library materials in order to distinguish each one of them from the total collection of the library. Nwalo (2000) citing Aje (1980) noted that

cataloguing and classification constitute the core of librarianship. He further stated that it is a fundamental discipline that provides orderliness in the library. Cataloguing library materials is as important as the profession itself. The process of cataloguing as stated by Ola (2007) entails the preparation and maintenance of a catalogue including classification, assigning subject headings, and subject indexing. It is one aspect of the profession that has witnessed radical changes due to the introduction of ICT into library routines. This has also been succinctly captured by Dada (2001) when he averred that cataloguing processes have experienced tremendous revolution. Mason (2004) also observed that libraries are a classic example of how automation has impacted on the traditional ways that work is done, particularly in cataloguing departments—changing how, and by whom, the cataloguing is done. He further stated that the introduction of automation into any profession causes dramatic changes, upheaval, displacement of staff, and changing role for others. Automation has impacted the librarianship profession in no small way as one of the most crucial aspects of the discipline, which is cataloguing has witnessed a total change. Some of these changes among others include online cataloguing using the databases of other reputable libraries, changing from one classification scheme to another, the use of Cataloguing-in-Publication, involvement of non-professionals in copy cataloguing and resource sharing in cataloguing activities to mention but a few. This paper will however focus on the involvement of non-professionals in cataloguing activities which is fast becoming a practice in most academic libraries in Nigeria.

It has been claimed that cataloguing practices in Nigerian libraries are experiencing radical changes as a result of deployment of information communication technology in their operations (Dada 2001; Mason 2004). One of such notable changes is the involvement of non-professionals in cataloguing. The study therefore seeks to investigate the claim, find out specific changes in this regard and understand strategies employed to manage the change as well as ensure quality control and best practices.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Cataloguing, which is the core of librarianship has witnessed some revolutions brought about by the introduction of computers into all library routines. One of such revolutions is the use of non-librarians/professionals in cataloguing activities. Non and paraprofessionals in libraries are now effectively engaged in cataloguing which hitherto was the exclusive preserve of professionals (Nwalo 2000). This is as a result of automation which enables libraries connected to the Internet have access to databases of other big libraries such as the Library of Congress and the OCLC where cataloguing details can be copied without having to go through original cataloguing. California Occupational Guide (1996) reacting to the impact of ICT on the role of paraprofessionals in cataloguing observed that automation has in many cases changed cataloguing of routine materials from being primarily a responsibility of the librarian to a paraprofessional responsibility or employees assigned to the cataloguing department. The Bureau of Labour Statistics (2007) also noted that as libraries increasingly use the Internet, virtual libraries and other electronic resources, the duties of library technicians are changing. It further posited that new technologies allow some technicians to assume responsibilities which were previously performed only by librarians; technicians now catalogue new acquisitions. This has stirred up fear in some quarters as it is seen to constitute a threat to the job of professional librarians all over the world. Mason (2004) reported that a study done in the early 1990s showed that American academic libraries are now hiring more paraprofessionals and even fewer professional

librarians than normal. This has a great implication for cataloguers as it places a question mark on their relevance in the 21$^{st}$ century library.

Nwalo (2000) posited that non-librarians, including clerks with computer skills have apparently taken over the administration of the virtual library and could do copy cataloguing online with relative ease. The empire of the cataloguer according to him is fast dwindling, and the professional cataloguer is about to swallow her boast. Due to this development, the role of the professional cataloguer is gradually shifting from that of cataloguing to that of supervision. The changing role of the cataloguer was also put succinctly by Oketunji (2007) when he asserted that the new Cataloguing Department Head or Section Head will have to do something library school has given the least preparation for; being a supervisor of a department that is in a constant state of change as new technologies are embraced.

Commenting on the management of the academic library cataloging department in changing times in America, Sibley (1998) opined that paraprofessionals and clerical staff are doing not only all of the copy cataloging, but often some of the original cataloging as well. Benaud (1992) also observed that paraprofessionals, who previously did the more routine work, while professional cataloguers did the intellectual work, are now more involved in producing more professional work.


## OBJECTIVES AND METHOD

The objective of the study is to examine the involvement of non-professionals in cataloguing activities. The specific objectives are to:
   a) Investigate changes in cataloguing practices in the academic libraries under study;
   b) Examine strategies adopted by cataloguers in these libraries in managing change in their cataloguing activities;
   c) Determine the extent of involvement of non-professionals in cataloguing activities in the libraries under study;
   d) Determine methods adopted to ensure quality control over non-professionals' involvement in cataloguing

Research questions posed are as follows:

   a) What are the changes in cataloguing practices in the library over the past ten years?
   b) What strategies have the library adopted in managing these changes?
   c) Are non-professionals involved in cataloguing activities in the library?
   d) How do library ensure quality control over non-professionals' involvement in cataloguing?

The study adopted a case study and participatory observation approaches. It was assumed that the first and second generation universities in Nigeria would exhibit higher stability in their cataloguing practices; hence only the new emerging universities were examined. The three chosen were based on proximity to the researcher in order to ensure participatory observation. A total of 25 cataloguers in the three libraries under study were used as respondents. Data was analysed using frequency counts and percentages.

The three institutions under study were:

a) Babcock University (Six respondents)

Babcock University is a private Nigerian university owned and operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nigeria. It is located between Ibadan and Lagos, precisely at Ilishan-Remo in Ogun State. The university was officially chartered on April 20, 1999. It has a total population of 5,563 students. The university library is known as Adekunle Alalade Library. It has a total of 45,000 volumes of books, 590 journal titles, 240 CD-ROMs and electronic journals.

The cataloguing section of the library is responsible for classifying newly acquired library materials. The professional librarians engage in both online and original cataloguing. Until 2002 when the X-lib software was acquired, the library was manually operated. Professional librarians provide full bibliographic details of materials on worksheets which are then passed to computer operators to key in the details using the cataloguing module of the X-lib software. Also, manual card catalogues are prepared to serve as back-up.

b) Tai Solarin University of Education (TASUE) (Eight respondents)

This is the first University of Education in Nigeria. It was established in 1978 with the name Ogun State College of Education, which was later changed to Tai Solarin College of Education. On the 29th of January, 2005, the erstwhile Tai Solarin College of Education was transformed and upgraded to a university. It has a total population of 28,000 students. The University Library came into existence in 2005. It houses a collection of more than 20,000 volumes of books and about 2000 journal titles.

The Technical Services Section as it is called is one of the key sections of the University Library. This is where cataloguing and classification of books and journals take place. Organization of new materials is done using the Library of Congress Classification Scheme (LCCS). The old materials are currently undergoing retrospective conversion since the Dewey Decimal Classification Scheme (DDC) was in use before. The activities of the section are yet to be automated though the library enjoys Internet connectivity which allows cataloguers in this section engage in online cataloguing using the Library of Congress online catalogue records.

c) Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU) (Eleven respondents)

Olabisi Onabanjo University, formerly Ogun State University was established on 7th July, 1982 through the efforts of the then civilian Governor of Ogun State, Chief (Dr) Olabisi Onabanjo. The name of the university was changed from Ogun State University to its current name on May 29, 2001. The university is located at Ago-Iwoye in Ogun State and has a total population of 39,065 students. The University runs a multi-campus system; therefore, it has branches of the library scattered all over the various campuses. It has a total of 65,580 and 20,359 volumes of books and journals respectively distributed all over the main and branch libraries.

The technical services department comprises the cataloguing and classification sections headed by the Deputy University Librarian. The section is partially automated; Alice for Windows is the software in use, though the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) is not functional. The software is basically used to enter bibliographic details of library materials. This makes reliance on card catalogue still very heavy. Materials are organized through the use of LCCS.

**FINDINGS**

Table 1 depicts that 52% (13) of the cataloguers are male while 48% (12) represents female. It further reveals that the preponderance of respondents (i.e 92%; 23) possess Masters in Library Science (MLS) while just 8% (2) possess Bachelor of Library Science (BLS). None of the respondents has a PhD degree. It shows that the majority of the respondents have a work experience as cataloguers ranging from 6-10 years, which represents 10 or 40% of the total sample.

Table 1: Demographic Background of Respondents

| Gender | Freq. | % | Qualification | Freq. | % | Work experience | Freq. | % |
|--------|-------|-----|---------------|-------|-----|-----------------|-------|-----|
| Male | 13 | 52 | BLS | 02 | 08 | 1-5 years | 08 | 32 |
| Female | 12 | 48 | MLS | 23 | 92 | 6-10 years | 10 | 40 |
| | | | PhD | - | - | 11-15 years | 05 | 20 |
| | | | Others | - | - | 16 and above | 02 | 08 |
| Total | 25 | 100 | Total | 25 | 100 | Total | 25 | 100 |

The responses in Table 2 confirm that there have been remarkable changes in cataloguing practices in the libraries under study. These changes include: the use of Cataloguing-In-Publication (CIP), online cataloguing using the databases of other reputable libraries, involvement of non-professionals in copy cataloguing, introduction of softwares, cataloguing of internet resources and other electronic files, the presentation of catalogues in an electronic format known as Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) among others.

Table 2: Changes in Cataloguing Practices

| What are the changes in cataloguing practices in the library over the past ten years? | Babcock | | TASUE | | OOU | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| The use of Cataloguing-In-Publication (CIP) | 6 | 100 | 7 | 88 | 11 | 100 |
| Online cataloguing using the databases of other reputable libraries | 6 | 100 | 3 | 38 | - | - |
| Involvement of non-professionals in copy cataloguing | 1 | 17 | 1 | 13 | 7 | 64 |
| Changing from one classification scheme to another | 5 | 83 | 4 | 50 | - | - |
| Introduction of library software resulting in different cataloguing modules | 5 | 83 | 6 | 75 | 8 | 73 |
| Emergence of outsourcing of cataloguing activities | 6 | 100 | 6 | 75 | 7 | 64 |
| Resource-sharing of cataloguing bibliographic details among libraries | 3 | 50 | 1 | 13 | - | - |
| Retrospective conversion of manual cataloguing records into electronic format using library software | 5 | 83 | 2 | 25 | 11 | 100 |
| Migration of cataloguing records from one library software to another | 1 | 17 | - | | 11 | 100 |
| Cataloguing internet resources and other electronic files | 2 | 33 | 3 | 38 | 9 | 82 |
| The presentation of catalogues in an electronic format known as Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) | 5 | 83 | 6 | 75 | 10 | 91 |

Babcock cataloguers reported the highest in the use of online cataloguing using the databases of other reputable libraries (100%), while Olabisi Onabanjo University and Tai Solarin University of Education cataloguers show no experience in this regard. The libraries show some varying degrees of involvement of non-professionals in cataloguing, with only one respondent from Babcock and TASUE respectively reported involvement of para-professionals in copy cataloguing and 64% (7) from OOU reported the same.

The data shows that Babcock and TASUE depend less on non-professional staff for copy-cataloguing, and one possible explanation may be due to the changing job specifications in some university libraries where less support staff are being hired and therefore the professionals are doing basic work like copy-cataloguing. This is actually the trend in most university libraries. However, OOU seems to be dependent on non-professionals. This could be attributable to the fact that it has several branch libraries and needed to involve and train experienced non-professionals to minimize cost in the face of dwindling budget allocations. Another plausible explanation for the involvement of non-professionals could be the need to free the librarians from routine operations to engage more meaningfully in research and other community development activities. This is acceptable as long as quality control measures are firmly in place to ensure strict adherence to cataloguing standards.

The study examines the strategies adopted by the cataloguers in these libraries in managing and coping with change in their cataloguing activities. Table 3 represents the findings. The application of ICT is the most frequently used strategy in the three universities sampled followed by sponsorship of staff to attend conferences and workshops. Staff exchange was hardly employed as a strategy. It is interesting to note that OOU cataloguers reported adopting "enhanced supervision of non-professionals involved in copy cataloguing". This should be an expected strategy coming from a library that seems to be dependent on the non-professionals.

Table 3: Strategies Adopted by Cataloguers for Managing Change in Cataloguing Practices

| What strategies have the library adopted in managing these changes? | Babcock | | TASUE | | OOU | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Outsourcing | 2 | 33 | 1 | 13 | 8 | 73 |
| Procurement of ICT | 6 | 100 | 6 | 75 | 10 | 91 |
| Employment of Systems Engineers as part of library staff | 3 | 50 | - | - | 5 | 45 |
| Attendance of workshops and conferences | 6 | 100 | 5 | 63 | 9 | 82 |
| Staff exchange/attachment to other reputable libraries | 1 | 17 | - | - | - | - |
| Enhanced supervision of non-professionals involved in copy cataloguing | 3 | 50 | 2 | 25 | 11 | 100 |
| Insistence that every fresh employee be computer literate | 6 | 100 | 7 | 88 | 3 | 27 |
| Provision of necessary infrastructures to create enabling environment for automation | 5 | 83 | 4 | 50 | 9 | 82 |

It is noteworthy to mention that the rigid technicalities that characterize manual cataloguing are mitigated through the use of automated cataloguing modules available in most 21$^{st}$ century libraries. The practice is user friendly and easily amenable to the manipulation of a non-professional. The use of metadata structure seeks to standardize operations and limits the level of cataloguing decisions required hence little supervision would permit the successful involvement of a non-librarian.

Are non-professionals involved in cataloguing activities in the library? The involvement of non-professionals in cataloguing practices in academic libraries under study as shown in Table 4 is fast becoming a reality. OOU affirm to the involvement of non-professionals. This finding is also consistent with the findings revealed in Table 2 for the involvement of non-professionals in Babcock and TASUE. However, Table 5 clearly highlights measures adopted by the institutions to ensure quality control. These include close supervision by the professional, training the non-professionals in copy cataloguing and designation of a librarian to constantly edit the catalogue for possible re-cataloguing. The use of prepared worksheets by librarians to be keyed in by non-professionals is the least used strategy adopted.

Table 4: Involvement of Non-Professionals in Cataloguing Practices

| Are non-professionals involved in cataloguing activities in the library? | Babcock | | TASUE | | OOU | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Yes | 1 | 17 | 1 | 13 | 11 | 100 |
| No | 5 | 83 | 7 | 87 | - | - |

Table 5: Methods Adopted to Ensure Quality Control Over Non-Professionals' Involvement in Cataloguing

| How do library ensure quality control over non-professionals' involvement in cataloguing? | Babcock | | TASUE | | OOU | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Through close supervision by librarians | 2 | 33 | 1 | 13 | 11 | 100 |
| Training the non-professionals in copy cataloguing | - | - | 1 | 13 | 11 | 100 |
| Designate a librarian to constantly edit the catalogue for possible recataloguing | 1 | 17 | 1 | 13 | 11 | 100 |
| The use of prepared worksheet by librarians to be keyed in by non-professionals | 2 | 33 | 1 | 13 | 6 | 55 |

**CONCLUSION**

The phenomenon of involvement of non-professionals in cataloguing is a reality in the three academic libraries studied in Nigeria. Olabisi Onabanjo University exhibits higher degree of dependence on non-professionals while Babcock and TASUE present evidence of less involvement of para-professionals. However, the libraries ensured that quality control

standards are entrenched through close supervision by cataloguers, intensive training of non-professionals, designation of a librarian to constantly edit the catalogue for possible recataloguing and the use of prepared worksheets.

Cataloguing practices in the academic libraries sampled has indeed witnessed changes as a result of the application of ICT in organizing library materials as evidenced by the results of the findings. Non professionals now take on conveniently the hitherto sacred job of cataloguers by simply hooking on to the databases of reputable libraries all over the world to copy cataloguing details. This has indeed changed the role of cataloguers from merely providing bibliographic details of materials to that of supervision and other administrative functions.

In order to maintain relevance in the face of these evident changes, most librarians have been forced to build capacity in the area of ICT. Computer networking and the modern environment of cataloguing practice provide for multitasking approach and by extension greater productivity, less manpower and enhanced career mobility.

## REFERENCES

Benaud, C. 1992. The academic paraprofessional cataloger: underappreciated? *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly,* Vol. 15, no. 3: 81-92

Bureau of Labour Statistics. 2007. *Library Technicians*. Available at: www.bls.gov/oco/ocos113.htm

California Occupational Guide. 1996. *Library Assistants.* Available at: www.calmis.ca.gov/file/occguide/LIBRASST.HTM

Dada, T.O. 2001. Foreword. *Proceedings of Selected Papers of the Cataloguing, Classification and Indexing Section of NLA*. October 2001. J. Lasisi, O.K. Odusanya, S.E.A. Sonaike, E.O Okegbola, F. Balogun and L.F. Osinulu. Eds. Nigeria: NLA Cataloguing, Classification and Indexing Section. 2-10

Mason, M.K. 2004. *Automation: IT has changed the face of cataloguing forever, but has it really de-professionalized the work of cataloguing librarians?* Available at: http://www.moyak.com/researcher/resume/papers/clogmkm.html

Nwalo, K.I.N. 2000. Collaboration in the provision and utilization of IT facilities for Library and Information Science education in Nigeria. In: *Information Technology in Library and Information Science Education in Nigeria.* 35

Oketunji, I. 2007. Creativity in cataloguing: which way forward? *Proceedings of Selected Seminar Papers of the Cataloguing, Classification and Indexing Section of the Nigerian Library Association:* 56.

Ola, C.O. 2007. Basic *cataloguing and classification principles: practical approaches to cataloguing and classification of information resources in libraries.* C.O. Ed. Ibadan: End-Time Publishing. 1-15

Sibley, B.P. 1998. *Managing the academic library cataloging department in changing times: a state of the art bibliography*. Available at: www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWEBportal/record