

Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) Services in a Nigerian University: A Report

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Abstract

This is a brief report of Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) services in Redeemer's University, Nigeria (RUN). It highlights the operations of SDI services in RUN. SDI services in RUN are aimed at meeting the growing information needs of faculty members. It has enhanced the reputation of the library as well as increase patronage of library services. To elicit information from the faculty, a profile form was designed. The form is a description of the process and procedure of providing current information but personalized to the faculty, and keeps them abreast of the latest development. One of the major challenges of the operations in RUN is that certain search engines being used in the provision of SDI services e.g yahoo and AltaVista are not good enough for effective information retrieval. Much is expected to be done in this regard.

Introduction

The provision of information has taken a different dimension world ever since the advent of information communication technology (ICT), and its application to Library routines and services. The attendant consequences of using the medium include training and retraining of librarians for effective use. Also noteworthy is the fact that Libraries that are ICT driven have continued to provide information online to their numerous clients, who may not necessarily have to visit the Library before accessing the information required for learning, teaching and research in an academic environment. Without any doubt,

the internet is an excellent tool for communicating ideas with other people within an organization and around the world. Also, it has the power to reduce the cost at which services and operations are performed. Time can also be saved when computers are used for online services. Transition to online services is expected of libraries in the developing world in this 21st century if they want to be relevant in the information sharing world. The library is indeed a major infrastructure in any academic institution, the implication of its inadequacy or absence will be obvious in scholarly communication process.

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It is clear that information service is a major role of the Library and of interest to users. It is a very dynamic system of catering information to users and it can go a long way for buttering the scientific communication (Guha, 1983). Keeping users informed of information relevant to their areas of study or needs is referred to as Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI). Libraries have found many ways to take advantage of technology in providing reference and current information to their users online, thus removing the barrier to the library.

Shulz, and DeGroot (2003) defined SDI as a service provided by a library or other information agency whereby its users are periodically notified of new publications, report literature, or other sources of information in subjects in which they have specified an interest. Historically, the Indian school of thought designed and developed SDI which was tested at the IBM for personalized information scientists and engineers. According to the report the service fascinated the engineers and scientist in the information center and the service was developed as a subsystem of the total information services provided by the information centre (Luhn, 1959).

Shulz, and DeGroot (2003) revealed that SDI is a service that can increase users' ability to keep current and may have a positive impact on efficiency and productivity. Whitehall (1986) gives the objectivities of SDI as follows:

- To provide current information on a particular subject
- To receive, scan, and provide literature to right users.
- To notify the latest information about a particular subject clearly.
- To delegate the computer base techniques for relating current profile of information to the interest of users.
- To achieve current requirements through the scan of journals, current awareness bulletin, and other important resources.

Connor (1967) sees SDI in a broader context as a type of information service. Any procedure, whether manual or automated, that attempts to provide a personalized current awareness service, selecting for each individual served the current literature of probable relevance to his research interests, may be considered as SDI system. From the foregoing, SDI service is aimed at the following:

- SDI is worthwhile because of the benefits to freely alert people to new publications, bulletin at no cost to the client
- SDI notifies users with potentially useful materials in the area of study or research.
- SDI has the ability to create positive impact on efficiency and productivity.

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- SDI is not restricted to a particular field, but has been used among different professional.
- The information provided is current and directed to individuals.

From the above, it is certain that librarians need to be proactive in their daily duties if they will remain relevant.

SDI Services in Redeemer's University

The Redeemer's University was established in 2005 by the Redeemed Christian Church of God mission (RCCG), Nigeria. From inception the philosophy of the university concerning ICT is to make the medium a means of communicating knowledge and information within the university and with the outside world. The university has continued to make progress along this line. Computer availability to staff is no problem. The policy on ground is every senior staff his or her computer. On electricity supply, effort to keep the university going when Power Holding Corporation of Nigeria (PHCN) 'hold' power has led to the provision of dedicated power generators for

both the library and academic areas, with all these in place, the library is determined to use these infrastructures to an advantage in the provision of electronic information. There is a strong ICT unit in place charged with the responsibility of proving adequate infrastructural facilities that will support the use of computers and related technologies. The pioneer University Librarian was brought out retirement because of her extensive experience. She was assisted by few professional Librarians who worked tirelessly in providing the foundation necessary for a good ICT driven library. Consequently a library portal was developed by a reputable indigenous computer outfit. The portal has since served the library to the present day. However, some adjustment and modification are still being made to accommodate new developments in the areas of service and operations

In an attempt to enhance the reputation of the library, increase usage of library service and add value to the work of the faculty, the library embarked on robust SDI service. To elicit information from the faculty, a profile form was designed (see figure 1) . The form is a description of the process and procedure of providing current information but personalised to the faculty, and keeps them abreast of the latest development.

Figure 1: **Profile Form**

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FROM: REFERENCE SERVICES LIBRARIAN

TO: ALL ACADEMIC STAFF

DATE:

RESEARCH AND TEACHING PROFILE

*Please do not fill this SDI (Selective Dissemination of Information) form, if you have already filled one before. The Cybrarian will get to you.

The Library is in the process of providing selective dissemination of research and information to academic staff.

Kindly provide the following information to facilitate the provision of the service:

1. Name: _____
2. E-mail address(es) (i) _____
3. (ii) _____
4. College _____
- Discipline _____ Designation _____
5. Research interests _____
6. Teaching Profile _____
7. Other relevant information you want to give in order to serve you best. _____
8. Intercom Number _____

For online inquiry, please dial intercom number 2447- Reference Services Librarian, You can also send a message to the Reference Library mailbox (runreflibrary@gmail.com) we are always ready to satisfy your information needs.

Thanks for your co-operation.

REFERENCE LIBRARIAN.

(Official use)

Response: _____ **Treated and sent on** _____

The reference librarian gets new sources of information (articles, books, news items, conference, seminar and workshop) to the faculty whom he knows to be interested in a particular topic. However, the websites of the relevant information were posted to the mail boxes of such individuals. The purpose here again is to keep users abreast current

with the websites of information relevant to their areas of interest and research. Initially, reaction of faculty to completing the profile from sent to their offices was lukewarm, however, an informal approach by the reference librarian yielded positive result, and electronic revision was sent subsequently. The reference librarian used

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search engines, which has the ability to submit queries to other search engines; it is like index to other search engines such as web crawler, meta crawler, info.com and others. Although not all the information retrieved by the search engines was relevant to users need, the reference librarian did the ‘sieving of the chaff from the wheat’ to

ensure that users received only what was relevant. The items were finally sent to the e-mail box of users.

Occasionally response came from users requesting the reference librarian to furnish them with journal abstract in specified area of study, e.g molecular biology.

Table 2: Users and numbers of SDI items sent online (2013-2014 Sessions)

COLLEGE	NO. OF LECTURERS	NO. OF ITEMS SENT VIA E.MAIL	AREAS OF RESEARCH INTEREST
NATURAL SCIENCES	17	495	Molecular Biology, Genetics Environment Ecology Food Microbiology Biotechnology, Antimicrobials Biomedical Research, Pharmacology Toxicology of environment biochemistry, Parasitology, Parasitic diseases, Infectious diseases Medical microbiology Molecular diagnosis of infectious diseases, Medical entomology Medical microbiology, Clinical Virology, Epidemiology, Biological Science, Radio communication, Virology diagnosis Entomology
MANAGEMENT SCIENCE	13	362	Deviant Behaviour, Drug addiction, Criminal Justice System, Child welfare, Gender Issues, Tourism Management and community Development, Risk Perception on Environmental worry, History of psychology, Food Science, Food Product development, Human

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			Nutrition and Hospitality Management, Human and Physical Geography, Demography, Earth Surface, Sociology, Child Labour, Labour Relations, Psychology, Retirement, Emotional, Intelligence, Industrial Psychology.
HUMANITIES	3	91	Sociolinguistics, Nigerian/African history, Varieties of English, English Syntax/Semantics, International Relations, Diplomatic history.
Total	33	948	

The table shows that the college of Natural sciences received the highest items, followed by Management sciences with a difference of 133(20%) items. A total of 33 users received 948 items for 2013/2014 session. A cursory look at the records of the

online service shows that the items received in three colleges cut across the discipline offered. The analysis of the categories of faculty served during the session is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Breakdown of status of faculty served (2009/2010).

STATUS	NO	PERCENTAGE (%)
Professor	7	21.2
Associate Professor	1	3
Senior Lecturer	3	9
Lecturer I	5	15.6
Lecturer II	10	30
Assistant Lecturer	7	21.2
Total	33	100

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Though the items provided for the various categories varied, they related to that disciplines and research interest. The table shows faculty at the level of Lecturer II as the highest beneficiary of the service. This may be because majority of faculty at this level are presently on their PhD programme.

A critical look at Table 1 and other records examined in this report shows that only websites address or references were sent to clients, however, further queries from users concerning websites address led to further actions action that resulted in the provision of abstract of journal articles. It is clear that the library has begun information service that leads users to the source of information; however, the usefulness of the information could not be ascertained until it is accessed. Observation and experience have revealed that certain search engines being used in the provision of SDI e.g yahoo and AltaVista are not good enough. Of the 33 faculty that enjoyed the information service, a few turned in comments on the service which are considered very important. One of the comment reads: "This is great!", another says, " I am grateful for these links you have provided for me". There is one that says: "Thanks a million". Another comment word considering reads: I belief I will find the references useful". The comments have shown that the current awareness service has notified the clients of the sources of materials that match their interest. Also, it has clearly shown that such sources were more likely to provide useful information.

Conclusion

The importance of SDI services in libraries cannot be over estimated. SDI can be provided in a variety of ways, both manually and electronically. However using electronic means has proved to be cost effective and faster. The library in question has moved from the traditionally approach to online information provision methods, however, a few things are still required in order to perfect the process and procedure of the SDI system being provided presently. For effective SDI service, training is required in the areas of scanning and abstracting of all the main ideas or concepts in the material. The library is more than determined to improve on what is being done presently. This will enable clients make informed decision using the information received.

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