

## Librarians' Awareness, ICT Skills and Marketing of University Library Services in the 21st Century in Delta State, Nigeria

Emuejevoke Paul Ogo, Humphrey Igwechi Wiche, and Helen Kikiri

### Abstract:

The study examined librarians' awareness, ICT skills and marketing of academic library services in the 21st century in Delta State. It adopted the descriptive survey research design with a population of 112, comprising all librarians in the university libraries in Delta State using the total enumeration sampling technique. A structured questionnaire was used as the instrument to gather data of which only 87 were completed and found usable, giving a 78% response rate. The data generated were analyzed using simple percentages, frequency counts and weighted mean. The findings revealed among others that university libraries market mostly reprographic, serials, e-library, reference, circulation, current awareness, technical, selective dissemination of information and webliography services. It identified the use of library websites and social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, X, Instagram, etc. as the major marketing strategies. Librarians in university libraries are aware of marketing library services to a high level. They also possess ICT skills such as Microsoft Office skills, information retrieval and social media skills for marketing library services to a large extent. Funding, inadequate technological infrastructure and lack of adequate support from management were identified as the major factors inhibiting effective marketing of library services. It recommended training on modern marketing strategies such as content creation tools and other digital technologies for librarians.

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## **Librarians' Awareness, ICT Skills and Marketing of University Library Services in the 21st Century in Delta State, Nigeria**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study examined librarians' awareness, ICT skills and marketing of academic library services in the 21st century in Delta State. It adopted the descriptive survey research design with a population of 112, comprising all librarians in the university libraries in Delta State using the total enumeration sampling technique. A structured questionnaire was used as the instrument to gather data of which only 87 were completed and found usable, giving a 78% response rate. The data generated were analyzed using simple percentages, frequency counts and weighted mean. The findings revealed among others that university libraries market mostly reprographic, serials, e-library, reference, circulation, current awareness, technical, selective dissemination of information and webliography services. It identified the use of library websites and social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, X, Instagram, etc. as the major marketing strategies. Librarians in university libraries are aware of marketing library services to a high level. They also possess ICT skills such as Microsoft Office skills, information retrieval and social media skills for marketing library services to a large extent. Funding, inadequate technological infrastructure and lack of adequate support from management were identified as the major factors inhibiting effective marketing of library services. It recommended training on modern marketing strategies such as content creation tools and other digital technologies for librarians.

**Keywords:** ICT Skills, Librarians' Awareness, Library Services, Marketing

### **INTRODUCTION**

Libraries as information hubs are central to the provision of information resources and services to users to meet their different information needs. They acquire, organize and disseminate information resources to their users according to their fields or areas of interest regardless of their background, age, religion, etc. The type of library mostly determines the type of users they serve, and ultimately the bulk of information materials they acquire and information services they render. Adamu et al. (2021) opined that any country's foundation for knowledge and information is its libraries as a library gathers, arranges, and provides access to a wide range of information resources for users of all ages, backgrounds, and interests. Hence, different libraries provide different

services to their patrons depending on the kind and nature of the library. Akinade and Akinola (2022) claim that academic libraries are essential for a successful academic endeavor and are burdened with the task of managing enormous amounts of information stored in various libraries offer services to their patrons to support their academic success and give them access to a variety of information resources. Ashikuzzaman (2023) asserted that an academic library is a specialized repository of knowledge and information, found in educational institutions, mostly universities, colleges, and research centers. They are designed to specifically meet the needs of students, faculty, researchers, and other members of the academic community with a wealth of resources that support teaching, learning, and scholarly research, hence are essential to the institutions' educational missions and objectives.

The ever-evolving information landscape of the academic community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century within every tertiary institution poses a myriad of opportunities and challenges for the academic libraries within its enclave, which either directly or indirectly affect their service delivery as they try to meet the changing information needs of the users of the library. Uwandu and Osuji (2022) noted that university libraries offer library services to help members of their parent institutions with their teaching, learning, and research needs, identifying technical services, document delivery services, bibliographic services, interlibrary loan services, library liaison services, user education, current awareness services, user education, referral services, reprographic services, indexing services, abstracting services, and more as the common services rendered in a typical university library. According to Yuliana and Ifadah (2022), the primary objective of providing library services is to provide adequate access and increase the use of the information resources available to library users, of which the users' satisfaction is of the utmost importance. Consequently, university libraries must start marketing to draw users' attention to these services and resources. Olorunfemi and Ipadeola (2018) suggested, that for libraries to break even, they must actively market their services to users to demonstrate their value and ensure they are fully aware of the services available and the information resources available. This can be done by understanding user needs, planning service provision, promoting the services, and delivering them efficiently and effectively.

There is a rapid change in the field of librarianship as a result of the proliferation of information technology that has created numerous avenues for different information products and services in different formats, making libraries more conscious of other information centres that compete with them for information-based service delivery and therefore the need to market their products and services (Etukudo & Aliu, 2019). Libraries are now subject to pressures from other information centres due to this information revolution. Therefore, to improve the management of libraries and information centers, library professionals are being compelled to adopt marketing strategies to meet up with the competition arising from the presence of these information vendors and the complexity they pose. Even though libraries remain an important part of many universities Olorunfemi and Ipadeola (2018) asserted that the advancement of technology over the years has seen them struggle to remain relevant in a digital era despite their adoption of the use of electronic resources. Libraries and librarians therefore must be proactive in communicating the resources and expertise they offer through marketing, as they are no longer the only option for accessing information. They must develop or adopt marketing strategies capable of making them more visible to enable their users and parent institutions aware of them which is essential for their survival.

Urhefe-Okotie (2023) posited that library marketing should be focused on using a variety of strategies, and tactics, to raise awareness of the information resources and services that are available to researchers, staff, and students at the institutions. Marketing strategies according to Yusuf (2019) imply the selection of various techniques in a manner that proportionately balances the intention of the organization and the expectations of the customers, as different situations warrant the use of different marketing techniques for it to be effective. The emphasis in the above assertions on marketing strategies is on the appropriateness or suitability of the strategy to effectively reach out to the library community to inform them of what the library offers. Hamza and Hamana (2021) identified one-on-one conversations, published guides, newsletters, leaflets, flyers, social media, online advertising and library websites as well as email stand as the best strategies in marketing library services. While the use of traditional marketing strategies like the use of bulletins, flyers, leaflets and other paper information media may not go away completely, especially in developing countries like Nigeria because of inadequate ICT infrastructure and power, librarians are duty-bound to quickly adopt the use of modern marketing strategies to improve the visibility of their libraries to both current and potential users.

The application of modern or digital marketing strategies is imperative for creating awareness of the library's offerings, boosting their visibility and encouraging patronage in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They help to bring to light all that is available in the library and promote its relevance and value in the eyes of the user community as well as people all over the world, through the use of the Internet. According to Desygnier Team (2024), for a library to effectively market its offerings in the digital era, it must actively indulge in novel thinking and innovative approaches that will appeal deeply to its expected audience in a way that can change their perception from seeing the library as a mere repository of books to a confluence of knowledge and innovation. It noted that this can be achieved by engaging the users online through captivating stories and interactive platforms that can significantly amplify its reach; one such strategy is the use of social media to showcase the unique experiences the library offers. Another strategy is online marketing or Internet marketing which Adeleke (2023) inferred to include search engine marketing and email marketing considered valuable tools for the promotion of library resources and information services to users. O'Brien (2023) identified content marketing, social media marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), paid advertising, influencer marketing and email marketing as the most effective digital marketing strategies capable of ensuring the visibility of a business or brand.

To create and implement effective library marketing strategies, a thorough understanding of customer preferences, interests, and needs is required. Libraries must perform extensive audience research, including demographics, interests, and digital habits, among other things. This insight allows libraries to adjust their marketing messages and channels to efficiently reach their target population and appeal to their interests (Acharya & Vigdal, 2023). Therefore awareness of the appropriate marketing strategy to apply at any time is very important for ensuring its successful implementation, meeting the objectives of the library, as well as the purpose for which the strategy was adopted in the first place. Awareness is the ability to be cognizant and perceptive of events, emotions, sensory patterns, thoughts, and things. It involves the capacity to recognize, identify, and comprehend information or situations. It is also the state of being conscious and having knowledge or understanding of something (Merriam-Webster, 2024). Urhefe-Okotie (2023) noted that librarians must be aware of the various marketing strategies and know the ones necessary for a given product in a given circumstance, especially in the library with the 21<sup>st</sup> century in perspective. Libraries therefore need to advertise their services using specific tactics, as being skillful at choosing the right tactics for every situation is essential for success in marketing. The

awareness of marketing strategies in the twenty-first century can thus be seen as librarians' knowledge of the various marketing strategies in terms of their types, usage, components, advantages and disadvantages, to effectively apply them, as people would naturally make the best use of what they know and are familiar with..

Hamza and Makama (2021) identified ignorance of marketing concepts, and lack of necessary marketing skills among others as some of the challenges librarians of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library, Bauchi face in ensuring the successful implementation of marketing library services. Aiyebilehin et al. (2020) argued that awareness plays a crucial role in the adoption and utilization of information communication technology tools by librarians in university library settings. They posit that librarians who are aware of technological advancements are more likely to embrace and integrate them into their service delivery methods, while those who lack awareness may struggle to do so. From the foregoing, it is established that the level of effectiveness of any marketing strategy is incumbent on the level of librarians' awareness of such strategies which would help in its application within a given circumstance, to achieve the best result.

Effective marketing of library and information services in this digital era according to Horsfall (2020) is a process in which libraries and information centres devote a significant amount of effort and energy to producing and delivering information services and products that will please their users. Thus, marketing of library and information services in the digital age demands the application of ICT using web 2.0 platforms, such as WhatsApp, email, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, and so on, to reach out to their clients. In light of these changes in the context of marketing library services in the 21<sup>st</sup> century librarians must be aware, and acquire the requisite skills/competencies in the use of digital infrastructure needed to effectively sell the library's offerings to users to be successful in their enterprise. Leveraging these skills to effectively market their services in the digital age is very important for librarians to break even at communicating the library's offerings to both users and intending users.

Possession of ICT skills is a prerequisite for effective marketing of library resources in the 21<sup>st</sup> century characterized by digitization and use of electronic resources. ICT skills of librarians according to Daniels et al. (2023) are those technological and or computer skills and knowledge required by librarians to fully exploit information services in a digital environment. Ilesanmi (2023) enumerated the ICT skills required by librarians for effective service delivery to include social media skills, Microsoft Office skills, information retrieval skills, internet use skills, programming skills, and conservation/preservation skills. Therefore, it is imperative to take into account librarians' level of awareness of the various marketing strategies, especially with the use of online/ICT tools and possession of ICT skills to effectively market and promote library services to the user community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Statement of the problem**

The proliferation of various information technologies has brought about transformation in the digital space and with it dynamic strategies, by which librarians can market their products and services in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the use of ICT tools. Though librarians are making frantic efforts to adopt digital and other marketing strategies, they seem not to be doing enough to promote library services both online and offline to meet the changing expectations of users. This is evident in their low visibility in both the digital space and the university community about the spectrum of services they render. Observation and studies have shown that there is a decline in the patronage of

university libraries, especially in developing countries like Nigeria because potential users seem not to be drawn to the activities and services of the library. Could this aversion and disinterest among users be the resultant effect of librarians' poor awareness of the appropriate marketing strategies to apply, or could it be that they lack the required ICT skills to enable them promote their offerings to 21<sup>st</sup> century library users effectively? Does the problem still lie with the issue of poor awareness and low level of ICT skills, rather than lack of/inadequate ICT infrastructure and funding in Nigerian university libraries? Furthermore, the researchers acknowledge that while there is literature dealing with the study in other regions of Nigeria, there is a dearth of studies examining librarians' awareness, ICT skills and marketing of library services in university libraries in Delta State, Nigeria; that gap the researchers hope to fill.

### **Objective of the study**

The general objective of the study is centred on librarians' awareness, ICT skills and marketing of university library services in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Delta State. Specifically, the objectives are to;

1. examine the level of librarians' awareness in marketing library services in university libraries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century,
2. know the extent to which librarians possess ICT skills for marketing university library services in the 21<sup>st</sup> century,
3. identify the strategies used for marketing university library services in the 21<sup>st</sup> century,
4. identify the types of marketable library services in university libraries in Delta State,
5. determine the factors inhibiting the effective marketing of university library services in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the level of librarians' awareness in marketing library services in university libraries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
2. To what extent do librarians possess ICT skills for marketing university library services in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
3. What are the strategies used for marketing university library services in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
4. What are the marketable library services in university libraries in Delta State?
5. What are the factors inhibiting the effective marketing of university library services in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Marketing Library Services in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Information delivery in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is characterized by the proliferation and utilization of ICTs and the Internet which enable information seekers to access information with the click of their keyboard anytime any place without physically visiting the library. The Internet affords the academic community unhindered access to different types of information as it suits their diverse information needs, making it possible for them to easily patronize different information service providers or sources without stress. As a result of this trend, libraries are now faced with the challenge of getting users to use the library, avoid under-utilization, and remain relevant to its

parent institution. Urhefe-Okotie (2023) posited, that due to advancements in ICT in the 21st century, users now expect the library to move to them wherever they may be, making it imperative for the library to market its services and resources to create awareness for its utilization and forestall non-utilization or under-utilization of services available in the library.

Marketing according to Hamza and Makama (2021) is an approach that involves systematically evaluating customer requirements and designing information products and services to satisfy those needs. This necessitates thorough planning, analysis, and identification of the customers' needs and the options available to satisfy them. This implies the need for consideration of appropriateness to deal with each situation; that is, adopting a prudent approach to effectively communicate with library users about the library's offerings. In the same vein, Olorunfemi and Ipadeola (2018) asserted that marketing is essential for libraries to provide benefits that users desire, lower obstacles to use and access, inform and persuade users, and carefully plan to effectively satisfy users' needs. University libraries must take a creative approach to connecting with users in light of the demands of modern information handling and the introduction of information and communication technology (ICT), which introduces several competitors in the information service delivery space. Marketing is one useful tool for this approach. This study looks at the methods university libraries in Africa employ to promote their materials and services to patrons (Edewor et al., 2016).

Daniels et al. (2023) noted that librarians are growing increasingly concerned about the inefficiencies of traditional librarianship in the face of ongoing technological demands, contemporary realities, and the need to enhance library services. The survival of libraries has also become dependent on their ability to remain innovative in the face of technological advancement due to the growth of rival information platforms like Google and Web 2.0, as well as competitors or other information service providers like bloggers, the choice of marketing strategy to adopt of paramount importance. In a study by Urhefe-Okotie (2023) on marketing techniques and skills required by librarians for the promotion of library services and resource utilization in academic libraries in Nigeria in a 21<sup>st</sup> century perspective, the researcher stressed that to effectively market library services and resources, librarians must improve their technical skills, suggesting they hone their knowledge of databases, the internet, and other electronic resources, as well as by troubleshooting new technology and staying up to date on its advancements.

### **Librarians' Awareness of Marketing Strategies**

Librarians are growing increasingly concerned about the inefficiencies of traditional librarianship in the face of ongoing technological demands, contemporary realities, and the need to enhance library services. Additionally, as rival information platforms like Google and Web 2.0 with more advanced software, hardware, products, and services continue to grow, as do competitors or other information service providers like bloggers, the survival of libraries is now dependent on their ability to innovate to stay relevant in the face of technological advancement (Daniels et al., 2023). They noted, that for university libraries to continue to exist, they must improve staff skills, repackage their offerings, and use technology to provide better services. Marketing libraries and information services are about determining the needs and wants of the customer and providing for those needs using the organization's resources. Keeping users informed about services and resources that align with their interests is the goal of marketing which helps to rekindle the interest of library users by making them aware of the spectrum of services the library render. Urhefe-Okotie (2023) submitted that librarians must be aware of the various marketing strategies and know which ones are necessary for a given product in a given circumstance. From the above, one

can deduce the need for libraries to advertise their services using specific tactics they are aware of in terms of the implication for its application, as being adept at choosing the right tactics for every situation is essential for success in marketing. Therefore, librarians' awareness of the different marketing strategies will enable them to better understand the best one to adopt to effectively promote the services rendered in their libraries considering the make-up of their users.

An earlier study by Edewor et al. (2016) on marketing library and information services in selected university libraries in Africa where the survey research design was adopted using a purposive sampling technique to select twenty (20) universities in Africa revealed that librarians are very much aware of orientation exercises, use of library publications, flyers, posters as marketing strategies. They further identified Facebook, Twitter and website as the least known strategies. Also, Hamza and Makama (2021) studied the awareness and perception of librarians on the marketing of library services, using Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library, Bauchi as a case study. The study applied the quantitative research methodology adopting the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprises academic librarians and senior library officers in the library. Using a structured questionnaire, the data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Even if the findings from the study revealed that librarians are aware of marketing strategies like one-on-one conversations, published guides, newsletters, leaflets, and flyers, they identified social media, online advertising and library websites as well as email as the best strategy in marketing library services. In line with the above position, Maturure and Rakemane (2021) noted that information centers, especially libraries are not complete without marketing what they offer. While there have been limited strategies employed in the past to promote library collections and services, the use of social media tools has grown over the past several years and appears to be a significant avenue for doing so. This change may be based on their level of awareness that using modern technologies is best suited for reaching out to 21<sup>st</sup>-century users characterized by the propensity to use digital technologies not limited by space or time.

A more recent study by Ogbomo and Ebhonu (2023) on librarians' awareness of content creation tools for professional branding in university libraries in Delta State. The study population covers librarians and library officers in university libraries in Delta State. Employing the use of a questionnaire to generate data from the respondents, the data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study uncovers that the extent of librarians' awareness of content creation tools for professional branding which is a major component of marketing in university libraries in Delta state is low. From the foregoing, it can be inferred that librarians, especially in Nigeria are steadily becoming aware and are using modern marketing strategies to promote their service, though they seem not to be very aware of the use of content creation strategy which is a major approach for meeting and captivating potential library users in the contemporary information space.

### **Librarians ICT Skills in Marketing Library Services**

There is a paradigm shift in the library profession as the adoption and use of modern technologies have redefined how information is acquired, organized and disseminated, especially with the proliferation of different online information centres and databases that are in constant competition with the library for its users. This has in turn changed the expectations of both current and potential library users, as they would rather patronize that which they perceive would easily and quickly satisfy them. For libraries to thrive and effectively deliver their mandate of meeting



users' information needs without any form of limitation, librarians need to acquire the right competencies or skills to operate modern technologies, usually referred to as ICT skills. This aligns with the assertion by Hussain and Ahmad, (2021) that over the years, a lot of revolutions to traditional library practices have sprung out of innovations in digital technologies.

Ilesanmi (2023) studied the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills of librarians for service delivery in private universities Southern Nigeria, which revealed that the ICT skills acquired by librarians are categorized into social media skills, Microsoft Office skills, information retrieval skills, internet use skills, programming skills, and conservation/preservation skills and the findings also showed that librarians have these skills and are versatile in their application for internet searches, information retrieval, social communication and Microsoft-office-related activities, except for programming skills. Also, Daniels et al. (2023) conducted a study on librarians' ICT skills and effective library service delivery in university libraries in Rivers State which revealed that librarians in Rivers State have web application, library networking and cloud technology skills, defining ICT skills within the context of library and information science as those technological and or computer skills and knowledge required by librarians necessary to fully exploit information services in the digital environment. Furthermore, the purpose of libraries in the twenty-first century is to facilitate access to information for users. Thus, web 2.0 technologies have given library professionals new roles. People can now genuinely connect and communicate online with the help of Web 2.0 tools like Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and online groups, also referred to as social media.

The above findings are suggestive that the acquisition of ICT skills is a prerequisite for effective service delivery, marketing not excluded, in the contemporary information society also known as the 21<sup>st</sup> century information environment, and librarians are currently in possession of these skills that are capable of effectively carrying out marketing of library services using digital technology.

### **Marketing Strategies in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Librarians need to market their services and resources to students and potential users to create awareness of the academic Library's value. Major sectors of the potential market for the library's services are probably not aware of all the services available or have no understanding at all of what is offered. This is why marketing is vital to the success and existence of the academic library. The main focus of every library should be good customer service, as good service equals a good marketing campaign, which is the objective of marketing in libraries (Adamu et al., 2023). Aderibigbe and Farouk (2017) identified various strategies to improve the efficient marketing of library services in academic libraries. These strategies include creating a training program, advertising in print media or directories, sending out newsletters, brochures, and flyers, word-of-mouth endorsement, and personal sales by the librarians. They also include publicity and public relations strategies, pasting new information on the notice board, improving the image of libraries, and using user orientation as a strategy. These marketing strategies could however be viewed as traditional marketing strategies, as they require the library users to come to the library or assemble physically. This differs from the current trend and attitude of library users who want the library to come to them wherever they are.

The findings in a study by Hamza and Makama (2021) on the awareness and perception of librarians on marketing of library services in Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library, Bauchi identified social media, online advertising, library websites and email service as the best strategies

in marketing library services. Another study by Obiamalu et al. (2024) investigated marketing strategies for the promotion of library information resources and services in Prof. Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library in Anambra State, and it revealed that the marketing strategies used for the promotion of library information resources and services include special programmes and events; such as library orientation, workshop and seminar, library display and exhibition, social media, e-mail marketing, content marketing and advocacy program or outreach. These findings have established that librarians are implementing best practices in the current reality where the use of ICT tools is the best approach to achieving effective outcomes within the contemporary information landscape.

### **University Library Services in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

A university library is owned and operated by a university to provide the information needs of all members of the university community, including researchers, instructors, and students. According to Uwandu and Osuji (2022), depending on the kind and nature of the library, different libraries provide different services to their patrons. The provision of library services to patrons is deemed of paramount significance in university libraries which is to support the information needs of members of their parent institutions in the area of teaching, learning, and research. To this end, Ilesanmi (2023) posited that librarians are professionals who have acquired the competencies in the area of information science to enable them to perform diverse library functions ranging from collection development, knowledge management and preservation of information resources. Other services they provide are Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), Current Awareness Service (CAS), issuance of notifications, reservation, library orientation and reference among others. These services are very important in making the library relevant in meeting the different information needs of the members of the university community, hence libraries acquire the information materials needed to uphold this objective.

Uwandu and Osuji (2022) conducted a study on strategies used by librarians in marketing information resources and library services using the Federal University of Technology Owerri as a case study, and it revealed among others that the library services available for marketing in their library are reference, circulation, abstracting and indexing, current awareness, selective dissemination of information, referral, inter-library cooperation, internet, document delivery, and consultancy services. The librarian of the twenty-first century is an information warehouse, driven by a desperation to make a good difference in his surroundings. He is at home with a modern infrastructure of technology. According to Igwela and Nsirim (2018), reference, document delivery, borrowing, renewing, reserving, computerized interactive search, technical services, IT services, e-library services, serials services, exhibition and displays, user education, SDI, CAS, referral, reprographics, counseling, and webliography service are among the library services rendered in a typical university library.

### **Factors Inhibiting Effective Marketing of Library Services**

Libraries are adopting various strategies to promote the different services they offer to increase their visibility and make their users aware of what they offer to impact their patronage. However, librarians are faced every day with several challenges that are capable of inhibiting the effective marketing of their services. The application of a marketing principle or strategy can only be seen as effective if it can pull more users into the library. According to Aderibigbe and Farouk's (2017) study on challenges in marketing information resources and services in federal university libraries

in Nigeria, it was established that inadequate funding, unstable power supply, inadequate library staff, low staff computer literacy, lack of professional marketing training, and inadequate infrastructure such as computers, photocopiers, and air conditioners were the main obstacles to the efficient marketing of library services.

Corroborating the above assertion, Hamza and Makama (2021) studied the awareness and perception of librarians on the marketing of library services in Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library, Bauchi. The findings showed that the challenges librarians face in marketing their services are ignorance of marketing concepts, lack of management support, high cost of marketing, and librarians lack necessary skills for marketing library services. It is also in consonance with the findings by Akpena (2023) who studied the influence of librarian's attitudes on the marketing of information resources and services in university libraries in North Central Zone, Nigeria pinpointing inadequate knowledge of marketing by librarians, poor marketing skills, and lack of understanding of the intricacies of marketing as factors inhibiting marketing of information resources and services in university libraries. In contrast with the others, Obiamalu et al. (2024) investigated marketing strategies for the promotion of library information resources and services in Prof. Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library in Anambra State and it revealed that lack of funding, non-computerization and non-automation of library operations and services, low level of computer literacy among library staff are the issues associated with applying marketing strategies for the promotion of library information resources and services. Here, lack of knowledge or awareness of the marketing strategies were not an issue, but the availability of ICT infrastructure and poor ICT skills.

The findings of the above studies go a long way to show that the problem plaguing the use of digital tools for library services, especially marketing still revolves around poor ICT infrastructure, lack of power and funding, while a few regions are still facing the issue of poor ICT competencies and ignorance of ICT concepts. Hence, there is a need for urgent intervention in the area of building a viable ICT infrastructure and constantly training and retraining staff on the applicability of the right marketing strategies for showcasing their products and services.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed the use of a survey research design. The total population of this study is 112 comprising librarians in the eleven university libraries in Delta State, Nigeria. The total enumeration sampling technique was employed due to the small and manageable population size of the study; hence the entire 112 librarians in the eleven university libraries in Delta State were sampled. This conforms with the assertion of Israel (2013), that a study could adopt the entire population as the sample size when the entire population of the study is small. A well-structured questionnaire explaining the purpose of the study titled “Librarians’ Awareness, ICT Skills and Marketing of Library Services in University Libraries in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Questionnaire” was used as the instrument for collecting data from respondents. The questionnaire had six sections (A - F). While section A covers the demographic information of the respondents, sections B - F deal with questions covering the four objectives guiding the study. Copies of the questionnaire were given to lecturers in the Library and Information Science Department of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State for their input to ensure face and content validity. 112 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the librarians in the different university libraries in Delta State with the help of research assistants in each of the libraries. To ensure a high response rate, the

questionnaires were collected immediately after completion within a one-month duration. However, of the 112 copies of the questionnaire distributed, only 87 were collected and found usable, giving a 78% response rate. Data gathered from the questionnaire were analyzed using simple percentages, frequency counts, and weighted mean.

**Table 1: Population of the Study**

S/N	Name of University Library	Ownership	Librarians'
1	Nigeria Maritime University Library, Okerenkoko, Gbaramatu, Delta State, Nigeria	Federal	10
2	Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun Library, Delta State.	Federal	27
3	Delta State University Library, Abraka, Delta State	State	21
4	University of Delta Library, Agbor	State	6
5	Dennis Osadebay University Library, Asaba	State	16
6	Delta State University of Science and Technology Library, Ozoro.	State	4
7	Edwin Clark University Library, Kiagbodo, Delta State.	Private	3
8	Novena University Library, Ogume, Delta State.	Private	7
9	Western Delta University Library, Oghara, Delta State.	Private	6
10	Micheal and Cecilia Ibru University Library, Agbarha-Otor, Delta State.	Private	5
11	Admiralty University of Nigeria (ADUN)	Private	7
	<b>Total</b>		<b>112</b>

**Table 2: Questionnaire Response Rate**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Name of University Library</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Response rate</b>
<b>1</b>	Nigeria Maritime University Library, Okerenkoko, Gbaramatu, Delta State, Nigeria	Federal	7
<b>2</b>	Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun Library, Delta State.	Federal	25
<b>3</b>	Delta State University Library, Abraka, Delta State	State	15
<b>4</b>	University of Delta Library, Agbor	State	4
<b>5</b>	Dennis Osadebay University Library, Asaba	State	13
<b>6</b>	Delta State University of Science and Technology Library, Ozoro.	State	3
<b>7</b>	Edwin Clark University Library, Kiagbodo, Delta State.	Private	2
<b>8</b>	Novena University Library, Ogume, Delta State.	Private	6
<b>9</b>	Western Delta University Library, Oghara, Delta State.	Private	4
<b>10</b>	Micheal and Cecilia Ibru University Library, Agbarha-Otor, Delta State.	Private	4
<b>11</b>	Admiralty University of Nigeria (ADUN)	Private	4
	<b>Total</b>		<b>87</b>

## FINDINGS

**Research Question 1:** What is the Level of librarians' Awareness in Marketing Library Services in University Libraries?

**Table 3:** Level of Librarians' Awareness in Marketing Library Services in University Libraries

S/N	Items	VHL	HL	LL	VLL	Weighted Mean
1	Words of mouth	32	46	7	2	2.9
2	Notice boards	32	46	7	2	2.9
3	social media (WhatsApp, Facebook, X, Instagram, etc)	33	47	2	5	3.2
4	Library website	25	50	10	2	3.1
5	flyers and bulletins	15	58	8	6	2.9
6	email	29	44	6	8	3.1
7	Library orientation	32	48	3	4	3.2
8	Library tours	12	30	34	11	2.5
9	Training and workshops	10	39	24	14	2.5
10	Library handbook	8	64	13	2	2.9
<b>Criterion Mean</b>						<b>2.5</b>
<b>Aggregate Mean</b>						<b>2.9</b>

Table 3 shows that with an aggregate mean of 2.9 being higher than the criterion mean of 2.50, it can be concluded that the level to which librarians in Delta State are aware of strategies for marketing library services in university libraries is high.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent do Librarians Possess ICT Skills for Marketing University Library Services in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

**Table 4:** Extent of Librarians' ICT Skills for Marketing University Library Services

S/N	Items	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Weighted Mean
1	Social media skills (Facebook, X, Whatsapp, blogs, LinkedIn etc.)	28	20	14	25	2.6
2	Microsoft Office skills (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc)	24	45	13	5	3.0
3	Online information retrieval skills (Use of database or OPAC)	29	30	18	10	2.9
4	Internet use skills (Boolean search, search engines, download, print)	15	44	16	12	2.7
5	Programming skills (Web design, software installation)	7	28	20	32	2.1
6	Preservation and conservation skills (Cloud storage, digitization, scanning, printing)	11	38	22	16	2.5
7	Library networking skills (LAN, web upload)	7	28	20	32	2.1

8	Use of digital content creation tools (canva, blogger, WordPress, Grammarly etc)	7	28	20	32	2.1
<b>Criterion Mean</b>						<b>2.5</b>
<b>Aggregate Mean</b>						<b>2.5</b>

Table 4 shows that with an aggregate mean of 2.5 being equal to the criterion mean of 2.50, it can be concluded that the extent to which librarians possess ICT skills for marketing library services in university libraries in Delta State is moderately high.

**Research Question 3:** What are the Strategies Used for Marketing University Library Services in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

**Table 5:** Strategies Used for Marketing University Library Services in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

S/N	Items	Agree	%	Disagree	%
1	Words of mouth	14	16	73	84
2	Notice boards	32	37	55	63
3	Social media (WhatsApp, Facebook, X, Instagram etc)	87	100	0	0
4	Library website	87	100	0	0
5	Flyers and bulletins	74	64	13	36
6	Email	81	70	6	30
7	Library orientation	74	64	13	36
8	Library tours	64	56	23	44
9	Training and workshops	81	70	6	30
10	Library handbook	68	59	19	41

Table 5 shows that all 87(100%) respondents agreed that the library website and social media which include WhatsApp, Facebook, X, Instagram, etc are strategies used for marketing university library services in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. 81(70%) identified the use of email, training, and workshops as marketing strategies. Also, 74(64%) agreed on the use of library tours, flyers, and bulletins as a marketing strategy, while 68(59%) identified the use of library handbooks. On the other hand, only a very few 32(37%) and 14(16%) agreed to the use of notice boards and word of mouth respectively as marketing strategies in university libraries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Research Question 4:** What are the Marketable Library Services in University Libraries in Delta State?

**Table 6:** Marketable library services in university libraries in Delta State

S/N	Items	Agree	%	Disagree	%
1	Selective dissemination of information	35	40	52	60
2	Current awareness services	71	82	16	18
3	Information consultancy/referral services	32	37	55	63
4	Webliography services	35	40	52	60
5	Reprographic services	84	97	2	3
6	Serials services	84	97	2	3

7	E-library services (access to online and offline electronic databases)	84	97	2	3
8	Reference services (including computerized interactive services)	84	97	2	3
9	Circulation (user registration book lending and retrieval, renewal, reservation, interlibrary loan) services	84	97	2	3
10	Document delivery	16	18	71	82
11	Technical services	52	60	25	40

Table 6 shows that 84 librarians representing 97% of the total population agree that the marketable library services in university libraries in Delta State are reprographic, serials services, e-library services (access to online and offline electronic databases), reference services (including computerized interactive services) and circulation (users registration book lending and retrieval, renewal, reservation, interlibrary loan) services. While 71 (82%) agree to current awareness services being a marketable service in their library, 52(60) market their technical services. Meanwhile, 35 (40%) agree to have selective dissemination of information and webliography services. Also, Information consultancy/referral services and document delivery services were identified as marketable library services by 32(37%) and 16(18%) respectively.

**Research Question 5:** What are the Factors Inhibiting the Effective Marketing of University Library Services?

**Table 7:** Factors Inhibiting Effective Marketing of University Library Services in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

S/N	Items	Agree	%	Disagree	%
1	Inadequate funding	87	100	00	00
2	Inadequate power supply	68	78	19	22
3	Inadequate technological infrastructure	87	100	00	00
4	Poor ICT skills by librarians	38	44	49	56
5	Lack of adequate support from management	77	88	10	12
6	Poor marketing skills by librarians	65	75	22	25
7	Librarians' indifference towards marketing library services	77	88	10	18

Table 7 shows that the major factors inhibiting the effective marketing of library services by librarians as agreed to by all 87(100%) respondents are inadequate funding and technological infrastructure. 77(%88) respondents further identified a lack of adequate support from management and librarians' indifference towards marketing library services. Also, 68(78%) and 65(75%) respondents believe inadequate power supply and poor marketing skills by librarians are inhibiting factors respectively. Furthermore, only 38(44%) respondents agree that poor ICT skills by librarians inhibit the effective marketing of library services in university libraries in Delta State.



## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The analysis of the study revealed that the level to which librarians are aware of marketing library services in university libraries in Delta State is high. It further showed that librarians are more aware of the use of social media (WhatsApp, Facebook, x, Instagram, etc), library orientation, library website and email as strategies for marketing library services. This is at variance with an earlier study on marketing library and information services in selected university libraries in Africa by Edewor et al. (2016) which showed that librarians are less aware of Facebook, Twitter and other websites as marketing strategies. However, it conforms with the findings of Hamza and Makama (2021) who studied awareness and perception of librarians on the marketing of library services, using Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library, Bauchi as a case study where they identified social media, online advertising, library websites and email marketing as the best strategy they adopt in marketing library services. This would mean that a lack of awareness of the use of modern marketing strategies is not lost in the perception of librarians in Delta State, as data has shown that they are moving with the current realities in terms of adopting digital /modern technologies for marketing their library offerings.

Also, the findings show that the extent to which librarians possess ICT skills for marketing library services in university libraries in Delta State is moderately high. It also shows that librarians indicated possessing majorly the use of Microsoft Office, online information retrieval skills, and skills in the use of databases. The least possessed skills possessed by librarians as indicated are programming, use of content creation tools and library networking skills. This conforms with the findings of Ilesanmi (2023) who studied the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills of librarians for service delivery in private universities which revealed that librarians have basic ICT skills and were versatile in their application for internet searches, information retrieval, social communication and Microsoft-office-related activities except for programming skills. Another study by Ogbomo and Ebhonu (2023) on librarians' awareness of content creation tools for professional branding in university libraries in Delta State revealed that the extent to which librarians utilize content creation tools for professional branding is low. These findings have revealed that while librarians may possess basic ICT skills to carry out daily operations in the library, they lack the requisite ICT skills such as the use of content creation tools and programming skills which are needed to effectively market their services in the 21<sup>st</sup> century landscape.

The findings also revealed that library websites and social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, X, Instagram, etc are the major strategies used for marketing university library services in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Others include the use of email, training and workshops, library tours, flyers, and bulletins, as well as library handbooks. The least strategies identified were word of mouth and use of notice boards, which may be because they are major constituents of traditional library set-up. This finding is in sharp contrast to an earlier finding by Benson et al. (2016) who studied strategies used in marketing library and information services in tertiary institutions in Imo State which identified the use of library notice boards, face-to-face interaction with the user community, seminar/workshop as the major strategies used by librarians for marketing library services. However, the findings from the study by Obiamalu et al. (2024) investigating marketing strategies for the promotion of library information resources and services in Prof. Festus Aghagbo Nwako Library in Anambra State, supported the findings of this study, as it revealed that the marketing strategies used for the promotion of library information resources and services include special programmes and events; such as library orientation, workshop and seminar, library display and exhibition, social media, e-mail marketing, content marketing and advocacy program or outreach.

This contrast may be due to the time lag between the earlier study and the current studies, showing that librarians have improved tremendously in the area of adopting modern technologies, including those in Delta State. Hence they are more adept at using modern marketing strategies/tools that concentrate in the digital space as against traditional methods that are characterized by physical contact.

Furthermore, the study revealed that the marketable library services in university libraries in Delta State, Nigeria are reprographic, serials services, e-library services, and reference services that include computerized interactive services. Others are circulation service that encompasses users' registration, book lending/retrieval, renewal, reservation, and interlibrary loan, as well as current awareness, technical services, selective dissemination of information and webliography services. It however identified information consultancy/referral services and document delivery services as the least marketable library services available in their libraries. This finding is consistent with that of Uwandu and Osuji (2022) who conducted a study on strategies used by librarians in marketing information resources and library services using the Federal University of Technology Owerri as a case study. It revealed that the library services available for marketing are reference services, circulation services, abstracting and indexing services, current awareness services, selective dissemination of information, referral services, inter-library cooperation, internet services, document delivery services, and consultancy services. This shows a level of consistency over time regarding the type of library services rendered in libraries in Nigeria. However, the delivery of computerized reference services in university libraries in Delta State shows that they have adopted the use of ICT-based services to an extent.

Finally, the study revealed that major factors inhibiting the effective marketing of library services are inadequate funding and technological infrastructure. Others include lack of adequate support from management, librarians' indifference towards marketing library services, inadequate power supply and lack of marketing skills: indicating that lack of ICT skills does not inhibit their ability to market their services. This finding is consistent with the findings of Hamza and Makama (2021) who studied the awareness and perception of librarians on marketing of library services showing that challenges librarians face in marketing their services are ignorance of marketing concepts, lack of management support, high cost of marketing and lack of necessary skills for marketing library services. It is also in consonance with the findings by Akpena (2023) who studied the influence of librarians' attitudes on the marketing of information resources and services in university libraries in North Central Zone, Nigeria which revealed that the factors inhibiting the marketing of information resources and services in university libraries include inadequate knowledge of marketing by librarians, poor marketing skills, and lack of understanding of the intricacies of marketing. While the study confirmed that librarians in Delta State still face the already established issues of poor funding and inadequate technological infrastructure as deterrents to effective marketing of library resources, it identified/exposed the issue of librarians' negative attitude towards marketing library resources and poor knowledge of marketing even though they claim to have ICT skills and are aware of contemporary strategies.

## CONCLUSION

The study highlights librarians' awareness, ICT skills and marketing of academic library services in the 21st century in Delta State. The findings suggest that librarians are aware of marketing strategies and possess ICT skills for marketing library services especially Microsoft Office skills,

information retrieval and social media skills, using websites and social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, X, and Instagram for marketing their services. The study also showed that the major marketable library services in university libraries are reprographic, serials, e-library, reference, circulation, current awareness, technical, selective dissemination of information and webliography services. It further identified the major factors inhibiting the effective marketing of library services by librarians to include inadequate funding and technological infrastructure, lack of adequate support from management, librarians' indifference towards marketing library services, inadequate power supply and lack of marketing skills. The study has shown that while librarians in university libraries in Delta State Nigeria are aware of the different marketing strategies and possess basic ICT skills to carry out their daily tasks among others, they lack the requisite skills to use digital content tools as a viable medium to reach out to a large number of library users which is a problem. In the 21st century characterized by the use of digital technologies, marketing library services demands new ideas and perceptions on the part of librarians. This is so that they can leverage the curiosity of the members of the library community by identifying contents, adopting the right marketing strategy that would deeply appeal to potential users, and changing their understanding of the library as a place of knowledge and innovation, and not just a boring place where books are kept.

From the foregoing, it is recommended that there should be training on modern marketing strategies that include the use of content creation tools and other digital technologies for librarians organized by the library management quickly, so librarians can imbibe the right attitude and skills needed to apply the appropriate marketing strategy to showcase the library's offerings towards a positive outcome.

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