SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES OF LIBRARIANS IN MODERN LIBRARY E NVR O NMENT: A CASE STUDY OF DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY, ABRAKA, NIGERIA

DR. ESOSWO FRANCISCA OGBOMO DEPARTMENT OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE, DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY, PMB 1, ABRAKA.

Abstract

The purpose of the study is identify the core skills and competencies of librarians in modern library environment. The objectives of the study is identify the types of skills/competencies possessed by the librarians in the modern library environment, determine the means/methods through which they acquired the skills and competencies and find out the hindrances to acquiring the skills and competencies. Descriptive survey method was employed for this study. The population for the study was 35 academic librarians from the Library School and the University library. Questionnaire was used to collect d at from respondents. The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire and it was administered on a one-on-one basis to the respondents to ensure high response rate. The data were analyzed using frequencies and statistical mean. Findings showed that the librarians possessed IT, Internet, professional, presentation, database, publishing and value added skills. The means/methods through which they acquired their skills and competencies were through selfstudy, attending workshops/seminars, formal and informal education, from colleagues and attending IT programmes. Another finding revealed that learning IT knowledge, lack of written communication, insufficient staff in the library, and inadequate financial support are the hindrances to acquiring the skills and competencies. The study therefore concluded that the librarian should spice his/her skills and competencies with emerging ICT so as to act as both librarian and information technologist in the modern environment. The study recommended that the librarians should act in a proactive manner to support the modern library environment which must be continually updated.

Keywords: Skills, Competences, Informational Professionals, Modern library environment

Introduction

The library as a social institution is responsible for the provision of information for education, inspiration, recreation, social, economic, cultural and technological growth. As service oriented

institutions, the libraries bridges the gap between knowledge. "Libraries that offered services in traditional environment are gradually changing their roles with the advent of Information Communication Technology (ICT)" (Ganaie, 2005, p.38). According to Quadri (2012), today libraries have changed from the conventional resources and services provider to the digital resources and service provider. The library environment had changed from the conventional boundaries to the ICT driven environment and with calculated risk and opportunities (Singh & Pinki, 200^c). As libraries grow, changes are inevitable. According to Mahesh and Mittal (2010),

changes sweeping across libraries have never been pronounced as seen in recent times with the advent of ICT applications in libraries.

Modern library environment is the creation of library's physical atmosphere to arouse particular emotional craving in library clients in order to improve and secure increased usage of the library and its resources. For librarians to survive in the modern library environment, they need to possess the ability to deal effectively and proactively with a wide variety of modern-day challenges in the library. They need to shift their focus from traditional library activities of collecting, processing, storing and accessing the information to offer customer-centered automated information services, generated by using online/offline databases, e-resources, e-journals, networks and consortia, etc. Today, majority of the libraries are 'using computers and latest ICT tools and techniques for performing various house-keeping jobs such as, acquisition processing, and serial control and also for delivering various computerized services to the users. It should be noted that apart from the generic and traditional skills possessed by the librarians, they should in addition possess ICT skills which must be updated continuously.

The terms skill and competency have been used interchangeably, however, they are slightly different. Skill is practical dexterity in carrying out an action whereas, competency is often defined as the intrinsic attriLute and mental capability that govern how an individual interact with the world. Also, Sahu (2013) defined skill as a capability or proficiency in execution or performance that is needed for someone to arrange and execute an action designed to attain some goals or accomplish a selected task. A skilled person has the flexibility to perform any task with success. Competency on the other hand enables individuals to contribute positively to their organizations. Therefore, skill can be seen in an action in the way an individual carries out a task while competencies are hidden inside the individual but influence how he/she uses his/her skills. Ckill is the capability acquired by the librarian through training to successfully complete a particular task, whereas competencies are the skills that enable the librarian to succeed in a task (Sahu, 2013). According to Raina (2000), since the dawn of 21st century, libraries are facing serious transition on account of the following three main reasons:

1. The transition from paper to electronic media as the lominant form of information storage retrieval and dissemination. Convergence of different media, such as text, graphics, and sound, into multimedia resources, has direct impact on this transition.

2. Increasing attention on accountability, with focus on quality customer services, performance measurement, bench marking and continuous improvement. In addition, shrinking financial resources have direct bearing on this shift.

The American Association of Law Libraries (2010) created a document for the core competencies for law librarianship which can also be used by other types of libraries. According to the document, the core competencies created for the law librarians includes:

110

3. demonstrate a strong commitment to excellent customer service by recognizing and addressing the diverse nature of the library's patrons and community;

4. to have knowledge of the library workings including issues, standards, global best practices ability to use IT to support teaching, learning, and research;

5. To possess knowledge of digital imaging and recording technologies and reproductions of primary source materials;

6. awareness of changes in the use of information technology as well as to monitors and

implements changes in technology and information systems;

7. have knowledge of the procedures of acquisitions, prioritizing the processing, shelf management, collections management, and preservation of collections;

8. possess the leadership skills such as cogitative, risk taking, and creativity, irrespective of the management hierarchy;

9. mentorship and exchange knowledge, competencies with users and colleagues;

10. exhibit good communication skills;

11. be acquainted with the publishing activities and be able to communicate with the publishers and

other information providers;

12. recognize professional networking values and to actively participates in professional activities.

13. continuously pursue personal and professional growth; and" (AALL, 2010, p.2).

With the increased pressure on librarians to keep up to- date, and to maintain and improve productivity, continuous attendance to skill development courses is required (Ramaiah & Moorthy, 2002). Library professionals have identified a range of skills and these have been grouped or classified in a number of different ways. For example, one of the classifications categorizes skills as either professional or personal (SLA, 2003). Another classified them as technical. IT, and managerial (Sridhar, 2000. To survive and sustain in the modern library environment, one has to

have combination of generic, traditional and ICT related skills.

Generic Skills

Generic skills is applicable to all disciplines. The generic skills include: communication skill, flexibility, adaptability, self-confidence, creativity, innovation, anaytcal skills, problem solving, decision making, service attitude, customer relationship, presentation skills, stress management, time management, and working with difficult people.

Managerial Skills They are sometimes referred to as 'personal transferable skills. These are skills that are learnt in one situation, but can also be put into practice in another situation. The managerial skills includes: local and global thinking, planning and organizational skills, finance management skills (such as fund raising, skillful use of financial resources, accounting and auditing skills), team building, leadership, negotiation skills, etc.

Professional Skills

Professional skills are those acquired by an individual and necessary for use in a particular profession or assignment. The professional skills include: information technology skills (such as hardware/software and networking skills, MS-Office suite, presentation software e.g. power point, library automation, database creation, Internet and intranet skills, scanning technique, networking skills), information literacy, technical professional skills, and knowledge management.

Traditional Librarian Skill

The traditional librarian skill can be incorporated with handling of digital and online resources, i.e. acquisition, cataloguing and organization of resources, metadata schemes, reference/information services, information packaging, circulation, preservation, online reference service, information search skills, copyright and intellectual property laws, user behavior, user needs, information sources, packaging of information, management of digital and hybrid libraries, evaluation of information and information sources, knowledge of information flows in society (Sahu, 2013).

Value Added Skill

Value added skill is necessary for library professional in this present era. The professional must find the products and services that none of other organizations will offer. It includes marketing library skill, skill of conducting user education programme, research skill, skills for work and decision-making, etc. (Sahu, 2013).

Technical Librarian Skill Technical skills are those skills, which are needed to handle information technology and its other connected fields like computer operation, telecommunications media, creation of online data base, designing of websites, net surveying, etc. Thus the entire librarians should be familiar with the latest technology to handle its application within the library environment (Sahu, 2013).

Transferable Skills

Transferable skill is general and managerial skill associated with communication, public speaking, public relations, interpersonal and group skill, writing, interviewing skill, listening skills, conduction focus skills, teamwork, time management and research skill etc. which are relevant for the librarian to lead their library into prime position (Sahu, 2013). Appropriate Attitudes, Values and Personal Traits These skills are associated with user-orientation, service-orientation, belief in the pursuit of knowledge, love of learning, ability to read and respond to novel situations, intellectual curiosity, interaction with members of the profession, ability to articulate the roles of libraries and librarians (Sahu, 2013).

Domain Knowledge

Domain knowledge is very important and needed for modern library environment. In general, domain knowledge is the subject knowledge that are specific to the type of information service or organization they are working in (Sahu, 2013).

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study
1. What are the types of skills/competencies possessed by librarians in the modern library environment?

2. Through what means/methods do the librarians acquire the skills and competencies?

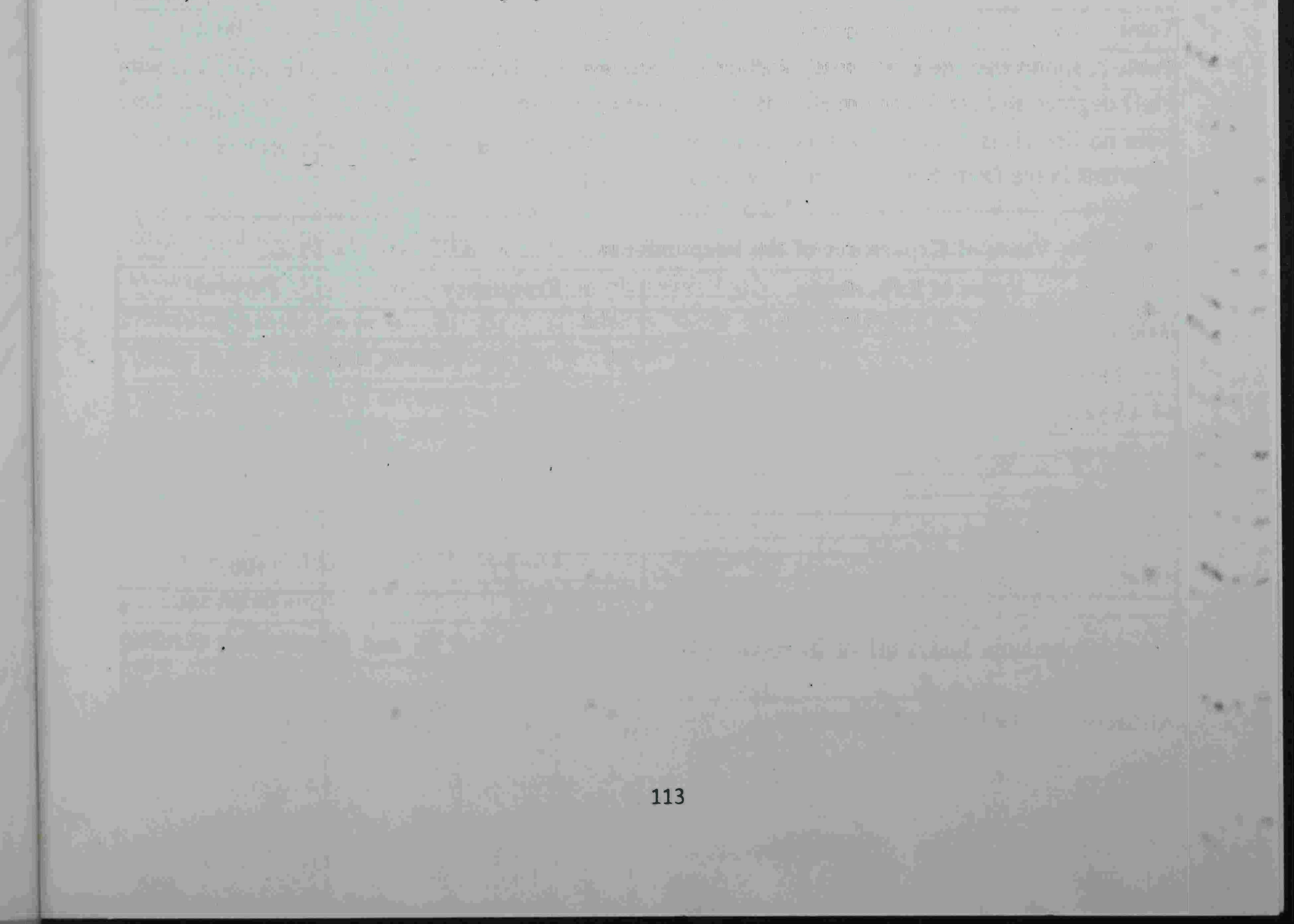
3. What are the hindrances to acquiring the skills and competencies?

Methodology

The descriptive survey method was employed for this study. The population for the study was 35 academic librarians. This comprised 18 academic librarians from the Library and 17 from the Department. A questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents. The data were analyzed with simple percentages and statistical mean.

Findings and Discussions

A total of 35 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and 23 i.e. 65.71% were returned. This is presented in Table 1. The response rate is considered okay for the study because the acceptable response rate for most studies is 60% (Malaney, 2002; Evans, Peterson, & Demark-Wahnefried, 2004, as cited in Dulle, Minish-Majanja & Cloete, 2010).



Findings and Discussions TABLE 1: Response Rate of the Respondents

| No. of Copies Administered | No. of Copies Returned | Percentage of Copies Returned | | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| 35 | 23 | 65.71 | | | | |

Socio-demographic Data of the Respondents

TABLE 2: Gender of the Respondents

Gender Frequency Percent

| Total | 23 | 100.0 |
|--------|----|-------|
| Female | 14 | 60.9 |
| Male | 9 | 39.1 |

Table 2 shows that there were more female librarians than their male counterparts.

TABLE 3: Academic Qualification of the Respondents

| Academic Qualification | Frequency | Percent | | |
|------------------------|-----------|---------|--|--|
| BLS/BLIS/B.Sc | 2 | 8.7 | | |
| PG Diploma | | | | |
| MLIS/MLS/M.Sc | 12 | 52.2 | | |
| Ph.D | 9 | 39.1 | | |

Total23100.0Table 3, shows that there were 12(52.2%) librarians with MLIS/MLS/M.Sc degrees, 9(39.1%) with

Ph.D degrees and 2(8.7%) with BLS/BLIS/B.Sc degrees respectively. It should be noted that there were no librarians with a PG Diploma degree as their highest qualification. This implies that the librarians in the Delta State University were highly read.

| Years of Experience | Frequency | Percent | | |
|---------------------|-----------|---------|--|--|
| Below 5 years | 1 | 4.3 | | |
| 6-10 years | 7 | 30.4 | | |
| 11-15 years | . 3 | 13.0 | | |
| | 3 | 13.0 | | |
| 16-20 years | 4 | 17.4 | | |
| 21-25 years | 5 | 21.7 | | |
| 26 and Above years | 23 | 100.0 | | |
| lotal | | | | |

TABLE 4: Years of Experience of the Respondents

Most respondents had worked between 6-10 years (30.4%) and 26 and above years (21.7%) respectively. Answering of the Research Questions

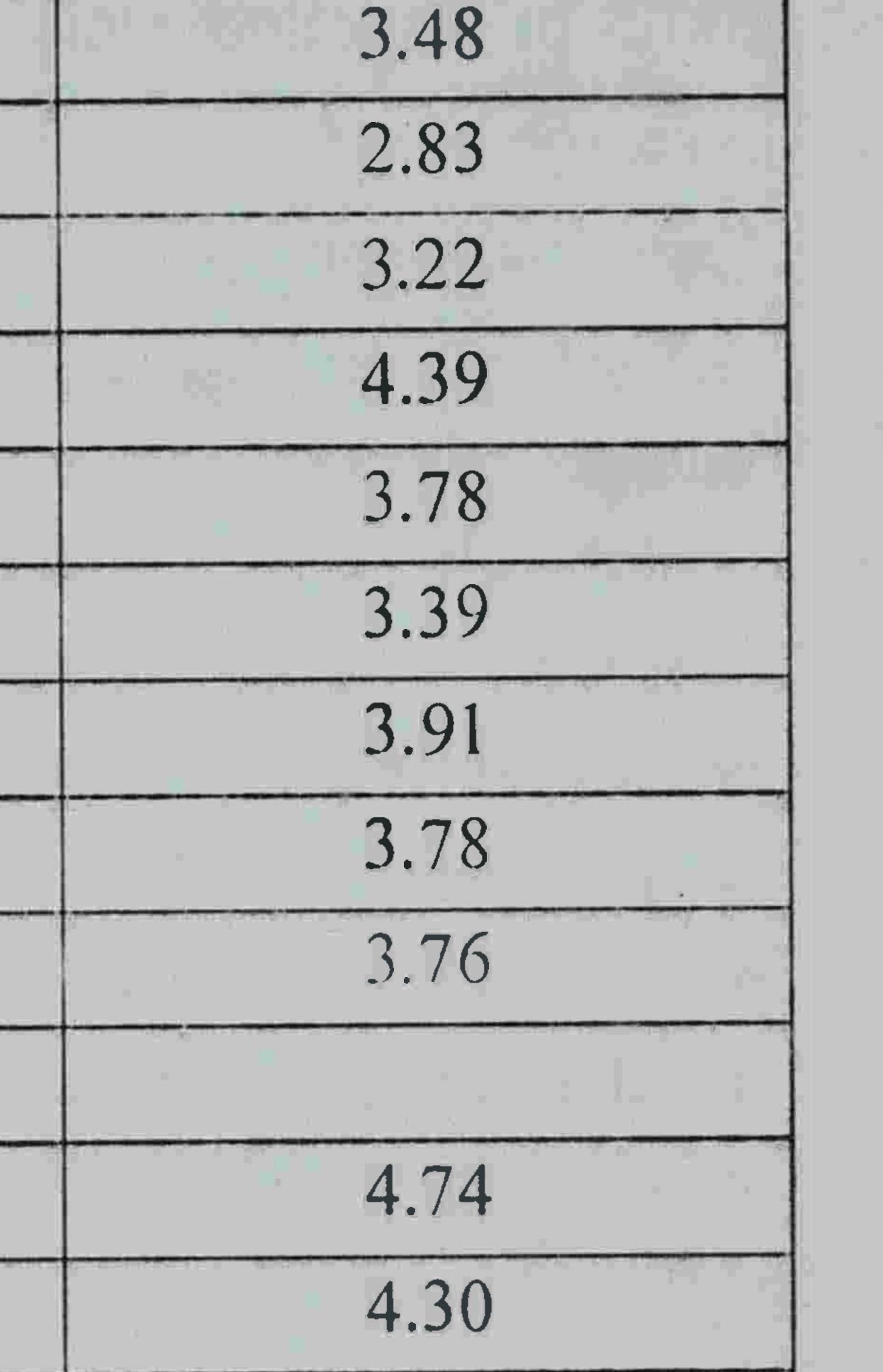
Research Question One What are the types of skills/competencies possessed by librarians in the modern library environment?

TABLE 5: Skills/Competencies Possessed by Librarians

Statistical Mean Skills/Competencies IT Skills Using Web browsers and knowing their functions Understanding PC operating systems

| Provide technical support | |
|--|--------|
| nstall and maintain printers | |
| lardware/software and networking skills | |
| nformation literacy skills | |
| Knowledge of Digital library software | |
| Using anti-virus programmes | |
| Ability to use Microsoft office suite | |
| Library Automation | |
| Average Mean | |
| Internet skills | |
| Use internet to search for information using search en | ngines |

Ability to employ effective search techniques



4.43

4.35

| Average Mean | 4.VJ |
|---|-------|
| Professional skills | 1 1 3 |
| Communication/writing skills | 4.43 |
| eadership and interpersonal skills | 4.43 |
| ndependent and innovative skills | 4.43 |
| Verage Mean | 4.43 |
| Presentation skills | |
| Ability to use Microsoft power point | 3.48 |
| Understand scanning of documents techniques | 3.48 |
| Average Mean | 3.48 |
| Database skills | |
| Use of Microsoft access | 3.91 |
| Install, maintain and administer databases | 2.26 |
| Average Mean | 3.09 |
| Skills in publishing | |
| Web design skills | 2.35 |
| | |
| 115 | |
| | |

| Author and publish an internet sites | 3.52 |
|--|------|
| Use of desktop publishing softwares | 3.17 |
| Use of Microsoft FrontPage | 2.74 |
| Average Mean | 2.95 |
| Value added skills | |
| Marketing library skill | 3.70 |
| Skill of conducting user education programme | 3.96 |
| Research skill | 4.39 |
| Skills of work and decision making | 4.22 |

Average Mean

Criterion Mean = 3.00

Table 5 shows the skills/competencies possessed by the librarians. The librarians possessed IT skills such as using web browsers and knowing their functions and information literacy skills; however, they do not possess skills in the installation and maintenance of printers. They also possessed Internet skills (such as use of search engines), Professional skills (such as communication skill) and Presentation skills (such as use of Microsoft Power Point). They possessed Database skills (such as use of Microsoft Access); however, do not possess skill in the installation, maintenance and administration of databases. They possessed skills in publishing (such as use of Desktop publishing software); however, do not possess web design skills. They possess value added skills such as skills of work and decision making and marketing library skills. It can be

deduced from the finding that the librarians possessed various types of ICT skills and competencies.

This finding is in line with Farahi and Gandhi (2011) who noted that the librarians of today needed to be skilled in many ways so as to adopt new skills and techniques for better services and improve facilities.

The finding also supports the work of Singh and Pinki (2009) who reported that in the modern library environment, for librarians to survive, they need to possess the ability to deal effectively and proactively to modern-day challenges in the library. Sridhar (2000) stated that realizing the fast upcoming advancements, librarians must have technical skills, IT skills and managerial skills as the world is in transition. Research Question Two

Through what means/methods do the librarians acquired the skills and competencies?

TABLE 6: Means/Methods of Acquiring Skills and Competencies

| | | Yes | | No | |)tal |
|------------------------------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|
| Means/Methods | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Self-study | 23 | 100 | | | 23 | 100 |
| Training at work place | 9 | 39.1 | 14 | 60.9 | 23 | 100 |
| Attending workshops/seminars | 16 | 69.6 | 7 | 30.4 | 23 | 100 |
| Formal education | 18 | 78.3 | 5 | 21.7 | 23 | 100 |
| Through colleagues | 21 | 91.3 | 2 | 8.7 | 23 | 100 |
| Attending IT programmes | 17 | 73.9 | 6 | 26.1 | 23 | 100 |
| | 10 | 826 | 1 | 171 | 23 | 100 |

17

Table 6 shows the means/methods through which Librarians acquires their skills and competencies. They possessed skills and competencies through self-study, attending workshops/seminars, formal and informal education, through colleagues and attending IT programmes. However, they do not possess the skills and competencies through training at work place. It can be deduced from the finding that they possessed the skills and competencies through self-study, from colleagues, informal education, formal education, attendance to IT programmes and attendance to workshops/seminars.

The finding of the study agrees with the work of Raina (2000) who noted that the existing informational professionals must be trained continually to sustain in the global competitive market. These skills need to be updated regularly through continuing professional development programmes. The finding is also in line with Ramaiah and Moorthy (2002) who reported that it is not always possible to recruit the staff with new skills. What is possible is to provide regular development opportunities that prepare them for the new roles. This is possible by continuing education in order to maintain job effectiveness in a changing information environment and to meet the demands put upon them by the society. With the increase of pressure on librarians to keep up to- date, and to maintain and improve productivity, continuous attendance to skill development courses is required.

Research Question Three

What are the hindrances to acquiring the skills and competencies?

TABLE 7: Hindrances to Acquiring Skills and Competencies

| Yes | | No | | Total | |
|-----|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| 18 | 78.3 | 5 | 21.7 | 23 | 100 |
| 20 | 87 | 3 | 13 | 23 | 100 |
| 17 | 73.9 | 6 | 28.1 | 23 | 100 |
| 19 | 82.6 | 4 | 17.4 | 23 | 100 |
| 7 | 30.4 | 16 | 69.6 | 23 | 100 |
| 20 | 87 | 3 | 13 | 23 | 100 |
| 1 | No. 18 20 17 19 | No. % 18 78.3 20 87 17 73.9 19 82.6 | No.%No.1878.35208731773.961982.64 | No. % No. % 18 78.3 5 21.7 20 87 3 13 17 73.9 6 28.1 19 82.6 4 17.4 | No. $\frac{6}{6}$ No. $\frac{9}{6}$ No.1878.3521.7232087313231773.9628.1231982.6417.423 |

From the Table 7, it could be noted that work overload. library professional not interested in learning IT knowledge, lack of written communication, insufficient staff in the library, and inadequate financial support are the hindrances to acquiring the skills and competencies.

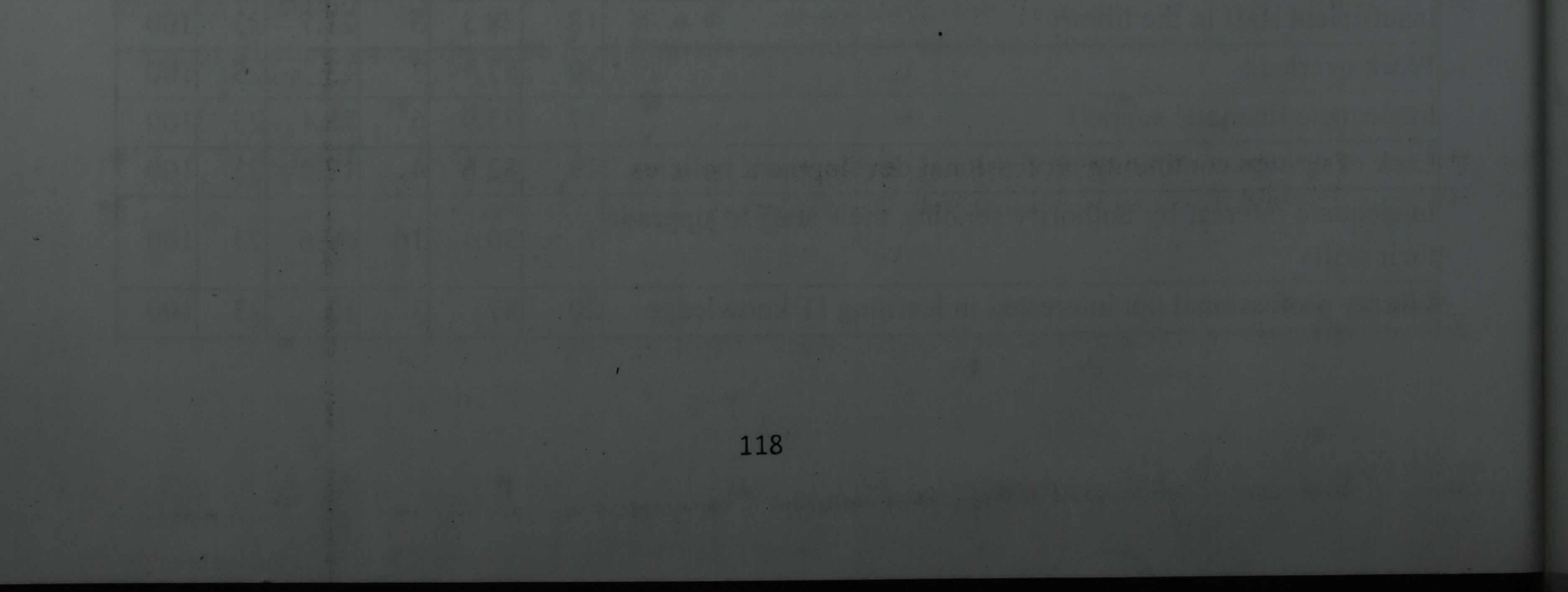
Conclusion

In the ICT environment, librarians may face challenges in the organization and dissemination of information. Therefore, they need spice up the skills and competencies with the emerging ICTs so as to act as both librarian and information technologist.

Recommendation

The modern day library environment is forcing libraries to focus on accelerating technology, innovation, technical complexities, social and legal issues, cost, risk, competence, skills of staff and technology itself. Therefore, the librarians have to act in a proactive manner to support the modern day library environment which must be continually updated.

A 100 A 100



References

- American Association of Law Libraries. (2010). Competencies of law librarianship. Retrieved from http://www.aallnet.org/prodev/c ompetencies.asp.
- Dulle, F.W., & Minish-Majanja, M.K., & Cloete, L.M. (2010). Factors influencing the adoption of open access scholarly communication in Tanzania public universities. World Library and Information Congress: 76th IFLA General Conference and Assembly 10-15 August 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden. Retrieved from http://www.ifla.org/en/ifla76.
- Farahi, M.T., & Gandhi, R.T.D.R. (201). IT skills among LIS professionals of medical libraries in India and Iran: A comparative study. Annals of Library and Information Studies, 58, 161-169.

Ganaie, S.A. (2005). Library & information science profession and professional competencies. Trends in Information Management (TRIM), 1, 38-42. Retrieved from js.uok.edu.in/ojs/index.php/crdr/article/download/64/58

Mahesh, G., & Mittal R. (2010). Skills for future and current library and librarians - perceptions of academic libraries in New Delhi. Retrieved from www.degruyter.com/.../...

Quadri, G.O. (2012). Impact of ICT skills on the use of E-resources by librarians : A review of related literature. Library philosophy and practice, ISSN 1522-0222. Retrieved from http://unlib.unl.edu/LLP/

Raina, R.L. (2000. Competency Development among Librarians and Librarians. XIX IASLIC Seminar, Bhopal, 2000. 211-216.

Ramaiah, C. K., & Moorthy, L. (2002). A. The impact of education programmes on library and information science professionals. Library Review 51(1), 24-31. Delhi: Delhi U Lib. Retrieved from http://www.emeraldinsight.com.

Sahu, M.K. (2013). Skill, Competences and Current Practice of Library Professionals in Engineering College Odisha: An Analytical Study. International Research: Journal of Library & Information Science, 3(4), 631-647.

Singh, S.P., & Pinki, S. (2009). New skills for LIS professionals in technology-intensive environment. ICAL Retrieved from crl.du.ac in/ical09/papers/index_files/ical-55_200_422_3_RV.pdf

Special Library Association (SLA). (2003. Competencies for librarians of the 21st century. Retrieved from <u>http://www.sla.org/content/learn/me_mebers/competencies/index.cfm</u>>

Sridhar, M.S. (2000). Skill Requirements of LIS Professionals in the New E-World. Library Science with a Slant to Documentation and Information Studies 36,3. Retrieved from http://eprints.rclis.org/archive/00009657/01/J42_itskills.pdf.