

# Expectations and Challenges of Information Repackaging In Nigerian Academic Libraries

U.O. Ugwuogu

Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic Unwana, Ebonyi State, Nigeria

Email: uougwuogu@gmail.com

Doi:10.5296/ijld.v5i2.7514 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/ijld.v5i2.7514>

## **Abstract**

This paper describes information repackaging as the provision of information to different categories of users in forms based on either team approach or needs assessment in order to facilitate quick and meaningful decision-making for result-oriented impact. As the hub of intellectual creativity and resourcefulness in the provision of information as a critical resource, what is expected from academic and research libraries are examined. Forms of information repackaging from the traditional to the electronic modes are x-rayed. Process considerations, challenges and the way forward are highlighted. It is recommended that librarians re-invent their minds, institutions and services. Collaborative efforts through consortia are encouraged.

**Keywords:** Information Repackaging, Academic Libraries, Nigeria

## 1. Introduction

As focal points for teaching, learning and research, academic and research libraries are expected to keep and provide standard information resources. The advent of digital technology has revolutionized the way information is acquired, packaged, repackaged, processed, stored and disseminated. This has also affected how users seek and access information. Anunobi and Okoye (2008) observed that academic libraries no longer restrict themselves to print services such as collection development, cataloging and classification, circulation and reference services, current awareness, selective dissemination of information and other bibliographic services, but have extended their efforts to interdisciplinary concepts, computer software/ hardware, telecommunication engineering and technology. Consequent upon these, numerous creative, innovative and useful services have evolved within academic and research libraries which gave rise to the provision of quality learning spaces, creating metadata, offering virtual reference services and teaching information literacy. Others are choosing resources and managing resource licenses, collecting and digitizing archival materials and maintaining digital repositories (Campbell, 2006). In all these, the main focus is how to satisfy students and faculty/researchers on their varying intellectual needs. Library patrons, every day, are confronted with alternate choices that are more convenient and present qualitative sources of information. Wagner and Tysick (2007) corroborated this by opining that technological advances have eliminated many of the traditional reasons for which patrons actually visit the physical library with its carefully maintained collections, helpful staff and well designed service points. The basic reason for this altered behavior, especially among students was ready access to rich online resources carefully and neatly packaged and presented. To avoid relegation, therefore, information has to be innovatively repackaged by academic libraries to meet the needs of users.

Kuneke (2001), Campbell (2006) and Gayton (2008) are all consistent in maintaining that consumer needs must guide organizational strategy. In other words, focus must shift from the information provider to the information consumer. The nature and format of information should reflect and satisfy its peculiar needs and access. Academic and research libraries in developing countries are beginning to drop the traditional service platforms to embrace technology driven concepts and practices.

## 2. Concept of Information Repackaging

As an important economic resource, today, information is considered as assuming the same status as other factors of production like land, labour and capital.

Madhusudhan (2008) observed that information has been called the fifth need of man, ranking after air, water, food and shelter. Being in an information age, the success or otherwise of information as a key element in research and development depends on the amount, accuracy and reliability of that information that is available to users.

Owing to the need for academic libraries to justify their existence, coupled with the emergence of other alternate sources of information provision, libraries now consider

seriously the option of repackaging information for their readers. Patrons have to be retained. Services must be quick and efficient. Besides, access must be guaranteed in a convenient and expeditious manner.

The concept of Information repackaging (IR) has been variously examined by different writers and it all came to the same meaning. Saracevic and Woods (1981) and Bunch (1984) contend that it describes how an information service selects appropriate materials, reprocessing and packaging the information and arranging materials in a way that is appropriate to the user. Their studies focused on scientific and technical information and on community information.

Agada (1995) opined that it is a systematic approach to the design and provision of information services, particularly in the corporate environment. He advocated the team approach to service design and provision. Cassel and Hiremath (2006) hold the view that the process involved to make this service work adheres to the same objective of helping library users identify sources of information in response to a particular question, interest, assignment or problem. The needs-based approach remains the same. Iwhiwhu (2006) shares the same view but maintains that IR is the bundling of products and services to address specific needs of users. Udensi (2010) further asserts that IR is the organizing or processing of information in a form that can be understood by the different categories of users that the information is meant for.

Information repackaging is therefore the provision of information to different categories of users in an encapsulated form based on team approach or needs assessment in order to facilitated or yield quick and meaningful decision making for result-oriented impact.

### **3. Information Repackaging in the Information Age**

Information repackaging in the new information age is now driven by value. The value added components include but are not limited to information analysis, synthesis, editing, translating and transforming its symbolic and media formats. It ensures the accuracy, currency, pertinence, comprehensiveness, ease of comprehension (e.g technical level, presentation style); and convenience of use (e.g timing, format of coding). Agada (1995) maintains that the service is in consonance with an on-going shift in library and information professions from documents to their content and from collections to their users. Abrigo (2009) submits that what makes IR a novelty in this age, is the transformation that occurs once it tallies with present day technology. The author further asserts that with information and communications technology which acts as a means to get to everywhere, customizing knowledge to cater to the specific needs of the target users has now become an advocacy of every information professional. Academic and research libraries in order to add more value to information and resource sharing employ web 2.0 applications - the second generation/shareable content internet to provide borderless information access.

It attempts to cope with the information explosion and the competition for fast, reliable, convenient and efficient information support for corporate decision making.

#### **4. Forms of Information Repackaging**

It is established that libraries exist to provide some basic traditional services to as many users as possible. Some of those services are provided in conjunction with the major aims for setting up the library. Those services include Selection, Organization, Reference services, Information services, Readers advisory services, Inter library loans, Information display services, User Education and Bibliographic services.

All the above services and more exist in libraries but the issue is that information and communications technology (ICT) has changed the face of traditional library services. For libraries to remain relevant therefore, more innovative skills and services have to be acquired and deployed.

Forms of information repackaging have emerged in the sciences/arts as ways of addressing current information provision challenges. This is also in consonance with the on-going shift in library and information professions from documents to their content and from collections to their users. The works of Rosenberg (1987), Agada (1995), Iwhiwhu (2008) and Udensi (2010) discussed the forms of IR which is summarized as follows:

- i. Reformatting and synthesizing raw information.
- ii. Combining expertise or consulting on a subject with access to relevant information sources.
- iii. Providing training or assistance to a user in accessing an information product.
- iv. Drama.
- v. Use of songs.
- vi. Story telling.
- vii. Audio – Visual materials.
- viii. Translation.
- ix. Oral transmission.
- x. Group Discussions.
- xi. Poetry.
- xii. Technological tools.

Other media through which information could also be repackaged include: Bibliography on disks, Internet, Wide Area Information Services (WAIS), World Wide Web (www), and Social Media.

#### **5. Models and Process Consideration in Information Repackaging**

The processes or steps to be considered in information repackaging depend on the model to be adopted. The service – marketing model as proposed by Irons (1996) and adopted by

Iwhiwhu (2008) argues that there is a triangle where customers are chosen and products created for them according to the customer's needs at affordable prices. In other words, the product designed to specific users' needs will attract them if it is affordable, thereby leading to customers' satisfaction.

On the other hand, Abrigo (2009) perceives IR as an information service which is need-based in line with the views of Bunch (1984) as the backbone of his work (webliography) on the International Labour Organization.

The Systematic Instructional Design (ISD) model adapted by Agada (1995) produced the Systematic Information Repackaging (SIR) model. The ISD models are abstractions which depict the elements and relations of learning situations. They may be procedural or theoretical and may be designed to describe, predict, prescribe or explain the elements of effective instruction in varying degrees. The SIR model derives the structure of its elements from the adapted ISD model.

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that no meaningful process can be initiated without a thorough knowledge of the similarities or differences in the models and the direction the professional, library or users are heading to. Empirical data, it is believed, would help to distinguish varieties of the models as dictated by depth or level of repackaging for diverse clientele and circumstances.

The first process or step to be considered in IR is specified knowledge of the target audience. The group to be served should be known. Are they undergraduates/postgraduate students or lecturers/ researchers?

Secondly, what is the recurring pattern of the information needs of the target group? A needs assessment could be undertaken either through interviews, questionnaires, observation or during question negotiation periods at the reference desk.

Thirdly, an appropriate format to repackage the information should be selected or chosen.

Fourthly, the channel of dissemination is very important. It should be decided whether the information should be in soft or hardcopy. If the researchers are in rural areas where electric power supply is not steady, what else could be done to satisfy their needs?

Fifthly, a feedback system should be planned. This is to judge the success or otherwise of the repackaged information. Such a process could help in redesigning or reformatting or restructuring what has been produced for better acceptability.

Sixthly, the information to be repackaged should be properly evaluated for possible adjustment. The accuracy, completeness, simplicity, readability and clarity of purpose must be thoroughly examined.

Essentially, the pains-taking procedure is to ensure that an attractive package that will lure users closer to the library by retaining their trust and confidence is produced.

## 6. Expectations from Academic Libraries

Academic institutions are established primarily to focus on teaching, research and community service. Furthermore, it aims to fulfill educational, social, cultural, economic and technological needs of their respective communities. As vital components of any research or academic institution, libraries are home to collections and technologies that nurture inquiry and the search for truth.

Boon *et al.*, (2001) argued that libraries and information systems should actively get involved in the business of information processing (and repackaging) other than only the traditional macro selection and accessing of information. Following this argument, they proposed a model that compares the traditional to the non-traditional information processing. The model argued that activities like analyzing, editing and the quality control of information should become core activities of university libraries. Adapting information for effective use and involvement in knowledge management (knowledge sharing and transfer, learning in the organization; aligning of organizational knowledge values) should become core activities of information specialists in university libraries. De Aze (2002) opines that products and services which provide benefits for users and which answer users' most important needs are the core business of the library and information service.

Progressively, more and more academic and research libraries have been looking for new and innovative products and services that can be used in serving their patrons.

## 7. Challenges and the way forward in Information Repackaging

Academic and research libraries have always set the pace in information repackaging (IR) due to the nature of their clientele which require creativity and innovativeness. IR is therefore not a new concept for library and information work. Challenges therefore exist which, more often than not, try to hamper effective IR implementation.

Inadequate staff training and exposure brings about shoddy attempts to repackage information which sometimes are hardly utilized by potential users. For instance, media production and needs diagnosis skills require that the packager has some exposure to courses in message design and diagnostics, interviewing and counseling dynamics.

Poor infrastructural facilities especially in the developing world could frustrate properly trained packagers in doing their work. For instance, good hardware and a telecommunications infrastructure that is reliable and cost effective could be the only way forward.

Absence or dearth of quality sources of primary information could be a disaster for any meaningful effort to be made in IR. Issues of subscription and timely receipt of information or unreliable sources of data and information could be a bad omen. Published materials should therefore, be available, likewise reliable data from research institutes and government statistical services. Electronic information acquired from reputable on-line services should also be used.

Budgetary cuts or low funding do not help this project. It is a fact that these days libraries are charged to be more creative in revenue generation but are hardly motivated through sustained

financial support. In fact, to salvage any adverse economic fortune in institutions, the library usually is the first target. Library top executives are therefore requested to review their advocacy techniques and introduce innovative and aggressive marketing/enlightenment strategies.

The dearth or absence of subject specialists/language experts could be a handicap if repackagers lack it. In essence, the technical level of the topic to be treated and knowledge of the target group for the package must correlate; otherwise, the work could be an exercise in futility. Language experts, on the other hand, play invaluable roles by translating equally essential research information into languages in which they can be appreciated and used for further research and scholarship endeavours.

Irregular supply of electricity in developing nations is a major constraint in IR especially in this era that information provision has become technologically driven. To own a stand-by generating set may not be enough since other variables like engine capacity, funds for maintenance and fuelling, running hours, etc. have roles to play in determining viability and effectiveness.

## **8. Recommendations**

To stay relevant in the competitive information environment, the academic librarian is charged to re-invent his mind, institution and services. In doing this, libraries have to change how they are perceived in their local constituencies. Librarians need to help each other and other staff change the mental models of their roles in the system (Giesecke, 2011). Morale has to be high most of the time irrespective of daunting challenges facing them in information provision and management.

Collaborative efforts through consortium in creating new information packages should be enunciated by like-minded groups or associations. The University, Licensing Project (TULIP) involving nine (9) Universities with Elsevier Science in the United States is worthy of emulation (Tagler 1996).

The Nigerian universities virtual library project should still be vigorously pursued as new products and services could be generated from there. Again, the Nigerian University Libraries Consortium subscribe to many databases and web portals. These packages should be used in conjunction with institutional repositories to repackage new and competitive products collectively or separately. The Polytechnic and Monotechnic Libraries Foundation (POMLIF) recently revived its negotiation with Elsevier Publishers for updates on their e-publications and the need to develop specialized (subject) collections or web portals for access by participating institutions. The portals will provide links to subject – specific electronic journals and databases and information of importance for specific user groups.

The issue of delayed transmission of information or slow access to it is not unconnected with low bandwidth. Access to repackaged information that is technologically driven can only be made feasible if bandwidths are increased. Priority should be placed on this.

## 9. Conclusion

Libraries have been metaphorically referred to as rainforests for learning. Fritzler (2003) in his submission maintained that as vital components of any college or university, libraries are home to collections and technologies that nurture inquiry and the search for truth. To justify public confidence and trust, innovative and creative solutions must be found in the provision of satisfactory information needs. Information properly and duly packaged to meet the various yearnings and aspirations of the teeming population of users for research and developmental pursuits will be the pride of a blended librarian.

## References

- Abrigo, C. M. (2009). From raw materials to end-product: developing an On-line information resource for the International Labour Organization (ILO). *Journal of Philippine Librarianship* 29. p. 13 – 23.
- Agada, J. (1995). Analysis of information repackaging (IR) processes using the Instructional System Design (ISD) Model *Journal of Instructional Science and Technology*. Vol. 1(1) file:///c:/users/user/Downloads/agada-IR.htm
- Anunobi, C. V and Okoye, I. B. (2008). The role of academic libraries in universal access to print and electronic resources in the developing countries. *Library Philosophy and Practice* (e-journal) paper189 <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/Libphilprac/189>
- Boon, J. A, Bothma, T. J. D and Cronje J. C. (2001). E-learning and e-libraries: Quo Vadis ? *Proceedings of the IATUL Conferences*. Paper 18 <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/iatul/2001/papers/18>
- Bunch, A. (1984). *The basics of information work*. London: Bingley.
- Campbell, J. D (2006). Changing a cultural icon: the academic library as a virtual destination. *Educause Review* 41(1) 16 – 31.
- Cassel, K. and Hiremath, U. (2006). *Reference and information services in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: an introduction*. London. Neal-Schumann Publisher.
- De Aze, E. E (2002). *Marketing concepts for libraries and information services*. London: Library Association. <<http://www.envisionit.com.au/Docs/gandhi.htm>>
- Fritzler, P. (2003). Building REEAFS: packaging and personalizing library services to remote marine science facilities. <http://library.uncwil.edu/star.html>
- Gayton, J. T (2008). Academic libraries: ‘social or communal’? the nature and future of academic libraries. *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 34, 60 – 66.
- Giesecke, J. (2011). Finding the right metaphor: restructuring, realigning and repackaging today’s research libraries. Faculty Publications, UNL Libraries. Paper 253 <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libraryscience/253>
- Iwhiwhu, E. B (2008). Information repackaging and library services: a challenge to



information professionals in Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice* (e-journal) <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/178>

Kuneke, K. J. (2001). The paradigmatic shift of service organizations: a proposed marketing model for South African University libraries.

M-Inf.thesis, University of South Africa, Pretoria.

Madhusudhan, M (2008). Marketing of library and information services and products in University libraries: a case study of Goa University library. *Library Philosophy and Practice* (e-journal) <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/175>

Rosenberg, D. (1987). Repackaging scientific and technical information for illiterates and semi-illiterate users: a case study of the Southern Sudan. In: Asamani, J. O. et al., (ed.) *Libraries and Literacy: Proceeding of the standing conference of Eastern, Central and Southern African librarians*. Gaborone. 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> August.

Saracevic, T. and Wood, J. (1981). *Consolidation of information: a handbook on evaluation, restructuring and repackaging of scientific and technical information*. Paris: UNESCO, (PGI – 83/CONF. 009/COL. 1)

Tagler, J. (1996). Reconvening and repackaging journal information for electronic delivery. *Proceedings of the IATUL Conferences. Paper 49*. <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/iatul/1996/papers/49>

Udensi, J. (2010). Information repackaging – a necessity in Nigerian libraries. In: Madu, E. C and Ezeani, E.B. (Eds) *Modern library and information science for information professionals in Africa*. Ibadan: Textlinks Publishers, P 223 – 232.

Wagner, A. B. and Tysick, C (2007). Setting up shop where our patrons live. *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 46. 60 – 65