

**ETHICAL ISSUES INFLUENCING THE USE OF ICTS FOR
LIBRARY SERVICE DELIVERY IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY
LIBRARIES: A CASE STUDY OF DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY, ABRAKA**

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Abstract

This study explored ethical issues influencing the use of ICTs for library service delivery in Nigerian University libraries: A case study of Delta State University Library, Abraka. . The study discussed ethical issues in the use of ICTs for library service delivery, the extent ethical issues influence the use of ICTs for library service delivery and the relationship between ethical issues and the use of ICTs for library service delivery. The study employed ex post facto research design to establish the causal-effect relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The study was made possible by the responses obtained from 48 respondents who are library staff (professionals and para-professionals) using the total enumeration technique. The researcher elicited responses from the respondents with the aid of a self-constructed open ended questionnaire and also a thorough review of both empirical and theoretical literature was carried out. The findings revealed that there existed a significant relationship between ethical issues and the use of ICTs for library service delivery. It was also found that plagiarism, cyberbullying, censorship, among others are the ethical issues influencing the use of computers in rendering library services. Thus, it was recommended that library management should organize workshops/seminars for librarians in order to sensitize them on the ethical issues associated with the use of ICTs generally. Also, library management should established rules and regulations accompanied by strict implementation in order to guide librarians and clientele in the use of ICTs. It was also recommended that library week should be organized regularly to sensitize library users on ethical issues that are associated with the use of ICTs.

Key words: Ethical issues, ICTs, Library services, University libraries

Introduction

Libraries of all categories are established to render information services in order to facilitate easy access, location and effective utilization of information resources that are housed in the library and to meet the information needs of its users.

Libraries in higher institutions of learning are regarded as the heartbeat and live blood of the institutions of learning that they are serving due to the different information services that librarians rendered to its users (students, teaching staff, non-teaching staff and other external users of the library) in support of the teaching, learning and research activities that are carried out in the institution. In line with the aforementioned assertion, Patience and Syed (2001) opined that academic libraries are the heart of the learning community through the provision of enabling environment for students and staff to carry out their research and advance their knowledge base. Hence, the discourse on issues have to do with the delivery of library services cannot be overemphasized especially in the 21st Century that is dominated by the use of computers and other auxiliary technologies in all human activities.

Libraries of all categories have experienced tremendous changes in the 21st Century especially in the area of information service delivery due to the presence of ICTs in handling every facet of information processing and dissemination. Emezie and Nwaohiri (2013) are of the opinion that the presence and application of ICTs in library operations have revolutionized the traditional pattern of disseminating information to the use of electronic means of communication, the presence of ICTs have also improved library operations and facilitated the dissemination of and access to information within and outside the library. Librarians now assume active role rather than passive role in the provision of information to library users. Equally, librarians are now gate way to diverse information resources rather than the custodian of books in the library.

Library services include all the assistance provided by librarians to library users in order to ensure or facilitate the effective use of library information resources and meet the information needs of the users. Library services encompass the resources, activities, programmes, operations, etc. carried out or provided by the librarians to satisfy users' information needs which could be behind the scene activities carried by librarians or through readers' services. Throwing more light on the issue of library services, Lihitlar and Rajyalakshmi (2009) argued that one of the major goals of any library system is the provision of pinpointed, exhaustive and expeditious information services to resolve the information needs of its users. Furthermore, Popoola and Haliso (2009) defined library services as all the efforts, activities, operations, programmes that libraries and their personnel (staff) render to meet the information needs of their users. They further established that academic libraries are custodian of information resources or recorded human knowledge where services like Internet services, current awareness services, selective dissemination of information services, repository services, bindery services, indexing and abstracting services, circulation of information resource services, CD-ROM database search services, word processing services, etc. are rendered to

library patrons. However, the use of ICTs in rendering library services is without some regulations to ensure the effective and legal use of these facilities. Ethical issues are expected pattern of behavior which could be written or unwritten that contains acceptable standards guiding the use of ICTs in information handling in the library and beyond. In a nutshell, ethical issues has to do with what is right or wrong arising from the values of a given society (Ugbogbo & Atu, 2016). Thus, to a large extent, the use of ICTs for rendering library services is being regulated by the generally acceptable standards that have been put in place overtime.

Statement of the Problem

Libraries of all types are established basically as service oriented organizations through which the information needs of its clientele are fulfilled. The services rendered in libraries include: reference services, circulation services, e-mail services, indexing and abstracting services, selective dissemination of information services, current awareness services, document delivery services, inter library loan services, consortia services, amongst others. These services are either rendered through the traditional system, with the aid of computers and other technologies or the combination of both. However, the presence of ICTs in the 21st Century has necessitated librarians to reduce the use of the traditional system of library operations for the ICT driven system due to its numerous advantages/benefits over the traditional system. From preliminary observation and due consultation of relevant literature, the researcher has observed that librarians often encountered difficulties or complained of some challenges or expressed displeasure in the use of ICTs for the delivery of library services. Could these displeasures expressed by librarians be associated with the ethical issues that are related to the use of ICTs generally. This puzzle kept the researcher wondering if the ethical issues associated with the use of ICTs is responsible for the displeasure expressed by librarians in the use of ICTs for the delivery of library services, hence, this study on ethical issues influencing the use of ICTs for library service delivery in Nigerian university libraries: a case study of Delta State University Library, Abraka.

Case Study

University libraries generally are one of the major requirements considered by National University Commission (NUC) for approving institution as a degree awarding body. Delta State University has a standard library which has been in existence for over twenty-five (25) years spread across its three campuses (Abraka, Asaba and Anwai campuses) of the institution and Abraka branch of the library as the headquarters. The library has well over fifty (50) staff (professionals, para-professionals and other library staff) that are seasoned workers who are

knowledgeable in the field of librarianship.

In order to stream-line the views of renowned scholars on ethical issues influencing the use of ICTs for library service delivery in Nigerian university libraries with what is obtainable in practical situations, the researcher decided to administer structured open-ended questionnaire made up of thirty (30) items to the library staff on which they were requested to respond to be able to answer the following research questions relating to ethical issues influencing the use of ICTs for library service delivery.

- i. What are the ethical issues pertaining to the use of ICTs for library service delivery?
- ii. To what extent do ethical issues influence the use of ICTs for library service delivery?
- iii. How significant is the relationship between ethical issues and the use of ICTs for library service delivery?

Review of Related Literature

Ethical issues surrounding the use of ICTs for library service delivery is a question of what is right or wrong in the application of computers and other associated technologies by librarians in meeting the information needs of its users. Literature abound on the age long and endless debate across all human endeavours on what is right or wrong or the acceptable ways of behavior in the society. This age long and endless debate which shows no sign of abating was further compounded with the emergence of ICTs which has added another dimension to it. Due to the exponential growth of information in all aspect of human endeavours and the corresponding massive proliferation of ICT tools and techniques, librarians are now at a cross road to determine what constitute privacy, freedom of expression, right to information and accessibility, copyrights, among other ethical issues. Thus, ethical issues are applicable to or they cut across all human endeavors or activities in the society. Librarians like every other professionals want to render library services to their users in a legal or morally acceptable way in the society. Hence, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) ethics in library service delivery have to do with the focus on the relationship between the creation, organization, application/use of ICTs and the acceptable standard, moral values governing human conduct in the society. Ethical issues that pertain to the use of ICTs look at the morality that has to do with the application of computers and other accompanying technologies; they critically examined individual information privacy, copyright issues, etc. (Joan, 2010).

In the use of ICTs for library service delivery, librarians have to decide whether to put restrictions on the use of computers in the library, to charge users for the use of Internet services in the library, allowing users to photocopy certain material(s) in the library and in what percentage, whether to upload certain materials in the computer for the consumption of the library users, preventing a group of library users from having access to the computer and internet services of the library, at what age are the library users allowed to use the internet services of the library, which religious information materials to be uploaded for the view of the library users, how to ensure the privacy of the library users, among other ethical issues are now being faced by librarians.

Ethical issues associated with the use of ICTs for library service delivery in Nigeria revolve round the widespread breakdown of established laws and order, lack of commitment to constituted authorities, societal norms and values, work ethics, social responsibilities, general civility and morals which are binding to all (Akinyemi, 2009; Ogundele, 2010). As posited by Kazi (2012) and Danku (2014), some of the ethical issues influencing the use of ICTs for library service delivery include: intellectual property rights/ copyright infringement, access to information, conflict between "right to information and ethical use of information",

diversification of information works, privacy and information security, digital divide/ globalization, plagiarism, identity theft, health implication on the frequent use of computers, cybercrime, safety of information, among others.

Libraries generally are service oriented in nature, hence, they deal with different categories of library users from different educational background, economic status, social class, cultural/religion believe, ideology, etc. Therefore, in the use of ICTs in rendering services to library users, librarians are at a dicey situation to decide on a morally acceptable or appealing way of rendering their services so as not to offend the library users. Floridi and Sanders (2002) averred that ICTs have unprecedented impact on the present day society and as such raises so many eyebrow in its application especially in the dissemination of information or library service delivery that has to do with numerous library users from different socio-economic status, cultural belief, etc.

There is a continued increase on the issue of personal privacy in the use of computers and other technologies for rendering library services due to information explosion and the ease of accessing information through the use of ICTs. This scenario to a great extent has made librarians to be extremely careful in the application of ICTs in library service delivery so as not to infringe on the privacy rights of individuals (Loch & Conger as cited in Turgay, Salih & Hafize, 2012). In view of the aforementioned, Privacy International (2011) revealed that several countries in a bid to enforce the personal privacy rights have put in place laws to protect the privacy of their citizens as a way to quenching the concern raised by individuals as everyone has the right to demand for his or her private and family life (Turgay, Salih & Hafize, 2012). Another ethical issue that influences the use of ICTs for library service delivery is the issue of copyright or intellectual property rights. Copyrights or intellectual property rights is a complex issue because laying claims to intangible things that cannot be measured explicitly becomes difficult. Also, humans are social creature that interacts with one another, therefore, it is difficult to prove the extent to which an idea belongs to a particular individual. Thus, librarians are being careful when sharing information materials to their users through the use of ICTs or they are being careful of the amount of information shared in order not to violate copyright laws or the intellectual property rights of individuals. Tengku (2003) and Tagacay (2014) observed that to a large extent, the use of ICTs in library service delivery is being influenced by ethical issues. They further buttressed that the coming together of computers, telecommunications and media, the Internet and world wide web have brought a seemingly endless set of ethical issues some of which include: freedom of speech/expression, legal jurisdiction, access to information, right to privacy, cultural diversity, intellectual property rights, cybercrime, gender equality, digital divide, human right, cyberbullying, cybersquatting, exposure to sexual predators, etc.

Methodology

The researcher adopted ex post facto research design to investigate the causal-effect relationship between the independent variable (ethical issues) and the dependent variable (use of ICTs for library service delivery) which has already occurred without the manipulation of the variables. The study was carried out using a population of forty-eight (48) respondents who were library staff (Professionals, para-professionals and library assistants) of the Delta State University Library. The total enumeration technique was used for the study due to the small and manageable size of the population. Hence, the entire population of forty-eight (48) respondents were used as the sample size of the study. The questionnaire was the sole instrument used for the study and it was comprised of thirty (30) items of open-ended questions. Copies of the questionnaire were personally administered to the respondents in their various offices in the library in order to ensure high questionnaire response rate. Data generated from the completed copies of the questionnaire were analyzed using simple percentages, frequency counts and correlation.

Results

Table 1: Ethical Issues Influencing the Use of ICTs for Library Service Delivery

Ethical Issues in the use of ICTs	SA		A		D		SD	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Plagiarism	22	45.8	13	27.1	7	16.6	6	12.5
Identity theft and invasion of privacy	23	47.9	19	39.6	6	12.5	00	00
Health implication on the constant use of computers	19	39.6	17	35.4	6	12.5	6	12.5
Digital divide	19	39.6	21	43.8	8	16.7	00	00
Computer crime	23	47.9	19	39.6	6	12.5	00	00
Copyright infringement	21	43.8	19	39.6	8	16.7	00	00
Security	23	47.9	17	35.4	8	16.7	00	00
Accuracy of information	18	37.6	23	47.9	7	14.6	00	00
Safety of information	11	22.9	21	43.8	16	33.3	00	00
cultural diversity	18	37.5	23	47.9	7	14.6	00	00
Equity in accessing information	19	39.6	15	31.3	8	16.7	6	12.5
Gender equality	19	39.6	17	35.4	6	12.5	6	12.5
Exposure to sexual predators	19	39.6	21	43.8	8	16.7	00	00
Cyberbullying	23	47.9	19	39.6	6	12.5	00	00
Censorship	21	43.8	19	39.6	8	16.7	00	00

Data in Table 1 reveals information on the ethical issues influencing the use of ICTs for library service delivery. It is shown in Table 1 that the respondents strongly agreed that: plagiarism (22, 45.8%); identity theft and invasion of privacy, computer crime, security and cyberbullying (23, 47.9%) respectively; health implication on the constant use of computers, equity in accessing information and gender equality (19, 39.6%) respectively; and as well as copyright infringement and censorship (21, 43.8%) respectively influence the use of ICTs for library service delivery in university libraries. It is equally revealed in the table as agreed by the respondents that: digital divide, safety of information and exposure to sexual predators (21, 43.8%) respectively; accuracy of information and cultural diversity (23, 47.9%) respectively also influence the use of ICTs for library service delivery in university libraries.

Table 2: Extent to which Ethical Issues Influence the Use of ICTs for Library Service Delivery

Ethical Issues in the use of ICTs	VHE		HE		LE		VLE	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Plagiarism	30	62.5	11	22.9	1	2.1	6	12.5
Identity theft and invasion of privacy	22	45.8	18	37.5	7	14.6	1	2.1
Health implication on the constant use of computers	14	29.2	23	47.9	11	22.9	00	00
Digital divide	24	50.0	13	27.1	10	20.8	1	2.1
Computer crime	28	58.3	17	35.4	3	6.3	00	00
Copyright infringement	25	52.1	21	43.8	2	4.2	00	00
Security	22	45.8	23	47.9	2	4.2	1	2.1
Accuracy of information	19	39.6	24	50.0	3	6.3	2	4.2
Safety of information	10	20.8	26	54.2	8	16.7	4	8.3
Cultural diversity	19	39.6	24	50.0	3	6.3	2	4.2
Equity in accessing information	7	14.6	28	58.3	8	16.7	5	10.4
Gender equality	28	58.3	17	35.4	3	6.3	00	00
Exposure to sexual predators	25	52.1	21	43.8	2	4.2	00	00
Cyberbullying	22	45.8	23	47.9	2	4.2	1	2.1
Censorship	19	39.6	24	50.0	3	6.3	2	4.2

Table 2 provides information on the extent to which ethical issues influence the use of ICTs for library service delivery in university libraries. It is revealed in the Table that: plagiarism (30, 62.5%); digital divide (24, 50.0%); computer crime and gender equality (28, 58.3%) respectively; copyright infringement and exposure to sexual predators (25, 52.1%) respectively; to a very large extent influence the use of ICTs

for library service delivery in university libraries. Other respondents indicated that: health implication on the constant use of computers, security, exposure to sexual predators and cyberbullying (23, 47.9%) respectively; accuracy of information, cultural diversity and censorship (24, 50.0%) respectively; safety of information (26, 54.2%) and equity in accessing information (28, 58.3%) to a large extent also influence the use of ICTs for library service delivery in university libraries.

Table 3: Correlation on the Ethical Issues and the Extent of Use of ICTs for Library Service Delivery

		Ethical Issues	Extent of Use of ICTs
Ethical Issues	Pearson Correlation	1	.645**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	48	48
Extent of Use of ICTs	Pearson Correlation	.645**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	48	48

α 0.05

Data in Table 3 shows the significant relationship between ethical issues and the extent of use of ICTs for library service delivery in university libraries. It is shown in the table that the Pearson's product correlation coefficient (r) is .645 and this is positively statistically significant ($r=.645, n=48, p<0.000$). Since the p-value of 0.00 is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between ethical issues and the extent of use of ICTs for library service delivery in university libraries.

Discussion of Results

The responses from librarians on ethical issues influencing the use of ICTs for library service delivery indicated that the issue of what is right or wrong or the issue of acceptable ways of behaviour in a given society have permeated every facet of human activities/endeavours and the use of computers and other accompanying technologies is not left behind in this age long debate. This was confirmed from the responses of majority of the respondents that several ethical issues such as: plagiarism, identity theft and invasion of privacy, computer crime, security, cyberbullying, health implication on the constant use of computers, equity in accessing information, gender equality, copyright infringement and censorship influence the use of ICTs for library service delivery in university libraries as revealed in Table 1.

The finding in Table 1 is in agreement with the views of Akinyemi (2009) and Ogundele (2010) that the ethical issues associated with the use of ICTs for library service delivery in Nigeria revolve round the widespread breakdown of established

laws and order, lack of commitment to constituted authorities, societal norms and values, work ethics, social responsibilities, general civility and morals which are binding to all. Thus, it is worthy to note at this juncture that the exponential growth of information and the presence of ICTs in all human activities have added another dimension to the issue of moral or what is right or wrong in our present day society. The finding as shown in Table 2 also revealed that to a very large extent, ethical issues influence the use of ICTs for library service delivery in university libraries. This is an indication of the fact that libraries being service oriented in nature deals with numerous users of different educational background, economic status, social class, cultural/religion believe, ideology, etc. is at a crossroad to decide on what is morally appealing to all in order not to encroach on the privacy of its users, act as security threat to its users, infringe on the intellectual property of its users, etc. in the course of rendering library services via the use of computers and other accompanying gadgets.

As expressed by majority of the respondents, plagiarism, digital divide, computer crime, gender equality, copyright infringement and exposure to sexual predators are to a very large extent influence the use of ICTs for library service delivery. The finding in Table 2 buttressed that of Turgay, Salih and Hafize (2012) which revealed that one major ethical issues that influence the use of ICTs for library service delivery is copyrights or intellectual property rights. They emphasized that copyrights or intellectual property rights is a complex issue because laying claims to intangible things that cannot be measured explicitly becomes difficult. Also, humans are social creature that interacts with one another, therefore, it is difficult to prove the extent to which an idea belongs to a particular individual. Thus, librarians are being careful when sharing information material(s) to their users through the use of ICTs or they are being careful of the amount of information material(s) shared in order not to violate copyright laws or the intellectual property rights of individuals.

Also, it was revealed in Table 2 that: health implication on the constant use of computers, security, exposure to sexual predators, cyberbullying, accuracy of information, cultural diversity, censorship, safety of information and equity in accessing information to a large extent influence the use of ICTs for library service delivery in university libraries. The finding in Table 2 is also in agreement with that of privacy international (2011) which revealed that several countries in a bid to enforce the personal privacy right have put in place laws to protect the privacy of their citizens as a way of quenching the concern raised by individuals as everyone has the right to demand for his or her private and family life.

The study also reveal in Table 3 that a significant relationship exists between ethical issues and the extent of use of ICTs for library service delivery in university libraries with a correlation index of 0.645 and p-value of 0.00 against the alpha

level of 0.05. The finding as revealed in Table 3 further indicates the fact that the use of ICTs in rendering library services is without some regulations to ensure the effective and legal use of these facilities. Hence, to a large extent the use of ICTs for library services is being regulated by the generally acceptable standards that have been put in place over time because ethical issues have to do with what is right or wrong arising from the values of a given society (Ugbogbo & Atu, 2016). In the same vein, Akinyemi (2009) and Ogundele (2010) emphasized on the relationship/tie between ethical issues and the use of ICTs for library service delivery in their assertion that ethical issues associated with the use of ICTs for library service delivery in Nigeria revolve round the widespread breakdown of established laws and order, lack of commitment to constituted authorities, societal norms and values, work ethics, social responsibilities, general civility and morals which are binding to all.

Conclusion and Recommendation s

The presence and application of ICTs in every facet of information handling has changed the traditional system of selecting, organizing and disseminating of information/ library service delivery in its entirety. The application of ICTs by librarians in library service delivery have raised a lot of issues pertaining what is right or wrong in the society because ICTs have created a lot of loop holes or has become a threat to national and private life or security of individuals. Thus, ethical issues and the use of ICTs generally are intertwined and as such librarians must be conversant with the acceptable way of life in a given society or the constituted laws of the society in order to guide them in the application of ICTs for library service delivery so as not to offend its users or the rights and privileges of citizens. Arising from the sampled opinions elicited from the respondents, the researcher found that: several ethical issues such as: plagiarism, identity theft and invasion of privacy, computer crime, security, cyberbullying, health implication on the constant use of computers, equity in accessing information, gender equality, copyright infringement, censorship, etc. jointly influence the use of ICTs for library service delivery in university libraries. Therefore, the level of success recorded by librarians in the use of ICTs for rendering library services may be determined by the level of compliance by librarians and library users on what is morally right or wrong in a given society.

It was also found that to a very high extent, the aforementioned ethical issues influence the use of ICTs for library service delivery in university libraries which has indirectly put librarians at a crossroad to decide on what is morally appealing to all in order not to encroach on the privacy of its users, act as security threat to its users, infringe on the intellectual property of its users, etc. in the course of rendering library services via the use of computers and other accompanying

gadgets.

The researcher also found out that there exist a significant relationship between ethical issues and the extent of use of ICTs for library service delivery in universities libraries. This implies that the application of ICTs for rendering library services is without some regulations in line with what is morally acceptable in a given society. Hence, what is morally right or wrong in a given society must be considered at all times before deploying ICTs for rendering library services.

It is therefore recommended that: library management should organize workshop/seminar for librarians in order to sensitize them on the ethical issues associated with the use of ICTs. Librarians should monitor and guide library users on the use of ICTs for accessing library services within and outside the library. Library management should establish rules and regulations in line with established laws of the society to guide librarians and clientele in the use of ICTs within and outside the library. Librarians should organize library week on a regular basis to sensitize library users on ethical issues that are associated with the use of ICTs generally.

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