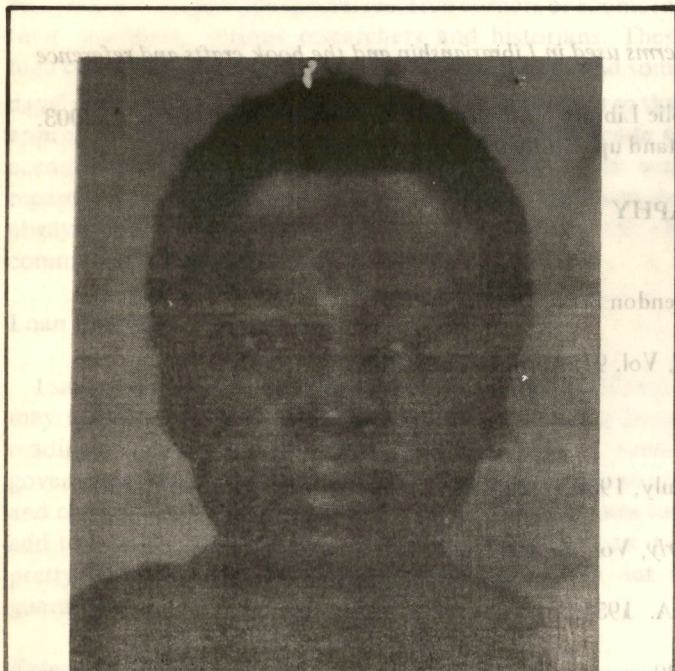


Statistics For Effective Library Management: with Special Reference to the Cataloguing Section

INTRODUCTION

Cataloguers, in their usual quest for setting and maintaining standards, have always relied on rules and regulations to guide their practice. It is this strong desire for standards that has led many libraries in the U.S. Canada, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and many English-speaking countries of Africa to jettison the old rules and regulations and to adopt the new AACR2 for their cataloguing practices.

In Nigeria in particular, the quest has led to the hosting of different seminars and workshops by the Cataloguing and Classification Section of the Nigerian Library Association; indeed, it is responsible for the attempts being currently made to review all modifications that have been made by individual libraries to major classification schemes used in Nigerian libraries.



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However, for now, it appears this is how far the Nigerian cataloguer is prepared to pursue the issue. For example, apart from the rules regulating cataloguing practice, should there not be standards as to the number of cataloguers that should be employed in a special or an academic library that acquires 10,000 new titles every year, or the number of junior and para-professional staff that should be employed in the cataloguing section of a small town public library where normal annual acquisition is not more than 500 titles?

If, because of new responsibilities, a library has to acquire additional 5,000 titles per year over what it normally acquires, how many new professionals, clerical and other non-professional staff must it employ more? Again, keeping the three levels of cataloguing description (AACR2) in mind, how many cards, packets of stencils etc. would a library that has chosen the second level of description need to purchase in order to have 5,000 titles processed?

The Nigerian Library Association, like its British and American counterparts, should by now be in a position to offer guidelines that would provide answers to these and similar questions so that each category of library would know the limits within which it is expected to operate. However, the NLA cannot pontificate without seasoned data to rely on. It would be in the position to give useful and reliable guidelines only when it has access to statistics compiled over the years by different categories of libraries.

WHAT IS STATISTICS?

Champion (1981)¹ describes statistics as the general body of methods and procedures used to assemble, describe and infer something from numerical data. He argues that since our world is becoming increasingly technical, mechanical and socially and psychologically complex, we have no choice but to turn more and more to statistics and statistical information in our planning and decision-making activities. Spiegel (1972)² in his own definition sees statistics as scientific methods for collecting, organising, summarising presenting and analysing data as well as drawing valid conclusions and making reasonable decision on the basis of such analysis.

On a national perspective, Adamu (1978)³ sees statistical information as extremely necessary for making complex national decisions. He explains that in a developing country like Nigeria, formulation of a set of goals, followed by a well thought out programme for execution is of utmost importance. Adamu concludes by stating that statistical information provides the backbone for the planning and execution of the programme and subsequently the realization of the set of national goals.

The point that is clear from the definitions above is that whether it is for a nation, organization or an individual, the data collected from statistics must be organised and analysed properly so that accurate conclusions which would lead to correct decisions could be made. Just as a nation requires data for short and long term decisions and planning, an institution, or an arm of it, also needs data for guidance, for appraising its performance and for planning. Since the objectives and goals of an institution may change from year to year or from period to period, there must be a method of evaluating service and measuring performance so as to ensure that each arm of the institution is working as it should towards the realization of the current goals and objectives of the institution.

The Cataloguing section, unlike most other sections of the library, presents a unique situation where the work done by each staff per day can be quantified. With such a situation, it should not be too difficult to design simple and appropriate forms of statistics which each member of the units making up the section must keep.

DESIGNING STATISTICS FOR CATALOGUING SECTION

The general squeeze on grants going to libraries which has come as a result of the downward turn in the national economy, has made it necessary for libraries to seek the least costly, but effective ways to operate. Duties performed in the cataloguing section includes cataloguing and classification,

typing and production of cards, labelling and minor book mending, filing of cards and general maintenance of the catalogue.

The specialized nature of some of the jobs and the wide variety of duties performed are responsible for the concentration of professional staff and the different categories of junior and intermediate staff who work in the section. The statistics that should be designed for such a section should therefore enable the library to appraise the contribution or otherwise of tools, equipment and staff in the realization of the objectives of the library.

The cataloguing section in a typical Nigerian library can generally be divided into three units:-

- (a) the cataloguing unit
- (b) Catalogue Maintenance Unit, and
- (c) Book Finishing and Mending unit

Even in libraries where the division is not very clear cut, one can still note that the description of the duties performed in the section could be compartmentalised along the three areas identified.

The Cataloguing Unit - is made up of two categories of staff (library assistants/ attendants and professionals), each group performing different duties. For the first category of staff the statistics to be designed should make the staff provide answers to such questions as:

1. the number of titles checked against public catalogue
2. the number of titles the staff has traced from NUC BNB
3. the number of titles with CIP data the staff has copied and
4. where there is automation, the number of books entered into the computer file.

For the professionals in the unit, the library has two options in the choice of statistics to maintain. First, the library may decide on a simple statistics which is designed to show the number of titles, volumes, added copies that have been catalogued or recatalogued, classified or reclassified per day/week/month/year by each staff. On the other hand, a library which operates in an institution where departments and faculties fight for library attention would need to keep a more detailed statistics.

In that case the statistics would have to show the number of titles, volumes, and added copies that have been catalogued or recatalogued, classified or reclassified in EACH SUBJECT AREA per day/week/month/year by each staff. The emphasis in this case is to reflect in a tabulated form not only the output of each staff but also how the library is caring for the needs of each department and faculty.

The Catalogue Maintenance Unit is responsible for producing and maintaining catalogue records. The unit is made up mainly of typists, clerical staff and library assistants. The nature of duties performed here demands that its statistics should be designed to show:

- a) the number of stencils typed per day
- b) the number of stencils damaged in the process
- c) the number of cards duplicated per day
- d) the number of cards damaged/destroyed in the process.
- e) the number of cards filed for:
 - 1) author/title catalogue
 - 2) subject catalogue
 - 3) Shelf list or classified catalogue
 - 4) the library's special collection
 - 5) N U C.

and f) stationery supplies for the whole section.

The Book Finishing and Mending Unit is composed of library attendants and clerical staff. Their schedule of duty includes the labelling of books, minor book repair jobs that do not need to go to the bindery and the transportation of already processed books and materials to their destinations.

The statistics to be maintained in the section should enable each staff to record:

- a) total number of volumes labelled or lettered
- b) number of relabelled volumes
- c) number of books mended at the unit
- d) number of books sent to bindery for major repairs
- e) number of books sent to New Arrivals Bay per week/month/year

and f) number of titles and volumes despatched to each branch, departmental, faculty or campus library.

USE OF CATALOGUING STATISTICS

Corbett (1978)⁴ observes that salary and wages represent 50-60% of a library's expenditure. He observes further that since the personnel function has become increasingly important in libraries, all libraries with responsibilities for supervising staff need to be aware of the general principles of personnel management.

The implication here is that if a library invests that much on its staff then it should obtain value for its money. In other words, libraries have to devise ways of monitoring the progress and contribution of staff in order to make sure that each staff is put where he could be most effective and productive.

Statistics keeping in such a section as the cataloguing therefore presents a way for management to keep staff on their toes. At the end of the day, the cumulative statistics would enable management to know those staff who have measured up to standard, those needing advice, and those who may need to be moved to other sections of the library where they could perform better.

It should also be possible to deduce from the data collected whether the present number of staff is adequate, too large or inadequate for the work that has to be done in each unit.

Secondly, cataloguing statistics could be used by a library to maintain proper balance in its collection development. A special library has no choice but to acquire materials as dictated by the need of the group it serves. A public library, too, has to ensure that it satisfies the divergent needs of its clientele. School and academic libraries, from time to time, lay emphasis on certain subjects/disciplines as dictated by developments in the institutions.

A library serving institution where enrolment policy is, for example, 60% science and 40% arts would need to keep this in mind in its acquisition. A cataloguing statistics which reflects what is processed in each subject area could be used both to defend the acquisition policy of the library and to show how well the library is coping in its contribution towards making the larger objectives of the institution easily realized.

Thirdly, cataloguing statistics could be an invaluable source of information to the chief executive in the preparation of library budgets, especially as it affects staff salaries, stationeries, tools and equipments needed in the section. Most of the statistics maintained in the section belong to what Freund (1970)⁵ called descriptive statistics - a collection of data which are not used to infer anything that goes beyond the data themselves. However, libraries stand to gain a lot from the data as they are being presently collected if they (the

libraries) shift emphasis to statistical inference or inductive statistics.

From statistics maintained over the years, a library should be in the position to estimate accurately, for example, how many packets of stencils or cards it would need to purchase for the 16,000 titles it hopes to acquire in the new year, or the number of library assistants/attendants and professionals that should be recruited for the processing of materials for a new branch library.

Finally, the shift from descriptive statistics to statistical inference or inductive statistics, as mentioned above, should lead to the establishment of standards for the different categories of libraries in Nigeria. Sewell (1983)⁶ observes that developing countries have a special difficulty in formulating and validating standards of library service because they lack a range of local library situations by which to measure need and adequacy of supply.

Ifidon (1983)⁷ also leads evidence to show that the absence of properly kept statistics is responsible for lack of standards in Nigerian libraries and decries the attempts being made to rely on other countries or world organizations like IFLA to set standards for our libraries as, according to him, "the effective universal application of the resultant set of standards is doubtful".

Nigerian libraries cannot afford to completely rely on standards set by others as the circumstances and the data that have led to the setting of such standards may be different from those available in Nigeria. Standards cannot be set in a vacuum; as a first step, each library in Nigeria would need to formalize the keeping of statistics.

CONCLUSION

Croft (1976)⁸ sees scientific management as basically management on the "basis of precise numerical information". It is now possible to tackle a wide range of practical problems using only the most elementary statistical methods. National offices of statistics are usually set up to produce and develop the statistical information that could be used by the respective countries for planning and fulfilling of national objectives and goals.

Modern library management, too, demands the maintenance of proper statistics in each section of the library to enable it function properly and stay on course in its activities. The art of management is now the art of taking decisions, and the basic necessity for correct decision-making is reliable information. The more information there is available, the better the decision taken. Statistics therefore is an essential pre-requisite of modern management.

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