

Empowering Academic Librarians in Imo State Through Continuous Professional Development

Ngozi Ike, Ogbonna Achilike, & Nnennaya Justina Ago

Abstract:

The study investigates the empowerment of academic librarians in Imo State, Nigeria, through Continuous Professional Development (CPD). The work adopted a mixed-methods design, the research assesses librarians' participation frequency in CPD, the impact of networking and CPD opportunities, and the role of knowledge-sharing culture in enhancing service quality. The study sampled 96 professional librarians from four academic libraries in Imo State, employing stratified random sampling. Data were collected via structured questionnaires and interviews, analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic methods. Findings reveals CPD participation: 2.69 (mean score) of librarians engage in CPD occasionally, 1.97 participate rarely, suggesting institutional or motivational barriers. Networking and Mentorship shows low engagement in mentorship programs (0.96 mean) and advanced certifications (1.71 mean) highlights gaps in structured professional growth. Digital Proficiency indicates a low mean score (0.63) in digital tool confidence underscores technophobia, impeding adaptation to modern library demands. The result also shows knowledge-sharing culture with a grand mean of 0.88 which reveals weak collaborative learning environments, linked to distrust and lack of institutional policies. The study concludes that there is the urgent need to institutionalize CPD, foster knowledge-sharing networks, and address technological skill gaps among librarians. Recommendations; universities and library management should sponsor CPD initiatives, including workshops, conferences, and advanced degree programs, implement mentorship frameworks and digital literacy training to bridge competency gaps, promote policy-driven knowledge-sharing practices to enhance service delivery and librarian expertise.

To cite this article:

Ike, N., Achilike, O., & Ago, N. J. (2025). Empowering Academic Librarians in Imo State Through Continuous Professional Development. *International Journal of Librarianship*, 10(3), 57-66. <https://doi.org/10.23974/ijol.2025.vol10.3.482>

To submit your article to this journal:

Go to <https://ojs.calaijol.org/index.php/ijol/about/submissions>

Empowering Academic Librarians in Imo State Through Continuous Professional Development

Ngozi Ike, University of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, Nigeria
Ogbonna Achilike, University of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, Nigeria
Nnennaya Justina Ago, Federal University of Technology, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The study investigates the empowerment of academic librarians in Imo State, Nigeria, through Continuous Professional Development (CPD). The work adopted a mixed-methods design, the research assesses librarians' participation frequency in CPD, the impact of networking and CPD opportunities, and the role of knowledge-sharing culture in enhancing service quality. The study sampled 96 professional librarians from four academic libraries in Imo State, employing stratified random sampling. Data were collected via structured questionnaires and interviews, analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic methods. Findings reveals CPD participation: 2.69 (mean score) of librarians engage in CPD occasionally, 1.97 participate rarely, suggesting institutional or motivational barriers. Networking and Mentorship shows low engagement in mentorship programs (0.96 mean) and advanced certifications (1.71 mean) highlights gaps in structured professional growth. Digital Proficiency indicates a low mean score (0.63) in digital tool confidence underscores technophobia, impeding adaptation to modern library demands. The result also shows knowledge-sharing culture with a grand mean of 0.88 which reveals weak collaborative learning environments, linked to distrust and lack of institutional policies. The study concludes that there is the urgent need to institutionalize CPD, foster knowledge-sharing networks, and address technological skill gaps among librarians. Recommendations; universities and library management should sponsor CPD initiatives, including workshops, conferences, and advanced degree programs, implement mentorship frameworks and digital literacy training to bridge competency gaps, promote policy-driven knowledge-sharing practices to enhance service delivery and librarian expertise.

Keywords: Continuous Professional Development, Academic Librarians, Empowerment, Digital Literacy, Knowledge-Sharing

INTRODUCTION

Academic libraries are the live wire or heart of educational institutions, providing indispensable resources and support for students and faculty. In Imo State, Nigeria, these libraries are instrumental to advancing knowledge and learning. To sustain the elevated standards expected of academic libraries and ensure they remain as the vanguard of education, it is crucial that academic librarians in Imo State engage in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programs.

According to Ike, Amadi, Madu-Malachy, Iheagwam, Iheanacho and Nwagu (2023) academic libraries are the libraries recognized in institutions of higher learning which serves two corresponding purposes that support the institution's curriculum and also support the research of the faculty members and the students. Anyanwu (2016) asserts that academic libraries are those libraries found in institutions of higher learning like universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and other related institutions.

The nature and location of academic libraries make them an essential arm of the parent institution, conferring on them the responsibility of winning the goal of the institution. Okorie (2016) stated that academic library service applies to how patrons are enabled to use the library and all that it provides. Academic libraries offer a wide variety of useful information sources, expertise, and technologies. They also provide support in accessing and using these resources to satisfactory end provided through various library services. The author went on to state that the satisfaction of library users is a function of three main sources - the information products received; the quality of information system and library services provided. Access to full library services is partly determined by one's status in the parent institution that established the library and wholly by registration status in the library. Academic libraries are those libraries that are established in tertiary institutions to serve two complementary purposes which are teaching and learning. Academic libraries according to Edom (2012) are those libraries established in institutions of higher learning such as universities, polytechnics, monotechnics, colleges of education and other similar institutions to support and enhance the tripartite functions and the full realization of the educational goals of the parent institutions.

Academic librarians in Imo State are facing rapidly changing scenario. The traditional role of librarians, focused on cataloging and managing print resources, have stretched to include technology integration, information literacy instruction, research support, and digital resource management. Today's academic librarians are expected to be versatile and adaptable, making CPD even more critical. Pierre - Robertson (2023) explores the evolving role of librarians in the constantly developing technological environment and demonstrates how librarians can combine information resources, technology and research assistance in these constantly changing spaces. The author also explores how technology enhances the role of the librarian, with specific reference to Artificial Intelligence (AI), and stressed that the need for library courses for credit to allow for feedback, assessment and critical thinking. The need for continuing professional development for librarians is necessary in areas such as Scholarly Publishing, Metrics and Analytics, Academic Integrity and Intellectual Property identified as areas of focus for the 21st century Librarian.

Statement of the Problem

The academic librarians play a crucial role in supporting the educational and research missions of their respective institutions in Imo State. However, there exists a pressing concern regarding the effectiveness and preparedness of these academic librarians to meet the evolving demands and challenges of the modern academic setting. Many academic librarians in Imo State may possess skills and knowledge that are no longer aligned with the rapidly changing technological and pedagogical advancements in the field. This may hinder their ability to provide relevant and efficient library services. A significant number of academic librarians in the state may lack access to structured and meaningful CPD opportunities. Financial constraints, institutional support, and lack of awareness about available programs may restrict their ability to engage in ongoing learning and development. With the increasing integration of technology into library services, there is a concern that academic librarians may not be fully leveraging digital resources, research tools, and

information management systems due to inadequate training and exposure. Therefore, addressing these issues is essential to empower academic librarians in Imo State to effectively fulfill their roles, stay current with best practices, and contribute positively to the academic institutions they serve. A comprehensive study that investigates the current state of CPD, the barriers faced by academic librarians, and the potential impact on academic institutions is necessary to develop informed strategies for improvement and empowerment.

Research Questions

1. How often do professional librarians in Imo State participate in continuous professional development?
2. To what extent has networking and CPD opportunities empower the development of librarians?
3. How can knowledge-sharing culture within libraries contribute to the overall enhancement of service quality and librarian expertise?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic libraries play a vital role in providing reference and research support to library patrons. Librarians assist library users in finding useful information resources, and utilizing library resources effectively. The library staff also offer workshops and training sessions on research skills, citation management and information literacy skills. Ali and Naveed (2020) state that university libraries are playing very crucial role in supporting research and academic activities and libraries have been providing services related to information availability to student, staff and other researchers and that the nature of library resources and services are constantly changing under the contemporary information environment as such the librarians are sure that the library users information needs are met through reference and research support.

Continuous Professional Development of academic librarians refers to the ongoing process of acquiring, updating, and enhancing the skills, knowledge, and competencies necessary to excel in their roles within the academic library setting. CPD is a proactive approach to professional growth and improvement that recognizes the dynamic nature of academic librarianship and the evolving needs of library users and institutions. Academic libraries have evolved significantly over the years, transitioning from traditional repositories of books to dynamic centers of information and learning. Librarians have had to adapt their roles and acquire new skills to meet the diverse needs of users in the digital age (Barnes, 2009).

In line with the discussion on empowering academic librarians in Imo State through continuous professional development, Gregory, (2012) states that information literacy instruction is a core responsibility of academic librarians. CPD is essential for librarians to develop effective pedagogical techniques, understand evolving information resources, and engage in collaborative teaching with faculty. Academic librarians are increasingly involved in research support services, aiding faculty and students in research activities. CPD enables librarians to provide guidance on data management, scholarly communication, and research impact metrics (Hicks, 2017). According to Hall, (2013) technology plays a central role in modern academic libraries. Librarians

must continually update their technological skills to manage digital collections, implement library management systems, and assist users with digital resources. Empowering academic librarians through continuous professional development will enhance adequate and effective service delivery to the library patrons. Many librarians actively engage with professional associations such as the American Library Association (ALA) or the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL). These organizations offer conferences, webinars, and publications that support CPD (Clements, 2019). CPD contributes to the overall excellence of academic institutions. Well-prepared librarians improve library services, aid faculty research, and enhance student learning experiences (Begum, 2017).

Continuous Professional Development is pivotal in empowering academic librarians to fulfill their multifaceted roles effectively. It enables librarians to adapt to the evolving information landscape, contribute to research and scholarship, and support student learning. Overcoming barriers and fostering collaboration within the library community and with professional associations are essential steps in promoting CPD. As academic libraries continue to evolve, the commitment to CPD remains a cornerstone in delivering quality services and contributing to the success of higher education institutions. Future research should focus on innovative CPD models and their impact on academic librarianship in an increasingly digital and globalized environment. The study of Madukoma, and Garba (2022) affirmed that continuous professional development of librarians could influence their work engagement in federal universities in North West, Nigeria. The authors went further to state that, the management of federal universities in collaboration with the federal university libraries in North West, Nigeria should try to maintain and continue to satisfy the job demands of librarians as well as to provide adequate job resources to sustain work engagement of librarians in their domain. They should uplift the level of continuous professional development of librarians by sponsoring them to further their education, attend seminars, workshops and conferences regularly. In addition, librarians in federal university libraries in North West, Nigeria should actively participate in web-based CPD programmes via webinars, zoom, massive open online courses, social media platforms among others.

Academic librarians can be made powerful through continuous professional development by participating in workshops, conferences, and online courses to stay updated on new technologies and trends in library science. Networking with peers, engaging in mentorship programs, and fostering a culture of knowledge-sharing within the profession also contribute to their ongoing growth. Additionally, encouraging librarians to pursue advanced degrees and certifications enhances their expertise, benefiting both their individual careers and the overall quality of library services.

Continuing professional development (CPD) is a vital factor to implement emerging technologies according to the changing job requirements for organizational survival (Cooke, 2012). There is a strong positive connection between CPD and enhanced work performance of librarians (Massis, 2010). Ample availability of e-learning courses provides free continuing professional development opportunities to the library professionals with internet connectivity to improve professional skills (Ecclestone, 2013).

Professional development activities provided in an online environment enable librarians to grow and flourish professionally (Hendrix & McKeal, 2017). Institutional changes in higher education due to rapid technological advancements stimulate information professionals towards professional development (Cassner & Adams, 2013), (Nebeolise, 2018, Anene & Idiedo 2021).

Continuous Professional Development improves proficient knowledge and skills of the library personnel and provides sufficient prospects to develop skills in a variety of areas. Job-

specific education was provided to information professionals for their professional development so that they might re-shape information resources for the virtual community and advance in career and personal growth (Khan & Du, 2017 and Sivankalai, 2021). Subject knowledge was acquired through CPD; efficiency and productivity were enhanced, and it was highly beneficial for librarians' professional growth (Venturella & Breland, 2019). According to Juma, Nakaziba and Holmner (2021) after attending CPD programme the librarians had become more self-driven, and they developed interest in research and keeping abreast of the latest trend that corroborate with Bowen-Chang and Hosein (2019) who noted that CPDs are a payoff because of the benefits attained like competence, career advancement and job satisfaction. CPD creates platforms for librarians to connect with peers, fostering a supportive community that encourages the exchange of knowledge and experiences. It implements mentorship initiatives to provide guidance and support for librarians at various stages of their careers, facilitating knowledge transfer and professional growth; which encourages a collaborative environment within libraries, promoting the sharing of expertise and best practices among librarians to enhance overall service quality.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The population of the study is made up of ninety-six (96) librarians in four academic libraries in Imo State from Owerri which include Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education (15), Federal Polytechnic Nekede (11), Federal University of Technology (50), and Imo State University (20); only the professional librarians were selected. The study adopted descriptive statistics. The study adopted a stratified random sampling method to select academic librarians from various institutions in Imo State. Instruments for data collection were a structured survey questionnaire. The interviews allowed for in-depth exploration of CPD experiences, challenges, and perspectives. Interviews were conducted in person. Interview transcripts were analyzed thematically.

Result and Data Analysis

Table 1: Frequency of CPD Participation Response

S/N	FREQUENCY	SA	A	D	SD	N	X
1	Rarely	13	12	30	41	96	1.97
2	Occasionally	31	24	21	20	96	2.69
3	Regularly	14	21	30	31	96	2.19
4	Very Frequently	11	12	27	46	96	1.88

The result in Table 1 indicates that the mean of respondents 2.19 reported librarians participating in CPD regularly, indicating a commitment to staying updated on trends in library science while 2.69 affirmed participation of CPD occasionally, 1.88 affirmed Very Frequently and 1.97 responded that they participate rarely to CPD. Could it be they are not interested in CPD or the institution do not involve these librarians for CPD.

The result of the study is not in line with Madukoma and Garba (2022) who revealed that the level of continuous professional development was low (Grand mean=2.34, SD=.899). This implies that the librarians may not be embarking on further studies to improve their knowledge and skills. The study also revealed that their level of education (mean=2.25) as well as their level of training (Mean=2.43) were low. The authors went further to state that the extent to which the organizations sponsored them to further their education was low (mean=2.25), as well as the availability of grants in their organization to further their education (mean=2.25) was also low. Similarly, on training, the respondents indicated that the extent they attend seminars, conferences, and workshops (mean=2.47) was low, as well as the amount of attending in-house training with external persons (mean=2.41). However, their magnitude of attending webinars and other online trainings was on the average (mean=2.59). The implication of these findings is that librarians studied may not possess the relevant knowledge and expertise to effectively perform their work. In addition, they may not be current and up-to-date in their profession and this will subsequently affect their level of work engagement as well as the attainment of organizational aims and objectives.

Table 2: Extent to which networking and CPD opportunities empower the development of librarians

S/N		SA	A	D	SD	N	X
1	Active engagement in networking	27	19	23	27	96	1.13
2	Participation in mentorship programs	23	28	21	24	96	0.96
3	Pursuit of advanced degrees or Certs	15	23	18	14	96	1.71
4	Confidence in Utilizing Digital Tools	39	10	24	47	96	0.63
5	CPD improves knowledge and skills	17	28	23	6	96	1.63
6	Provides sufficient prospects to develop skills	45	34	23	22	96	0.71
7	CPD empowers job specifications of academic librarians	29	23	21	7	96	1.88
8	Efficiency and productivity are enhanced by CPD	31	32	23	12	96	1.21
9	CPD programme had become more self-driven	28	42	12	11	96	1.29
10	CPD creates platforms for librarians to connect with peers	28	33	23	12	96	1.17
Grand Mean							1.23

The result in Table 2 shows the Grand mean of **1.23**, the findings indicates that CPD has a very low extent in the empowerment of the librarians studied. This implies that the minimal numbers may not be up-to-date with the innovations in the library trends; while **0.96** of respondents participated in mentorship programs, showcasing an interest in guided professional growth through mentor relationships. A few number of respondents with mean of **1.71** pursued advanced degrees or certifications, underscoring a commitment to enhancing academic and professional capabilities, could this mean that the respondents lack the interest to further their

studies or the institutions do not make opportunities for sponsorship; this lack of furtherance of education might affect the librarians from delivering effective and efficient service delivery. The mean score of **0.63** expressed confidence in utilizing digital tools, showed minimal confidence in utilizing digital tools highlighting a generally tech-savvy librarian group.

The result of the study is in consonance with Madukoma and Garba (2022) the extent to which their organizations sponsored them to further their education was low (mean=2.25), as well as the availability of grants in their organization to further their education (mean=2.25) was also low. Similarly, on training, the respondents indicated that the extent they attend seminars, conferences, and workshops (mean=2.47) was low, as well as the amount of attending in-house training with external persons (mean=2.41). However, their magnitude of attending webinars and other online trainings was on the average (mean=2.59). The implication of these findings is that librarians studied may not possess the relevant knowledge and expertise to effectively perform their work. In addition, they may not be current and up- to- date in their profession and this will subsequently affect their level of work engagement as well as the attainment of organizational aims and objectives. The study suggests a vibrant and engaged librarian community with a commitment to continuous learning, networking, adapting to technological advancements and the positive perception of mentorship programs indicates a willingness to foster collaborative professional development.

Table 3: Knowledge-sharing culture within libraries contributes to the overall enhancement of service quality and librarian expertise

S/N	KNOWLEDGE SHARING CULTURE	SA	A	D	SD	N	X
1	Supportive	26	21	27	22	96	1.08
2	Moderate	23	22	27	24	96	0.96
3	Limited	21	23	28	24	96	0.88
4	Non-existent	12	11	40	33	96	0.5
GRAND MEAN							0.88

The result in Table 3 indicates that the knowledge-sharing culture within libraries is perceived as very low going by the grand mean of **0.88** while supportive of 1.08 mean score, moderate **0.96**, and **0.88** limited and non-existent **0.5** indicating a negative environment for collaborative learning.

The result of the study is in line with Onwubiko (2022) who discovered that organizational culture prevalent in university library were in the area of customers' (Users) satisfaction, structure, commitment and communication, The result of the study also revealed the various knowledge sharing practices of the library staff to include: departmental/unit meetings, general meetings, face-to-face interactions, periodical unit-by-unit meetings, informal interaction sessions, report writing, training and whatsapp group. The study as well found that there were seven major factors militating against knowledge sharing in the university library which invariably affect staff performance. These include; lack of trust among staff; staff idiosyncrasy; lack of organizational policy on knowledge sharing, inhibiting factors of staff performance, inadequate managerial skills,

poor verbal/written communication and interpersonal skills and discriminatory attitude of university librarian towards staff. The result of the study further revealed that occupational culture and knowledge sharing practices have significant influence in staff performance in university libraries which is based on the findings and identified challenges facing effective knowledge sharing practices by staff in the university library.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the mean aspects, such as active networking and confidence in digital tools, should be acknowledged, while areas for improvement should be addressed to ensure continuous growth and effectiveness within the profession. The study recommends that fostering a more robust knowledge-sharing culture should be enhanced as well encourage more librarians to participate in CPD, addressing barriers to pursuing advanced degrees, and enhancing support for those with limited confidence in utilizing digital tools.

References

- Abbott, A. (1988). *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labor*. University of Chicago Press.
- Ali, N. & Naveed, M. A. (2020) Research support resources and services in university libraries of Pakistan: A situational analysis. *Pakistan Library and Information Science Journal*. Retrieved from URL: www.lpd-pak.com.
- Anene, I. A., & Idiedo, V. O. (2021). Librarians' participation in professional development workshops using Zoom in Nigeria. *Information Development*, 02666669211026714.
- Anyanwu, E. U. (2016). The library and types In R.U. Ononogbo and P.C Akanwa, (eds.) *Basic Concepts of library practice* (pp. 23-43). Owerri: Supreme Publishers.
- Barnes, S. L. (2009): Barnes, S. L. (2009). *Academic libraries: The changing knowledge centers of colleges and universities*. ACRL.
- Begum, M. (2017). Impact of continuing professional development (CPD) programs on job performance of academic librarians in public universities of Bangladesh. *Library Philosophy and Practice* (e-journal), 1-24.
- Bowen-Chang, P. & Hosein, Y. (2019) Continuing professional development of academic librarians in Trinidad and Tobago. *Glob. Knowl. Mem. Commun.* 68, 93–111
- Cassner, M. & Adams, K.E. (2012) Continuing Education for Distance Librarians. *J. Libr. Inf. Serv. Distance Learn.*, 6, 117–128.

- Clements, J. (2019): Clements, J. (2019). The American Library Association's role in the continuing education and professional development of academic librarians. *College & Research Libraries*, 80(4), 477-494.
- Cooke, N.A. (2012) Professional development 2.0 for librarians: Developing an online personal learning network (PLN). *Libr. Hi Tech News*, 29, 1–9.
- Ecclestone, M. (2013) MOOCs as a Professional Development Tool for Librarians. *Partnersh. Can. J. Libr. Inf. Pract. Res.*, 8, 1–6.
- Edom, B.O. (2012). Principles of the use of the library. Owerri: Springfield Gregory (2012)
- Hall, H. (2013): Hall, H. (2013). Skills and knowledge needed by library and information science professionals to support scholarly communication. *Library and Information Research*, 37(114), 81-100.
- Hendrix, B.R. & McKeal, A.E. (2017)Case Study: Online Continuing Education for New Librarians. *J. Libr. Inf. Serv. Distance Learn.*, 11, 346–354
- Hicks, A. (2017): Hicks, A. (2017). Shaping professional development for academic librarians: A review of the literature. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 43(5), 386-393.
- Ike, N. I., Amadi, C., Madu-Malachy, V., Iheagwam, S. N., Iheanacho-Kelechi, O. & Nwagu, O. J. (2023)."The library services and users' satisfaction in academic libraries in Imo State, Nigeria". *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 7727. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/7727>**
- Juma, G. M., Nakaziba, S. & Holmner, M. (2021) Building strong academic libraries and library professionals in uganda through the university of pretoria carnegie cpd programme. Conference: XXIV SCECSAL CONFERENCE At: Namibia. Retrieved from : <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/355782528>
- Khan, A. & Du, J.T. (2017) Professional development through social media applications: A study of female librarians in Pakistan. *Inf. Learn. Sci.*, 118, 342–353.
- Madukoma, C. E. and Garba, A. (2022) Continuous Professional Development and Work Engagement of Librarians in Federal Universities in North West, Nigeria <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/360671773>
- Massis, B.E. (2010) Continuing professional education: Ensuring librarian engagement. *New Libr. World*, 111, 247–249.

- Nebeolise, L.N. (2018) The Impact of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Compliant Librarians on Library Services Delivery in Academic Library: The Case of National Open University of Nigeria (Noun) Library. *Int. J. Educ. Benchmark. 10*, 118–129.
- Oduwole, A. A. (2020). Developing a framework for continuous professional development (CPD) for academic librarians in Nigerian universities. *Journal of Library Administration*, 60(1), 49-65.
- Okorie, O. N. (2016). Library services. In R.U. Ononogbo & P. C. Akanwa, (eds). *Basic concepts of library practice*. (pp.115-128). Owerri: Supreme Publishers.
- Onwubiko, E. (2022) An Empirical study of the Influence of Knowledge Sharing Behaviors and Organizational Culture on Staff Performance in University Libraries. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/361573904>.
- Pierre – Robertson, P. (2023) Super-Librarian – the evolving role of librarians in technology spaces. *Digital Library Perspectives*. DOI:10.1108/DLP-04-2023-0026
- Sivankalai, S. (2021) Academic libraries support e-learning and lifelong learning: A case study. *Libr. Philos. Pract.*, 8, 1–8. Venturella, K.; Breland, M. Supporting the best: Professional development in academic libraries. *J. New Librarianship*. 2019, 4, 283–292