

Information Transfer in Libraries and Information Centers: Role of Communication

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Abstract

Libraries and Information Centers (ICs) are points for rendering information services to their users. Likewise communication is vital for any human interactive accomplishment. This paper seeks to bring forth the role of communication in information transfer in Libraries and Information Centers. This is done by examining the term communications, its goals and importance as well as the Shannon-Weaver model and the communication process. It applied the communication process of information transfer to Libraries and ICs. Subsequently, it concludes by exposing the role of communication in information transfer to ensuring that the objectives and goals of libraries and ICs are effectively delivered.

Keywords: Libraries and Information Centres, Communication, Communication Process, Information Transfer.

Introduction

Information is today's driving force. How this information is provided, is still the core of the existence of Library and Information Centers. Libraries and Information Centers (ICs) are structural sources for the provision of information. Their main objectives and goals are to provide information and services to their users, which could be specific or general. The ways these objectives and goals are achieved requires several technical activities such as acquisition, cataloguing, classification and dissemination of information, as well as services which require communication and the transfer of the information needed between the library staff and the users.

Holistically, at every interval there is interaction and communication all through the process. In meeting the information need of the users, the users must become a partner in the process of ensuring that they get the information that they need. This is in line with Tabor (2010) assertion that the clientele of the library need communication to achieve desired information-seeking goals. Communication is an exchange of information; it takes two or more to exchange information. The extent at which the information acquired is communicated, technically processed and made available to the users determines the level and effectiveness of the information transfer.

Communication is often considered as an activity only, but in actuality, it is a process. The process of communication includes transmission of information, ideas, emotions, skills, and knowledge consisting of distinctive stimuli, from a source to a recipient. This is done with the help of symbols, words, pictures, figures, graphs, drawings, and illustrations, etc. It is also the process by which one understands and in turn tries to be understood by others. It is dynamic, constantly changing and shifting in response to the overall situation. Speaking about communication in everyday life, one can say that communication is a system through which the messages are sent, and feedback received. The flow of communication in any organization, libraries and IC inclusive, can be upward, downward, or cross-wise (Eboh as cited in Afinotan, 2009). It could be unidirectional (one-way) or bi-directional (two-way). Bi-directional or two-way communication is superior to unidirectional or one way communication.

Concept of Communication

Communication is etymologically related to the words “communion” and “community” and comes from the Latin *communicare*, which means “to make common” or “to share. (Slater as cited in Kourakos, Fradelos, Paphanasiou, Saridi, & Kafkia (2018).

Emojoroh (2010) opined that Communication is the transfer of information from a source to a receiver. It is effective when the sender of information and the recipient have a common comprehension of the message. Keyton (2011), defines communication as “the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another”. It is the process through which information, knowledge, idea, message are conveyed or transmitted from one source to another. It can also be seen as the exchange of meaning between individuals through a common system of symbol. Cole as cited in Owoye and Dahunsi (2014) views communication as the process of creating, transmitting and interpreting ideas, facts, opinion and feelings. It is a process of sharing, which is a mutual interchange between the two or more persons.

Shannon and Weaver (1964), the founding scholars of the theory of communication, posited that the word communication is to be used in a very broad sense to include all of the procedures by which one mind may affect another. This, of course, involves not only written and oral speech, but also music, the pictorial arts, the theatre, the ballet, and in fact all human behavior. From the various definitions, Communication can be surmised as the process or procedures of conveying,

transmitting, passing, impacting, information of any kind (processed or raw) from one entity (human or mechanics) to another and having the intended purpose. As a process, steps have to be taken and in a set/particular order to achieve a desired results and goals.

Communication is the modus operandi of social and commercial intercourse. It is communication, which gets the world going. It is the lifeblood of any organization. It is the ability of mankind to communicate across barriers and beyond boundaries that has ushered the progress of mankind. It is the ability of fostering speedy and effective communication around the world, which has shrunk the world and made 'globalisation' a reality. Communication is at once the cause and the consequence of a powerful world. Development of varied and sophisticated means of communication over a period of time has brought human beings across the globe closer and has also facilitated transmission of thoughts and ideas. The expanse of communication, therefore, is worldwide. And it truly encompasses human life in all its facets and endeavors. It galvanizes action among individuals, in organizations, in society and the world community at large. Understanding the power of communication is essential for the success of any human endeavor.

Goals of Communication

The goals of communication are:

- To Inform - For use in decision making and choices.
- To Request - For a specific action by the receiver.
- To Persuade - To reinforce or change a receiver's belief about a topic and, possibly, act on the belief.
- To Build Relationships - Some messages you send may have the simple goal of building good-will between you and the receiver.

Importance of Communication

Subba as cited in Owoeye and Dahunsi (2014) gave the following as the importance of communication in any organization-libraries and information centres inclusive:

- All the functions of management such as planning, organizing, leading and controlling involve the act of communication without which they cannot be performed at all;
- Managers devote a major portion of their time to the activity of communication;
- Interpersonal relations and group relations are maintained and developed only through the system of communication;

- To keep employees informed of company's progress;
- To make each employees interested in his respective job and in the work of the company as a whole;
- To reduce or prevent labour turnover.
- To instill each employee with personal pride of being a member of the company.

The Communication Process and the Elements of Communication

Shannon-Weaver Model of Communication has been called the Mother of all communication models. According to

CommunicationTheory.org (2010), the Shannon-Weaver theory of communication was primarily designed to improve technical communication, but was later used to describe different fields of communication. In this model, communication includes the following concepts: sender, encoder, channel, decoder, receiver and feedback. Furthermore, there is also concept of noise included in the model, which goes through the channel and renders the message more difficult to understand by the receiver. Each of those concepts is distinct and play deferent role in the communication process.

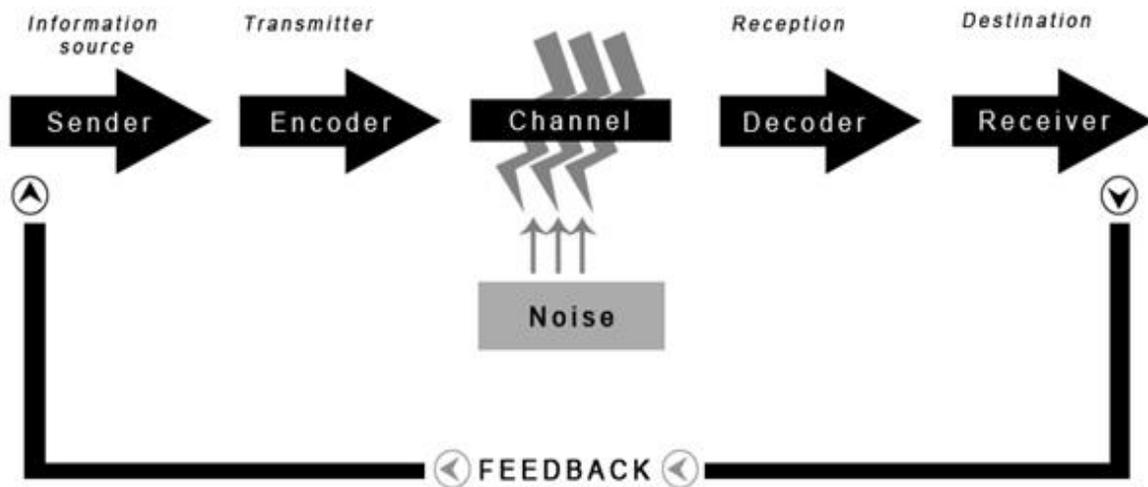


Fig 1: The Shannon-Weaver Model of Communication by CommunicationTheory.org (2010)

Communication as a Process

These are the important elements of the communication process as stated by Pearhtres (2016):

- **Sender/Encoder-** The sender also known as the encoder decides on the message to be sent, the best/most effective way that it can be sent. All of this is done bearing the receiver in mind. In a word, it is his/her job to conceptualize.
- **Message** - The verbal and non-verbal component of language that is sent to the receiver by the sender which conveys an idea.
- **Encode** –Here, the message/idea is translated into a spoken language, and in the process personal interferences or meaning is infused into the original message.
- **Channel** - The form which the message takes and the medium through which the message travels or is delivered, such as through oral communication (radio, television, phone, in person) or written communication (letters, email, text messages)
- **Receiver/Decoder-** The receiver or the decoder is responsible for extracting/decoding meaning from the message. The receiver is also responsible for providing feedback to the sender. In a word, it is his/her job to interpret.
- **Decode** - translates the senders' spoken idea/message into something the receiver understands by using their knowledge of language from personal experience.
- **Feedback** - This is important as it determines whether or not the decoder grasped the intended meaning and whether communication was successful (the receivers verbal and nonverbal responses to a message such as a nod for understanding (nonverbal), a raised eyebrow for being confused (nonverbal), or asking a question to clarify the message (verbal).
- **Noise** - This is any factor that inhibits or interferes the conveyance of a message. That is; anything that gets in the way of the message being accurately received interpreted and responded to. Noise may be internal or external. A student worrying about an incomplete assignment may not be attentive in class (internal noise) or the sounds of heavy rain on a galvanized roof may

inhibit the reading of a storybook to second graders (external noise).

Communication does not take place in a vacuum. The context of any communication act is the environment surrounding it. This includes, among other things, place, time, event, and attitudes of sender and receiver. The communication process is dynamic, continuous, irreversible, and contextual. It is not possible to participate in any element of the process without acknowledging the existence and functioning of the other elements (CAPE- Communication Studies, 2011).

Information Transfer

Turunen (2010) defined information transfer as the transferring of information between individuals even if the information is momentarily stored into a database, repository or memo of some kind. The information can be transferred between individuals face-to-face (so called face-time) or by various types of networks and communication devices (phone, video conferencing, etc.), thus relying on ICT infrastructure as an enabler. Gogoi (2011) views information transfer cycle as the process of creation, collection, storage, dissemination and retrieval of information. It refers to how information is transferred to the users from its sources. The

Information transfer Cycle can be structurally given as: Creation of information, Collection of information, Storage of information, Dissemination of information, Retrieval of information.

Palmer as cited by Syam and Sangkala (2014) states that information transfer is an activity that reproduces either from a full linguistic form into diagrammatic or semi diagrammatic form, or vice versa during the transfer activity, the information remains the same, but the form of information changes for instance, from nonlinguistic form to linguistic form. Information transfer involves getting people to put ideas and wants, spoken or written into another form, such as a texts, chart, grid, picture, table or diagram – or vice-versa. Make sure that the recipients do not misunderstand them by requiring a different understanding to the text. These tasks encourage deep processing of information. The interpretation of text, diagram or tables is a skill in communication that is very useful both in academic and everyday life.

Communication to Information Transfer

Middleton (2002) opines that communication models are influential and can be easily adapted to information transfer. Turunen (2010) views information transfer as, having to do with transferring information between individuals even if the information is momentarily stored into a database, repository or memo of some kind. The information can be transferred between individuals face-to-face (so called face-time)

or by various types of networks and communication devices (phone, video conferencing, etc.), thus relying on ICT infrastructure as an enabler. The communication process enable libraries users to convey their needs in messages and the needed information is returned by information transfer in the medium most suitable to convey the information.

Communication process of Information Transfer in Libraries and ICs:

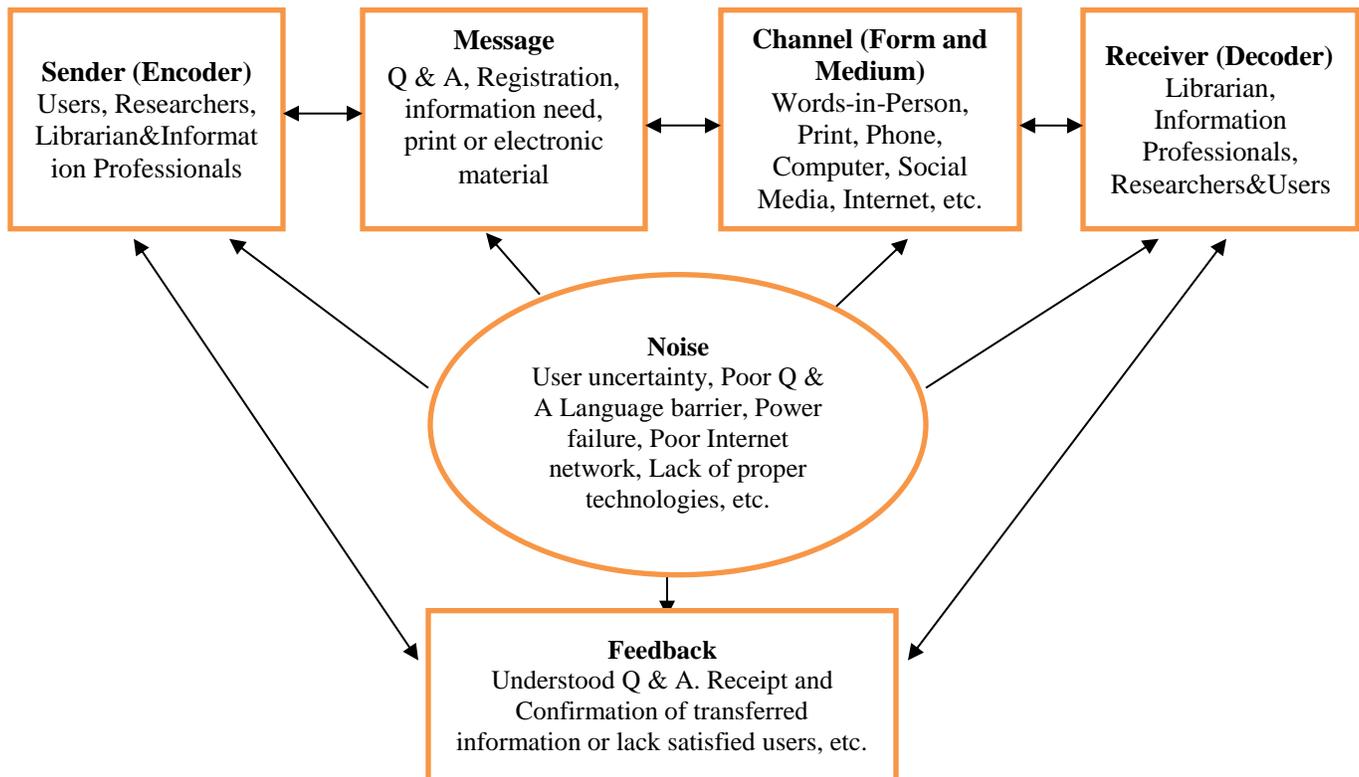


Fig. 3: An adapted diagram of Communication process

Application of Communication process to Information Transfer in Libraries and Information Centers

The Libraries and Information Centres (IC) carry out various activities that are geared towards meeting the information needs of the users such as acquisition, cataloguing, classification and dissemination of information to various libraries users. According to Ridley (2017) in the literal sense a library is an information centre and a repository/archive of information. Also an IC can be called a library because it contains information and is also a repository - albeit on a much smaller scale. Given the illustration above, the application of the communication process to Libraries and ICs would be thus:

The **(Sender/Encoder)** libraries user or information seeker/researcher, who wants to enquires about registration and use of the libraries. He/she puts their request **(Encode)** to the librarian **(Message)**. This could be done verbally or non-verbally, in person or via text, chat, mail/email, social media over the internet **(Medium/Channel)**. As the **(Receiver/Decoder)**, the Librarian or Information professional interprets the message sent by the sender, which is a request. The response to the request is in-turn responded through any acceptable and

appropriate **(Medium/Channel)** such as verbal or non-verbal, in person or via text, chat, mail/email, social media over the internet. This response could be acceptance for registration as a user, which could involve some procedures of registration (fees) and documentation (filling of forms). The **(Feedback)** is seen in the response from the librarian/Information professional to the User/Researcher. As it is shown in the diagram, feedback is two-way and could also be barter both ways. **(Noise)**, as earlier said, is any interference or hindrance such as, User uncertainty, Poor Question & Answer, language barrier, power failure, poor internet network, Lack of proper technologies, etc to the flow of the communication process. This may occur at any level of the communication process as seen from the above arrow indicators.

Conclusion

Communication is the basic skill required in rendering information services in Libraries and IC. Librarians, Information professionals as well as users of the libraries need communication to achieve desired information-seeking goals. Communication is the key tool for the process of understanding and the transfer of the needed information. It takes two or more to ensure the information transfer. Information transfer is therefore a

typical everyday happening in libraries and information centres. Owoeye and Dahunsi (2014) emphasized that communication in libraries and information centers takes various dimensions: staff to staff communication, staff to users' communication and sometimes users to

users' communication. Using the communication process model for information transfer ensures that the objectives and goals of libraries and ICs for effective information delivery will be achieved.

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