

**IMPERATIVENESS OF LIBRARY STATISTICS IN LIBRARY  
MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF POLYTECHNICS IN SOUTH EAST,  
NIGERIA.**

**BY**

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**Abstract**

*This research work on "imperativeness of library statistics in library management: a case study of polytechnics in South East Nigeria" was conducted through the survey method and data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The result shows that the libraries keep library statistics but the method of collection varies. Almost all the operations of the Readers' Services Department are taken care of. All of the respondents see statistics as relevant to library management especially in the areas of decision making, appraisal/evaluation, annual reports and setting standards. However, statistics collection in these libraries was seen as having some shortcomings which include; inconsistency in its collection, attitude of the staff collecting it and inadequate use of statistics by the library management. The researchers gave recommendations which they believe will help in effective and efficient statistics collection in libraries.*

**Introduction**

The goal of any library, whether public, special, academic or school library is to enable the clientele have access to the available resources and maximize its usage. The means of accomplishing this task is through the provision of efficient and effective library services.

The use of users' feedback mechanism to determine the quality and relevance of such services rendered to its users over a period of time.

The concept of library statistics can therefore be defined as the systematic generation and quantitative analysis of records of operations, services and occurrences in library at different time periods and for various purposes. Like its sister social sciences professions, librarianship generates and employs statistics extensively. The data that constitute library statistics are recorded at regular intervals and in several aspects of library operations, such records are statistical since they can be verified, accurately described and quantitatively analyzed (Flind, 1996).

Lai and Kumar (2005) identified three types of library statistics namely: statistics about resources, statistics about technical services and statistics about user's services. Based on this, it is clear that almost every activity, operation or service in the library could be documented and measured in concise statistical form. For the purpose of this study, statistics of users' services will be studied. This involves services provided to users such as circulation work and reference work,

Statistics are very useful planning tool as they help the library and its management to justify the expenditure of funds allocated to it. The use of the library resources, services rendered and categories or number of patrons served over a period of time including areas where there are lapses are revealed through statistics. It is therefore paramount that serving and prospective library staff should be sensitized on the concept of statistics and the various ways they manifest in the day to day operations of a typical library.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The following objectives will guide this research;

- i. To ascertain if the libraries keep library statistics;
- ii. To identify the frequency of statistics collection.
- iii. To ascertain areas/services where statistics are collected.
- iv. To highlight the relevance of statistics in libraries.
- v. To identify the problems encountered in statistics collection.

### **Review of related literature**

Dhiman and Rani (2005) define statistics as the Collection, presentation, analysis and interpretation of numerical data. Library statistics on the other way is defined by Hameed (1994) as "accurate and precise records of data collected by the library staff of a particular library in the course of discharging

its daily services to its clientele". They are usually recorded at short intervals as the users call in the library for their various needs. He went further to say that the concept of library statistics in the professional sense of it connotes the number of books consulted by users daily, weekly, monthly and yearly, the number of book and non-book materials borrowed and those returned to the library at a given time and the total volume of titles acquired each year amongst others.

Different kinds of numerical data are collected from activities of staff and users of libraries. Such statistics are relevant during assessment and decision making. At predetermined intervals, readers in libraries are counted and the number recorded. This gives a picture of the number of people that patronize a library within a particular period. It can also be books consulted for a period of time. This will enable the library to know a lot of things about use of its materials especially the subjects/days that have the heaviest patronage and materials frequently used by readers. Oduagwu (2002) in support of areas where statistics should be taken adds that statistics of books on circulation will reveal the rate and quantity of books in circulation or books merely consulted at any given period as well as number of readers involved. Nnadozie (2007) submits that a record of overdue fines will give as insight into how much is realized which could be used to run minor expenses in the library. Statistics of referrals (that is reference letters) given to users who want to visit other libraries are also taken. Inter-library loans if statistically analyzed will notify the library management of either the adequacy of its collection or the level of dependence on the resources of other libraries.

On how to go about library statistics Nnadozie (2007) posits that the data that constitute library statistics should be consistently collected, sincerely interpreted and meaningfully applied to the best advantage of the library. There should however be no variation of the time intervals. Such basic statistics when analyzed provide the parameters for assessing the extent to which a library has fulfilled its mandate.

The importance of library statistics are not be under estimated as every operation/activity of library staff and users is amenable to statistical analysis. The management of library which provides fund for its activities must have a means of appraising the personnel and other resources in order to determine whether the services rendered are meeting the goals and objectives for which it is established. This is the basis for which the library vote can be increased or decreased depending on how the management understands the analysis

made from library statistics. Onwubiko (2004) asserts that the aggregate of the statistics from various departments and operations of the library may permit deductions, inferences and generalizations on the performance of the library in question. Such data when carefully prepared, and interpreted, will permit each library to measure itself in relation to the established norms of library operation.

Statistics also permit the setting up of quantitative standards in terms of available resources. Library statistics is useful to every library administrator in monitoring the performance of activities towards attaining the objectives of the library. Oduagwu (2002) summarized the importance of statistics of monthly and annual reports to library authorities as having the advantage of revealing:

- i. Growth rate of readers
- ii. Main interest areas of readers
- iii. Problems of readers.
- iv. Publications and publicity.
- v. Ease in comparing statistics.

### **Methodology and population of study**

The survey method was used for this research. The population of the study was 12. This comprised of the Heads of Polytechnic Libraries and Heads of Readers Services Department of the six (6) polytechnics in South Eastern states of Nigeria under study namely: Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri; Imo Polytechnic, Umuagwo; Abia State Polytechnic, Aba; Institute of Managemnt & Technology, Enugu; Federal Polytechnic Oko, Anambra State and Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic Uwana, Ebonyi State. Copies of the questionnaire were sent through post and stamped self-addressed envelopes for the return of completed questionnaire were included. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, that is, frequency counts and percentages.

**Table 1: Distribution and return of questionnaire**

<b>Institutions</b>	<b>No distributed</b>	<b>NO returned</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Federal Polytechnic Nekede	2	2	16.66
Abia State Polytechnic, Aba	2	2	16.66
Institute of Management & Technology, Enugu	2	0	0
Akanu Ibaim Federal Polytehnic, Uwana	2	2	16,66
Imo State Polytechnic, Umuagwo	2	0	0
Federal Polytechnic , Oko	2	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Percentage</b>			<b>50%</b>

Out of the 12 copies of questionnaire sent out, only 6 were returned showing a 50% return rate. The analysis will however be based on the ones returned.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

**Table 2: Availability of statistics**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Fed Poly Nekede</b>	<b>Abia Poly Aba</b>	<b>Akanu Ibiam Poly</b>
Yes	✓	✓	✓
No	-	-	-

Findings from table 2 shows that all the libraries studied engage in the collection of library statistics which represents 100% response rate. This implies that these libraries are aware of the importance of library statistics as an administrative tool.

On the frequency of statistics collection, there was a 100% response in the affirmative though it is done without any standardized method. This is in agreement with the assertion of Hameed (2004) that there are no accepted standards or procedures for recording and processing data for libraries. Each library adopts its own method.

**Table 3: Types of statistics kept**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Fed Poly Nekede</b>	<b>Abia Poly</b>	<b>Akanu Ibiam Poly</b>
Consulted books	✓	✓	✓
Books on Loan	✓	✓	✓
Inter-library loan	X	X	✓
Registered users	✓	✓	✓
Referrals	✓	✓	✓
Daily users	✓	✓	✓
Library crimes	X	X	✓
Library offenders/defaulters	X	X	✓
others	-	-	Growth and Development

Findings in Table shows that all the libraries studied keep statistics of consulted books, books on loan, registered users and withdrawn books. This is shown by 100% response rate for each of the mentioned areas. Abia polytechnic and Akanu Ibiam polytechnic keep statistics of referrals and daily users. Statistics of referrals will reveal the extent of dependence of a library on the resources of other libraries as posited by Nnadozie (2007). Only the library of Akanu Ibiam Polytechnic keeps statistics for inter-library loan, library crimes and library offenders. There is need for adequate statistics of library offenders/defaulters to be kept and eventually published for people to see, it will serve as a deterrent for others who may want to indulge in the act. Apart from the given items, Akanu Ibiam Polytechnic keeps records of users and researchers from other libraries who use their library for one reason or the other.

**Table 4: Rating of adequacy of statistics in meeting varying needs of library managements.**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Highly adequate	5	83
Fairly adequate	1	17
Not adequate	0	0
Cannot determine	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100%</b>

Findings from table 4 above shows that only 1(17%) of the respondents chose fairly adequate, while 5(83%) of the respondents chose highly adequate. The 83% response rate of adequacy of statistics in meeting varying needs of library management shows that statistics is a useful planning tool for library management. Hence its absence will be disastrous, and lead to improper planning.

**Table 5: Areas of relevance of library statistics in library management**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Fed Nekede</b>	<b>Poly Abia Poly</b>	<b>Akanu Poly</b>	<b>Ibiam</b>
Decision making	✓	✓	✓	
Appraisal/evaluation	✓	✓	✓	
Comparison	X	X	✓	
Publicity	X	X	✓	
Setting standards	X	X	✓	
Guide in acquisition	X	X	✓	
Library vote	X	X	✓	
Annual report	✓	✓	✓	
others			Growth and Development	

Findings from Table 5 shows that all the libraries affirmed that statistics is relevant in decision making, appraisal/evaluation and annual reports. The findings also shows that responses from Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri and Abia State Polytechnic, Aba did not indicate the relevance of statistics in

comparison on, publicity, setting standards, guide in acquisition and library vote; while responses from Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic indicted that keeping of statistics in libraries is relevant in comparison, publicity, setting standards, guide in acquisition, library vote and growth and development.

Library statistics has been seen as relevant in almost every aspect of library management and administration. It serves as a checklist to appraise if the services rendered meet the goals and objectives for which the library services are rendered.

**Table 6: Problems that affect collection of library statistics**

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Fed Poly Nekede</b>	<b>Abia Poly</b>	<b>Akanu Ibiam Poly</b>
Statistics generated not adequately used	✓	x	x
Improper data	X	X	✓
Inconsistency in data collection	✓	✓	✓
Lack of awareness of the importance of data	X	X	✓
Lack of knowledge of statistics	X	X	0
Inadequate recording	2	0	0
Others		Staff attitude	Under funding

Findings from Table 6 shows that all the libraries indicated that inconsistency in data collection is the major problem affecting the collection of library statistics. Federal Polytechnic Nekede see statistics generated not adequately used as another problem while Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic Uwana chose all the items except statistics generated not adequately used. Inconsistency in data collection has been attributed to staff involved not knowing the importance of such data and therefore do it haphazardly. Other factors stated by Abia State Polytechnic and Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic Uwana are staff attitude and underfunding respectively.

Experience has shown that the data given on daily activities of the library is either under or over recorded. Thus the figures may not be accurate and in the final analysis, such data will not reflect the true position of the library services



for the purpose of appraisal. Lending his voice to the problems of statistics, Nnadozie (2007) stated that more often, the persons generating such library statistics are unaware of the importance of such data and thus seldom handle it with required seriousness and precision. Moreover, most library schools have so far paid scant attention to the teaching of library statistics.

## **Conclusion**

Statistical data are indispensable for the internal management of libraries but they can do more. When presented to policy makers, funding institutions or the general public, they will influence the strategic planning, and they can create and maintain influence in libraries. From statistics, you find out what the users like to read. A proverb says "there is nothing so false as facts without figures". To nothing on earth can this saying be more truly applied than to library statistics. Library statistics demonstrate the value that libraries provide to their users and to society. Hence library management should increasingly rely on statistics to demonstrate performance or strategic performance.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers recommend that;

- Professional body such as the Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) should devise a standardized way of collecting statistics in libraries. This will make for unity and professionalism.
- Staffs who keep record of library statistics should be trained on the need for adequate and consistent collection of library statistics.
- Library management should endeavour to make use of the statistics generated for efficient and effective library operations.
- Teaching of library statistics should be given proper attention in library schools.
- A database should be created for statistics generated for reference purposes.

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