

# Effective Communication for Library Administration in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

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## ABSTRACT

*The study considers the role of communication as an effective tool for library administration. The study shows that communication is the chain with which information can be passed from one person to another in the library in order to achieve its main goals and objectives. It also described the chain of command, the types of library communication and the means of communication to the users. This paper further stressed the importance of communication to the library and suggestions were made on how to have effective communication in the library to help librarians in managing their libraries effectively. This paper also discussed the barriers to effective communication in the library. The researcher recommended that Librarians should not rate their workers the same way as regards communication or message comprehension. He is therefore advised to be heterogeneous when putting across messages. Individual differences determine the way and perception of ideas or instructions. Therefore, the librarian needs a high depth of knowledge to manage these challenging tasks.*

**Keywords:** Communication, tool, library, information, effectiveness, administration

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **What is Communication?**

Communication had been given several definitions in relation to the intension and purpose it is meant for. Olorunyomi (2007) posited communication as “a message of human experience, the communication and reception of the intelligence and knowledge, which appraises and notifies surprises, reduces uncertainty, reveals additional alternative or help eliminates irrelevant or poor ones from individuals and stimulates them to action. Communication comes from the Latin word ‘Communicare’, which means “to make common”, “to share”. Huss (2002) asserted that “the root definition is consistent with our definition of communication. In this text, communication is defined as the process of understanding and sharing meaning. If we accept the concept of process, we view the relationship as a dynamic, ongoing, ever changing and continuous. Communication is the channel or terrain with which data, symbol, facts, ideas, information and knowledge are muted from one person to another or to a group of people.

## **WHAT IS LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION**

Like any other managers in government and non-governmental organizations, library administration involves an individual or group of people vested with executive powers to administrate and issue out instructions to subordinates in the library to see that information dissemination to library clientele is realized. On the other hand, library administration also involves the coordination of library state to comply with the professional ethics of librarianship and the librarian to provide a conducive working environment for his staff. Kumar (1985) posited that “a public librarian must understand politics and public administration”. Librarians are surrounded by information that they have to analyze, decide upon, verify, and, more importantly, disseminate and communicate to the users. Communication can also be referred to as human interaction and requires necessarily Information in the form of messages or contents transmitted, shared and communicated. A library is an organization; therefore, a professional manager should be able to manage it with the basic skills as are required in managing any other type of organization”. The chain of command in the library comprises of the University Librarian, Deputy Librarian, Principal Librarians, Senior Librarian and other senior members.

## **JUXTAPOSITION OF COMMUNICATION AND LIBRAY ADMINISTRATION**

The library is a communication agent like other information agents but with a difference that library services goes beyond broadcasting, marketing information products or embark on freelance information professionals. The library from time immemorial had been the power house of information generation, processing and dissemination to the users.

### **Library Organizational Communication**

The library organizational communications are in different forms. Like any other organization, library communication for administration purposes is hereby defined by Goldhaber (1993) as “the process of creating and exchanging message within a network of interdependent relationships to cope with environmental uncertainty”. All organizational communication shares certain characteristics.

### **TYPES OF LIBRARY COMMUNICATION AMONG THE STAFF**

#### **Written Communication**

Written communication is the most reliable and authentic mode of passing instructions and exchanging messages in the library. The University Librarian desk issue circulars, memos, instructions of notice of meetings et al. to his lieutenants such as Principal Librarians, Heads of Departments, Heads of Units to mention a few while the response if any take the same route back to the librarian. The librarian maintains files of individual staff for reference purposes.

#### **Oral Communication**

Oral communications within the library contribute in no small measure to the administration of the library but a time may not be reliable. It is subject to distortion. The librarian in his bid to relate with his staff may decide to create jokes and share some issues verbally with staff which borders on their welfare. Bringing down himself to the level of his staff goes a long way to promote productivity and cooperation with the library management. Face- to -face communication in the library can solve problems that circulars cannot solve.

#### **Non-Verbal Communication**

“Non-verbal Communication in the library often consists of various types of body language, for instance, hand or arm gestures or posture, touching, pinching, beckoning, gesture, nodding, blinking of the eyes or facial disapproval of instruction, reluctant response to order, maintaining eye contact, etc. Giesecke Joan (1993).

Non-verbal communication for library administration assist the librarian to understand individual personality and capability, it also keep him abreast of what is going on in the library through rumour mongering and some designated informant which equip the librarian to be tactical in handling issues. This means of communication is the easiest, fastest and cheapest because there is no cost implication. Non verbal communication cannot be stored, preserved for future utilization and can also be misinterpreted and denied.

### **Graffiti Communication in the Library**

Graffiti Communication in the library according to Olorunyomi (2007) posited that is a communication and feedback device. He cited the Americana Encyclopedia; Vol. 19, 1989 refers to it as general term for any obscenities, and other times refers to inscriptions or designed scratch on walls. The term “graffiti” is a public nuisance that is inscribed on private and public building and monuments. Graffiti in effect is a casual writing, scribbling or scratching found on buildings, toilet walls, furniture, in parks and public buildings. It is a library communication device that is employed to register disagreement, unhappiness and disfavor to management programmes, policies or services rendered.

**Memorandum:** A memorandum is a short statement or report used daily in libraries. It could be formal or informal, but its main characteristic is that it is relatively fast and easy way to communicate. However it does not give a full explanation of the matter under consideration (Eboh, 1986). Memorandum is usually sent by the senior officers to the subordinate; sometime it could also originate from subordinate officer.

**Reports:** Reports are records of activities or events that have taken place. They are official written accounts of any matter which are usually written after analysis or investigations have been concluded on the subject matter. They are usually very long and detailed, meant to provide the reader with a complete analysis of the matter under review. Reports could be on daily, weekly, monthly or on annual basis.

**Circulars:** These are printed advertisement, directive, or notice intended for mass distribution; it could also be referred to as flyer. These are short written messages intended for wide circulation. It always shows the source and the addressee.

**Bulletin Board:** This is a board on which messages are posted on various matters. They are always obviously and openly displayed. It is meant for library users’ consumption about the activities of the library. There is physical and electronic bulletin board

**Shelves label:** Various shelves are labeled to enable the users to know the specific materials that are located on the shelf so as to guide them in the choice of the information materials that would meet their needs.

### **LIBRARY ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

Organizational structure had been variously defined as the arrangement of job within the library”. Kumar (1985) posited that organizational structure is “Pattern of organizational systems aimed to achieve efficiency and service delivery to users”. Organizational structure in libraries forms sources of communication that could be oral, written or non verbal.

## **COMMUNICATION FLOWS IN THE LIBRARY**

Communication flows in the library organizational structure could be viewed in three different areas as follows:

### **Downward Communication**

Communication that flows from superiors to subordinates carries more weight and attention of the staff. Like earlier discussed such communication source is usually from the Chief Librarian to Deputy Librarian to Heads of Departments to Heads of Units and stop at Para Professional staff. Such communication may or may not demand response. If there is response, it means upward communication had set in.

### **Upward Communication in the Library**

Upward Communication consists of messages that flow from subordinates to superiors. Efore Barbara (1993) submitted that “in the vast majority of companies, if workers know that what they say will be passed along to the management with their names attached, they will not speak (or write) their minds”.

Upward Communication are rather murmurs, rumours that possess little element of facts that subordinates do not have confidence to stand by it. At times upward communication might be direct application letters for obligation, administrative matters while the oral upward communications are subject to distortion. Upward communication plays important roles in effective administration of the library because it informs and educates the Chief Librarian about the politics, culture and ways of life of his staff hence he becomes a better manager.

### **Horizontal Library Communication**

Horizontal library communication is the lateral exchange of ideas, feelings, exchange of messages and information pertaining to job or personal affairs.

Horizontal communication is very useful in achieving task coordination, problem solving, information sharing, decision making and conflict resolutions.

Galbraith (1993) opined that “central to the evolution of flatter, customer focused, dynamic organizations are the availability of information within the organization. The traditional movement of

information within an organization was based on models, derived from hierarchical orientation and from cost constraints that made it very expensive to move information throughout the organization”. Most horizontal communication takes place during meetings. Owoeiye and Dahunsi (2014) revealed that information flows from the University Librarian down the hierarchy and that ideas of senior staff are taken into consideration in taking decisions and that written form of communication is majorly being used for official matters. They also revealed that communication is a veritable tool in service delivery in the library and that poor education background among others is a barrier to effective communication, and proper communication promotes job effectiveness and service delivery in the library.

### **Communication to Library Users**

Communication as a means of effective library management, play major roles in library administration. Uhegbu (2001) asserted that beyond the interpersonal network, interactive communication exists among corporate organizations at various levels, especially among libraries and information centres. Communication to library users according to Aina (2004) held the view that “these clients who use the library with main purpose of expanding their knowledge or who read for pleasure”.

There are different ways the library management can communicate with users for services and administrative purposes.

### **Library Communication to Users through Bibliographic Symbols**

Examples of the communication flows are: Symbols, Codes, Labels, Notice board and User education.

**Symbols and Codes:** Communicating using symbols and codes with alphabets represent communication process. This form of communication has to do with library bibliographic information. Aina (2004) opined that “Dewey Decimal Classification Scheme uses Arabic numerals only as notation e.g. 200 represent religion, 300 represent Social Sciences etc. Library of Congress classification Scheme uses alpha numerical characters to represent subject class and double alphabets to represent sub-classes e.g. L, LA, LB, LC etc. all for the purposes of faster retrieval of library materials on the shelves.

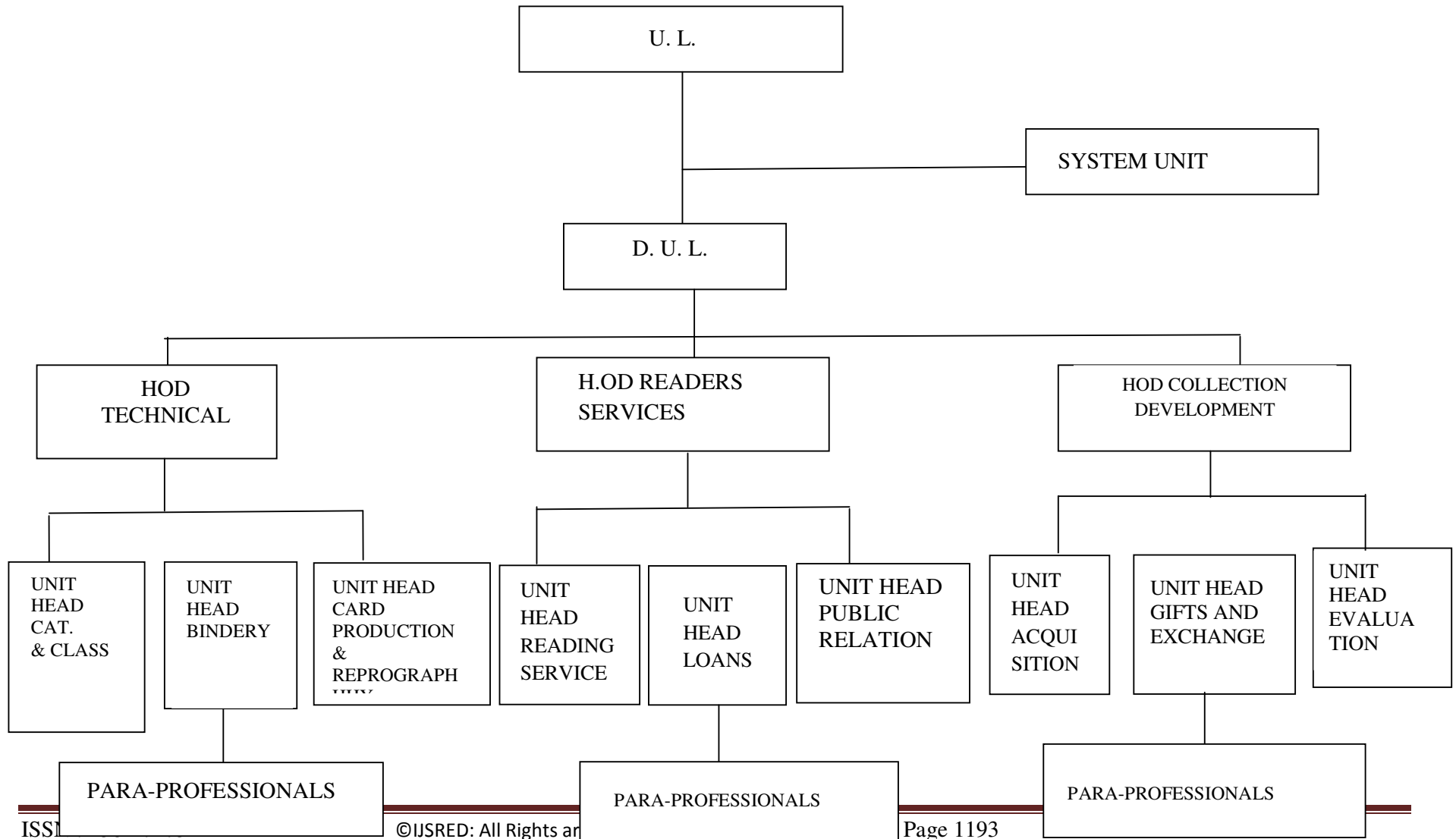
Information and Communication Technology has simplified communication to users in the library. Bibal (2002) positioned about the benefits of ICT in Online Public Access Catalogue and Machine-Readable Cataloguing accessible on the internet using Online Computer Library Centre website to access wider bibliographic search by users. Computer library software is employed to code library materials as in manual cataloguing.

The windows-based OPACs allow for hyperlinks searching and a new feature that was not possible in character based systems or Disk Operating System.

### **Communication to Library Users through Labels, Notice Board and Library Orientation**

There are library inscription on walls or suspended in reading areas, posted on reading tables in bold letters on library rules and regulations. Ogunleye (2004) asserted that “library etiquettes are meant to checkmate library users against misconduct and unwholesome behaviours. Folorunso and Familusi (2007) asserted that “compliance with library rules and regulations is important to having peaceful cosmos whereby the set out objectives can be achieved”.

Examples of Channels of Communication in the University Libraries





**SILENCE**

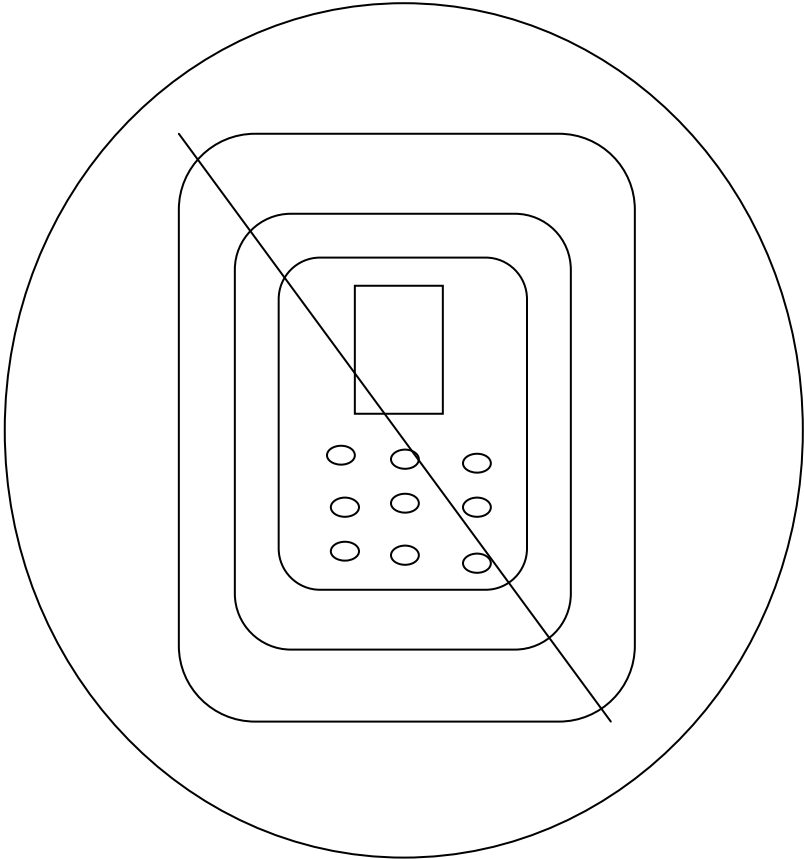
**NO SMOKING**

**DON'T BRING  
FOOD ITEMS  
INTO THE  
LIBRARY**

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**HANDLE BOOKS  
WITH CARE**

**LIBRARY PREMISES**



**SWITCH OFF YOUR MOBILE PHONE.**

## **USER EDUCATION COMMUNICATION**

User Education Communication can be achieved through library orientation or taught as a general course in the institution curriculum or through display of library work- flow chart or through display and exhibitions. User education goes a long way to support the library administration in the area of character molding, library etiquette and library materials preservation.

Uhegbu (2001) opined that user education “will make him adopt the right communication pattern and mien” Aina (2004) opined that information seeking behaviour of a user depend on education, access to the library and the length of time a user wishes to devote to information seeking. Educating users of library use is an indispensable method of communication in the library. When users retrieve library materials at no stress, the library manager or administrator is rated as effective.

## **EXTERNAL MEMOS AND CIRCULARS AS COMMUNICATION TOOL FOR EFFECTIVE LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION**

Letters and Memos generated from the library mailed to the management or outside the organization portray the librarian as an efficient and functional officer. Prompt delivery of responses from the management back to the management assist in no small measure to vindicate the librarian as a dutiful and virile professional. Attending meetings and suggestion of useful advices in the meeting also earn him respect and commendation from the management. Owoeye and Dahunsi (2014) also revealed that effective communication in library and information centre enables subordinate to become involved in the work, reduces frustration among employees, encourages greater productivity and reduces conflict among staff in the library. They also discovered that effective communication improves employee commitment to the organization, encourages spirit of cooperation and promotes better understanding of task to be accomplished.

## **ROLES AND BENEFITS OF COMMUNICATION IN LIBRARIES**

The benefits of communication cannot be over emphasized. Joyce et.al.(2009) quoting Subba (2007) emphasized the following as the importance of communication in any organization that

all the functions of management such as planning , organizing, leading and controlling involved 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 relation and group relations are maintained and developed only through the system of communication, to make each employees interested in his respective job and in the work of the company as a whole, to keep employees informed of company's progress, to reduce or prevent labour turnover and to instill each employee with personal pride of being member of the company. The role and importance of communication in the library can also be discussed as follows:

- Communication in libraries promote peaceful working relationship among the staff;
- Library communication increases job output when the Chief Librarian commend either in oral or written about a staff who had performed beyond expectation.
- Communication in libraries assist both the librarian and his lieutenants to take useful decisions to solve problems at hand
- Library communication imposes order on library misconduct and unwholesome practices.
- Communication with the management or with library friends like philanthropists assists library growth and development.
- Library communication helps to maintain discipline and ethics of the job on the part of staff. Oral and written instructions are issued to staff from time on their conduct on the job.
- Library communication is a useful tool to resolve organizational conflict and establish good or mutual relationship among library staff.
- Library communication eliminates doubts, suspicion and skepticism about happenings in the library.
- Library communication portrays the library to users and the public as an organized organ of the management or the patron organization.
- Library communication creates access to library materials. This brings about quick access, save cost and time of users.
- Communication in the library upholds the tenets of librarianship and justifies its existence as a social service information resource centre.

- Library communication preserves and elongates the life span of library infrastructure and library documents since the awareness had been created through communication on how to maintain decorum in the library.

## **CONCLUSION**

Many a times, people think of communication primarily in terms of intrapersonal or interpersonal alone, rather every organisation must device some means to bridge the gap of disputes to achieve the mission and vision of the organisation. Communication should never be regarded as ordinary in the setting of any organisation, rather should be seen as the “cord” that binds the various arms of the organisation together. Communication is the essence of organised activity and the basics procedures out of which all other functions could be realized.

Librarians should not rate their workers the same way as regards communication or message comprehension. He is therefore advised to be heterogeneous when putting across messages. Individual differences determine the way and perception of ideas or instructions. Therefore, the librarian needs a high depth of knowledge to manage these challenging tasks.

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