

# Professional Competence and Skills of Library Personnel in the 21st Century Reference Services

By

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## Abstract

*The study aimed at examining professional competence and skills of library personnel in the 21st-century reference services. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilitates the process of generating, processing storing, and disseminating information. The library personnel are utilizing ICT to keep pace with the problem of information explosion in the 21st century. For library personnel to be competent in handling ICT tools for reference services, certain skills are needed to get the right information from the right source to the right user at the right time. The study employed a survey of the descriptive method. The population of the study comprised library personnel. A questionnaire was designed to elicit responses from the respondents. Descriptive statistics with a simple percentage, mean and standard deviation were used for data analysis.*

*The results revealed activities of library personnel to include current awareness service, online reference services, answering queries from users, user education, etc. Some of the tools used for these services include blogs, social networking sites, podcasting, instant messaging etc. For library personnel to strive, some skills are needed. These include IT skills, questioning skill, marketing and repackaging, online searching, web maintenance, social networking, communication etc. To meet with these responsibilities, library personnel are confronted with several challenges including poor funding, lack of training, poor motivation and technophobia. It was therefore recommended that the government should change her attitude towards the funding of libraries to avail funds for training and acquisition of skills. Also, library personnel should embrace and accept changes in new technologies in their operations.*

**Key Words:** Reference Service, Library personnel, ICT and Skills

**Word Count:** 249

## **Introduction**

The concept of reference service simply refers to personal assistance provided to library users seeking information. Library personnel are variously referred to as mediators between the user and the information or navigators of the information super-highway. Reference service traditionally has been offered in person at a designated desk within the library building, over the telephone, and through correspondence (Martin, 2009). More recently, libraries have expanded to offer reference service electronically via the World Wide Web (www), e-mail, and even two-way videoconferencing. Another form of reference service is classroom and one-on-one instruction in the use of print and electronic resources. Regardless of the delivery method, the value of reference service remains the same; to provide quality information through personalized service to library users at the time of need. Reference service is characterized by human interaction.

Reference services, like most other library services, are in transition. Impacted by metamorphoses in technology, changing user expectations, and the migration to greater provision of online and distance service, reference services today is not the same as it was even just a decade ago (Smith, 2015). To meet these changing needs, many libraries are focusing their energies on adapting and reinventing the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to suit current patrons. Depending on the size and type of library, library personnel have experimented with many different models, ranging from tiered service, which breaks reference into discrete areas whereby directional, equipment and some ready-reference questions are handled by para-professionals and more complex questions are referred to professional library personnel, to consolidated service points where previously separate functions such as circulation, Inter-Library Loan, technology help and reference are co-located at one desk. Some libraries have implemented roving reference and other outreach models, which bring the service away from the desk and out into the stacks, or even outside the library itself, to meet user's dynamic needs in their locations.

New technologies allow for even greater flexibility in providing remote services. Many libraries now reach out to distant patrons with digital reference services, often with extended hours, through chat, text, and other more sophisticated systems that allow for co-browsing and other kinds of application sharing. In addition to these question-answering services, many library personnel find themselves taking on additional responsibilities, such as collection development, which often requires negotiating with vendors of electronic resources, and

instruction, ranging from library tours and workshops to formal classroom instruction.

Such changes in the service delivery necessarily entail different skills, competencies, and knowledge than the traditional emphasis on familiarity with particular reference resources and negotiation of the face-to-face reference interview (Knibbe-Haanstra, 2011). These changes not only pose challenges for library personnel in the field as they strive to keep up with the transitions, but they also have implications for the training of new library personnel. In light of the flux in the field, the library personnel in charge of reference activities are expected to be equipped with knowledge, skills, and competencies to be effective especially in the 21st-century operation.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Reference services are personal assistance provided to library users seeking information. Library personnel are shoulder with the responsibility of mediating between the library user and the information or navigators of the information super-highway. Reference services were traditionally offered to users at a designated desk within the library building, over the telephone, and through correspondence. In the adventure of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), libraries have expanded to offer reference service electronically via the World Wide Web (www), e-mail, internet and even two-way videoconferencing.

The task of library personnel becomes increasingly tedious with the adventure of ICT where the library personnel are expected to be vest in the use of diverse technologies. In maintaining competence in the reference services, library personnel are expected to be well equipped with diverse professional skills to fit in his/her services especially in the 21st century. It is on this background that the study sought to examine the professional competence and skills of reference services in the 21st century.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To examine the roles of library personnel in the 21st century.
2. To identify the tools use in the discharge of reference services in the 21st century.
3. To identify the skills required of library personnel in the 21st century.

4. To examine the challenges of competency of library personnel in the 21st century.

### **Research Question**

1. What are the roles of library personnel in the 21st century?
2. What are the tools uses in the discharge of reference services in the 21st century?
3. What are the skills required of library personnel in the 21st century?
4. What are the challenges of competency of library personnel in the 21st century?

### **Literature Review**

Reference service has traditionally been offered by library personnel at a reference desk. Depending on the library, desks are generally staffed for many hours on all of the days on which the library is open. This practice is considered by some administrators to be inefficient, has it lack the opportunity of providing service to users at the time of need. In this face-to-face environment, the approachability of the library personnel is of utmost importance (Martin, 2009). All of the knowledge in the world will be of little use if the library personnel has an unwelcoming demeanour. The library personnel's behaviour toward the user sets the stage for the success of the interaction therein. Once the library personnel and the user have agreed on the nature of the question, the library personnel begins the search process. If the question is factual, such as biographical or geographical, the library personnel will determine which source might provide the best answer most quickly. That source may be printed or electronic, or it may entail a telephone call or e-mail to another library personnel, library, or agency. If it is an open-ended inquiry, as are most questions by those people who are researching a subject, the library personnel will work with the user on a search strategy, suggesting resources and instructing in their use. The library personnel will often guide the user in deciding which books, articles, or Internet sources provide the most relevant information given the scope of the topic and the level of information that is required. Research questions generally involve far more instruction than factual questions.

The telephone was the first electronic device to be used in reference services. Library personnel quickly adopted it for use in providing service, but they have always had mixed feelings about its place. Most libraries locate their telephone reference service at the reference desk, so

the library personnel must juggle the in-person inquiries with those coming via telephone. Libraries often have a policy that the on-site person receives assistance before the caller, so the telephone goes unanswered. Some public libraries operate their telephone reference service separately from the desk, describing it as an answer line or quick reference (Smith, 2015). Users who need research assistance are generally asked to come to the library. Library personnel interaction with the telephone user is more challenging than in-person communication. Cues must be obtained from voice level and intonation. The library personnel needs to determine quickly the information need, determine whether or not to put the caller on hold or call back, and decide when a call should be referred.

Reference by correspondence is another form of traditional reference service, but it has never enjoyed the same popularity as on-site or telephone reference. Much of the correspondence that is received by libraries entails questions that are related to genealogy or special collections. Much of this mail correspondence has been replaced by e-mail inquiries. Most libraries provide e-mail reference service, with policies following those that were already established for telephone and correspondence service. Library personnel have found the reference interview to be problematic in the e-mail environment since the interaction is asynchronous and it may take several days to elicit all of the information that is needed to respond satisfactorily to the inquiry. The shortcoming of the traditional practices of reference service led to the advent of Information and Communication Technology in the practice of reference service in the 21st century.

### **Technology and the Practice of Reference Services**

Technology has had a major effect on reference services. Although the growing number of printed indexes made it possible to identify journal articles in many subject areas, the user had to wade through each year's index separately and search by prescribed subject headings or by the name of the author. Card catalogues allowed searching by title, author, and subject, but again, the subject headings were prescribed and users often had to seek the assistance of library personnel to identify the correct heading. In the 1960s, online databases were available only in the science areas, and they were used primarily in corporate libraries. Their use in academic and public libraries did not become common until the 1970s when the selected staff was trained. By the 1980s, the increase in the number of requests for online searching and the growth in the number of databases required that most library personnel receive training

(Shrikant, 2018). The searching was not performed by the user, and often, a fee was charged. Library personnel began to experiment with the notion of end-user searching, but that did not occur until databases became available on CDROM. By the late 1990s, many libraries moved from CD-ROM to providing databases through the Internet. These databases encompass several years of indexing and offer a variety of search options. Many also include the full text of the article, making searching by keyword rather than prescribed subject heading a powerful tool. The conversion of card catalogues to online catalogues has enabled library personnel and users to find books by keyword as well. Modern library personnel provide a strong link between the highly technical information environment and the user, advising on search strategies that help the user to focus the topic better and evaluate the information even as the user can access library catalogues and databases at the comfort of any location (Shrikant, 2018).

The advancement in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has brought a lot of changes not only on the operations and practices of reference service but also on patrons (Anaele and Hundu, 2014). In the 21st-century library practice, the task of fulfilling the patron's expectations depends upon the skillfulness of its library. ICT has already fundamentally changed how information is created, processed, stored preserved and disseminated.

Thus, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2012), ICT is seen as the range of technologies that are applied in the process of collecting, storing, editing, retrieving and transferring of information in various forms. Emezie and Nwaohiri (2017) affirm that ICT is the main grand hero of the century, driven by extreme courage and unlimited ambition, replicating itself like a virus sweeping and overshadowing everything on its path. ICT is increasingly being used in almost every activity and embedded in more and more things.

Today, the siren of the ICT is being heard loud and clear and in every sphere of humanity, including libraries. The emergence of ICT and the evolution of the World Wide Web (WWW) enabled people to use the Internet for many reasons; for communication, collaboration, teamwork, entertainment, education, and so forth. With the emergence of ICT & Web 2.0 technologies, libraries have a new, more dynamic role in the knowledge society and as the individual is affected by ICT, in the same way, the individual can also influence the technology (Bradley, 2010). Libraries began to recognize the presence of the web experience and utilize such services to create a new environment for library users where

interaction plays a basic role. These services have also reformed reference units which face greater demand for access to resources; they should store all kind of information resources in different forms. The library personnel are tasked with crucial duties and roles in disseminating knowledge and user's need to transfer information inside and outside of the walls of a library.

The adoption of ICTs for reference service has become very simple. Various types of information resources like the encyclopedia, directories, dictionaries, databases, online library catalogues, and maps, biographies, patents and online information resources are available on the internet which can be used to provide required information to the users. In the reference unit, queries are answered through the use of the Internet and other digital facilities. The computer has provided great promptness to reference services. The role of technology in reference services include library staff fulfil the demands of the users through various electronic resources like database, library catalogue database, directories etc. and in reference service, services are also provided to the users regarding information available on the internet after getting delivered through the computer.

### **Roles of Library personnel in the 21st Century**

The role of the library personnel in the 21st century with the adventure of technology becomes enormous. Some of these include the cultural role, teaching role, providing access to information, space provision, information advocates, advising role, repackage of information, information organisation and retrieval, knowledge and digital management, as well as information mining. For the library personnel to carry out these roles effectively, they will stay in advance of need, belief in themselves and what they can offer, not take their existence for granted, develop themselves, learn from each other, seize the opportunities, lift their heads, get out more and engage, be confident and claim the future (Omekwu and Echezona, 2013). The library personnel are faced with the daunting task of performing electronic reference services, digital reference services and using 'Second life' as an aid to perform reference services.

Electronic Reference Services (ERS): Smith (2015) noted that academic libraries are plunging with the increase to the access of electronic resources at the comfort of remote locations. This tendency can be ascribed to the fact that users can access these resources remotely via the Internet. Internet connectivity and e-resources had become essential for the new reference service paradigm. One of the key elements of

electronic reference service success is that the service is available at the point of need (Moyo, 2014). The tremendous growth in the use of online reference works has created a need within the academic library to develop services to support this type of service. Academic libraries are turning to on-line real-time reference tools to support students remotely. Online real time reference support is used to assist students at the point of need. Ferran, Mor and Minguillon (2015) opined that e-reference works share all the benefits of e-resources which include 24/7 remote accessibility, concurrent access for multiple users and the potential for online

updating to keep content up to date. Electronic communication had become the primary mode of communication in e-reference services. Online chat had become the method of choice. Some e-reference application providers have added Voice over IP (VOIP) to their products which enable voice dialogue with the library user.

Digital References services (DRS): The terms digital reference services, web-based reference services and electronic reference services are used interchangeably because of their similarities. There are various definitions of digital reference services. Moyo (2014) defines digital reference as Internet-based question and answer services that connect users with individuals who possess specialized subject or skill expertise. Digital reference services refer to a network of expertise, intermediation and resources put at the disposal of a user seeking answers in an online or networked environment. A digital reference occurs when a question is received electronically and responded to electronically (Ferran, Mor and Minguillon, 2015). In the view of Janes (2013), digital reference refer to a mechanism by which people can submit their questions and have them answered by a library staff member through some electronic means (e-mail, chat, Web forms, etc.) not in person or over the phone. A digital reference service generally comprises the following elements: the user of the service, the interface (e-mail, web form, chat, videoconference, etc.), the information professional, and electronic resources (including electronic or CD-based resources, web resources, local digitized material etc.), as well as print resources.

Second life as an Aid to Reference Service: Second Life is a multi-user virtual environment in which users can build their characters, create their worlds, communicate with other virtual users, and explore worlds created by others. To the 21st century library personnel, Second Life is found to be a valuable tool for training and development through developing models. Library personnel collaborating throughout the physical world can provide 24/7 reference service using SL. SL library



personnel can hand electronic note cards to virtual students as a way of pointing users toward various web resources (Janes, 2013). For library personnel to be successful in their services, they will need to employ the services of web 2.0.

## **Web 2.0**

The term "Web 2.0" was officially coined in 2004 by Dale Dougherty and Tim O'Reilly in O'Reilly Media Inc. - the company famous for its technology-related conferences and high quality books (Anderson, 2007). Web 2.0 is a network as platform, spanning all connected devices (O'Reilly, 2016). Web 2.0 applications are those that make the most of the intrinsic advantages of the platform, delivering software as a continually updated service that gets better the more people use it, consuming and remixing data from multiple sources, including individual users, while providing their data and services in a form that allows remixing by others, creating network effects through an architecture of participation and going beyond the page metaphor of Web 1.0 to deliver rich user experiences. Web 2.0 is an attempt to make the Web much more public, it is user friendly and user-centered (O'Reilly, 2016).

## **Web 2.0 Tools**

Web 2.0 tools are digital tools that allow users to create, change and publish dynamic content of all kinds. Stephens & Collins (2007) put some Web 2.0 tools as follows:

**Blogs:** Weblogs also called blogs are simply software tools that allow the easy creation of a Web site. Blog software, such as WordPress or Movable Type, creates the various pages of the site, a searchable archive, and a chronology of entries automatically.

**Rich Site Summary (RSS):** RSS is XML-based metadata content from a blog or other source. Web content is created or published in one place to be displayed in other places, such as in RSS aggregators. Some aggregators include Bloglines, NetVibes, and google reader. Whenever the source gets updated, the RSS feed gets updated and any aggregators that are subscribed to that feed are notified that there is new content available.

**Podcasting:** Podcasting is a form of audio blogging. Audio file, such as interview, short presentation, or speech is attached as an MP3 audio file to a blog post and syndicated out via RSS. Aggregators such as Bloglines

can subscribe to podcasts and automatically pull in new posts when they become available.

**Wikis:** Wikis are collaborative software applications that build Web sites. Ward Cunningham created the first wiki in 1995 when he wanted a quick way to publish information collaborate on the Web. Cunningham called the wiki "the simplest online database that could work". Wikis can be freely written or edited by users so Web pages are authored collectively. Some popular wiki engines include Wikipedia, MediaWiki, PmWiki, MoinMoinWiki, and TWiki.

**Instant Massaging (IM):** IM also called synchronous massaging allows real time conversation between individuals via Internet. IM also includes file transfer and the capability for video chat or voice chat.

**Tagging:** Tagging is essentially Web 2.0 tool because it allows users to add and change not only content (data), but content describing content (metadata). In Flickr, users tag pictures.

**Social Networking Sites (SNS):** Social networking technologies afford users the chance to interact, share themselves, and create content. They enabled massaging, blogging and tagging.

MySpace, FaceBook, Del.icio.us, Frapper, and Flickr are networks that have enjoyed massive popularity in Web 2.0. MySpace and FaceBook enable users to share themselves. Del.icio.us for example enables users to share Web resources and Flickr enables the sharing of pictures. Fraper is a bit of a blended network, using maps, chat rooms, and pictures to connect individuals.

**Mashups:** Mashup is a Web application that combines data from more one source into a single integrated tool. An example, the use of cartographic data from Google Maps to add location information to real-estate data creating a new and distinct web service that was not originally provided by either source. Content used in mashups is typically obtained from a third party source through a public interface. For example, WikiBios is a site where users create online biographies of one another, essentially blending blogs with social networks.

However, for library personnel to be effective and efficient in the handle of the technological tools in discharge of their service, some essential skills and competency are expected.

## **Skills required for 21st Century Reference Services**

**Ability to Embrace Change:** Patrons are rapidly changing as are the technologies for serving them. Library personnel need to look at how they can serve their patrons and to change their strategies if what they are doing is not working (or is not the best they could be doing). Change should be looked upon as an exciting thing – as a positive thing (Krishman, 2011). Library personnel should not fear providing the best services to their patrons much more than they should fear change.

**Comfort in the Online Medium:** Library personnel need to do so much online in the 21st century, way beyond basic catalog and database searching, which sure is not easy (Sulo, Kendagor, Kobagei and Chalangat, 2012). Library personnel have to be able to use search engines and use them well. They need to be able to find quality online resources. They need to help patrons set up e-mail and teach basic Internet skills. They need to be able to troubleshoot problems; users are having accessing online library resources, at least to the extent where they can figure out if the problem is on the library's side or the user's side. More important than knowing specific tools is a general comfort in the online medium. You just cannot provide reference services without basic Internet and search skills.

**Ability to Keep up With New Ideas in Technology and Library personnel Enthusiasm for Learning:** Keeping up with new technology is often not an explicitly listed part of one's basic weekly job duties, but its importance cannot be stressed enough especially as library personnel. Years back, few people were talking about blogs and IM in libraries, but now so many libraries are using these tools to provide reference services to patrons. Library personnel need to be able to keep up with what is new in technology and what libraries are (or could be) doing with it, and need to be able to keep up in the shortest possible time.

**Ability to Question and Evaluate Library Services:** There are so many little things we can do to improve our services. Step one is rethinking everything. Question why you are doing things the way you are doing them. Question whether what you are doing is helping your patrons. Question EVERYTHING. Oftentimes library personnel have policies that are not helping anyone. Maybe it is a relic of a time when it was useful or maybe it is a policy that only benefits the professionals. Either

way, it is important to keep asking why they are doing the things they do and how these things affect their patrons.

**Vision to Translate Traditional Library Services into the Online Medium:** With the growth of e-learning and the fact that so many patrons access the library from the Internet, it is important library personnel can translate traditional library services into the online medium. This includes readers' advisory, reference, and instruction services. How can we provide equivalent services to people who only access the library from online? Library personnel need to know how to capitalize on the technologies out there (HTML, blogs, wikis, screen casting, IM, etc.) to provide these services online to their patrons.

**Critical of Technologies and Ability to Compare Technologies:** This can be a toughie. It is often difficult to figure out what the right tool for the job is. Library personnel need to know what the requirements of a project are and what each available technology can do. They need to be able to compare different versions of the same types of software to figure out which will best meet our patrons' needs. They also need a sense of pragmatism about technology, they need to avoid techno-lust. They should not just implement wikis because wikis are cool and will want to use them. There is nothing magical about the technologies. It is how they are use that matters. Technology should always fill a need and they should think realistically about what technologies are needed in the library.

**Ability to Sell Ideas/Library Services:** No one tells Library personnel that they need serious marketing skills and salesmanship to be a fit for their professions. When an idea is conceived, it often has to be sold to administrators, faculty, colleagues, institutions, students and other users. Once service is implemented for users, there is need to repackage and market it so that people will use the service (Chigbu and Dim, 2012).

## **Methodology**

The study adopted a survey of descriptive design. Survey of descriptive design is a quantitative aimed at eliciting information from sample of a given population. The study adopted and modified research instrument of the "Core competencies for academic library personnel in Croatia" (Grigic and Zivkovic, 2012), as it relates to the study and have close features.

To determine the validity of the instrument, the items in the instruments were given to experts in the field for recommendations. Based on their comments and modifications, final drafts were produced for administration. The data collected were processed and analyzed using descriptive statistics with simple percentage, mean and standard deviation. A criterion mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) of 2.50 and above was considered as agreed while item with mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) values less than 2.50 is considered disagreed. The findings, conclusions and recommendations were given to guide future researchers.

## **Result**

**Research Question 1:** What are the roles of library personnel in the 21st century?

**Table 1: Activities of library personnel**

S/N	Activities	Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )	Decision
1	Current awareness service	3.63	Agreed
2	Answering reference queries from library users	3.58	Agreed
3	Recommendation for acquisition of reference resources	3.68	Agreed
4	Online reference services	3.26	Agreed
5	User education	3.42	Agreed
6	Knowledge Creation and Dissemination, KCD	3.32	Agreed
7	Database search	3.42	Agreed
8	Catalogue search	3.47	Agreed
9	Giving information about library	3.63	Agreed

Table 1 above depicts the roles of library personnel in the 21st century. It was deduced from the table that the respondents agreed with all the items in the table with items 3, 1 and 9 having the highest values of mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) 3.68, 3.63 and 3.63 respectively.

**Research Question 2:** What are the tools uses in the discharge of reference services in the 21st century?

**Table 2: Tools use in the discharge of reference services**

S/N	Tools	Mean (X)	Discussion
10	Blogs	3.78	Agreed
11	Rich Site Summary (RSS)	2.87	Agreed
12	Podcasting	3.63	Agreed
13	Wikis	3.42	Agreed
14	Instant Massaging (IM)	3.58	Agreed
15	Tagging	2.98	Agreed
16	Social Networking Sites (SNS)	3.73	Agreed
17	Mashups	2.37	Disagreed

Table 2 above presents the tools use in the discharge of reference services in the 21st century. It was examined that the respondents agreed with all the items in the table except items 17 with mean (X) value 2.37. Items 10, 16 and 12 had the highest mean (X)

**Research Question 3:** What are the skills required of library personnel in the 21st century?

**Table 3: Skills required of library personnel**

S/N	General skills	Mean (X)	Decision
26	IT skills	3.63	Agreed
27	Search skills	3.47	Agreed
28	Traditional reference interview	3.05	Agreed
29	Negotiating skill	3.05	Agreed
30	Questioning skill	3.42	Agreed
31	Marketing and repackaging of information resources	3.32	Agreed
32	Assessment/evaluation of information	3.42	Agreed
32	Customer service	3.32	Agreed
33	Research and publish	3.63	Agreed

S/N	Technology skills	Mean (X)	Decision
34	Online searching	3.79	Agreed
35	Web maintenance	3.42	Agreed
36	Social media	3.32	Agreed
37	Web design	3.32	Agreed
38	Software troubleshooting	3.11	Agreed
39	Chat/IM	3.26	Agreed
40	Hardware troubleshooting	3.16	Agreed
41	Programming	5.26	Agreed
	<b>Personal skills</b>		
42	Verbal communication	3.53	Agreed
43	Working in teams	3.58	Agreed
44	Approachability	5.16	Agreed
45	Self-motivation	3.53	Agreed
46	Adaptability/flexibility	3.63	Agreed
47	Written communication	3.58	Agreed
48	Listening	5.68	Agreed
49	Instruction/Teaching skills	3.63	Agreed
50	Media literacy	3.53	Agreed
51	Stress management	3.68	Agreed
52	Conflict management	3.37	Agreed
53	Sense of humour	3.53	Agreed

Table 3 above reveals the skills required of library personnel in the 21st century for effective library service delivery. It was shown from the table that there are three basic skills required of library personnel in the 21st century include; general, technology and personal skills. The respondents agreed with all the items on the table to be applicable to the required skills in the 21st century. For general skills, 33, 26, and 27 had the

highest value of mean (X) of 3.63 and 3.47 respectively. For technological skills, items 41 and 34 enjoyed the highest value of X of 5.26 and 3.79 respectively while items 48 and 44 had 5.68 and 5.16 values for personal skill respectively.

**Research Question 4:** What are the challenges of competency of library personnel in the 21st century?

**Table 4: Challenges of competency of library personnel**

S/N	Challenges	Mean (X)	Decision
54	Poor funding	3.98	Agreed
55	Lack of training	3.79	Agreed
56	Lack of technological literacy	3.05	Agreed
57	Lack of competency	3.16	Agreed
58	Technophobia	3.05	Agreed
59	Lack of motivation	3.37	Agreed
60	Erratic power supply	3.42	Agreed
61	Poor internet connectivity	3.21	Agreed
62	Administrative attitudes	3.68	Agreed
63	Inadequate facilities	3.48	Agreed

Table 5 above shows the challenges that could possibly lead to incompetency of reference services in the 21st century. It was deduced from the table that the respondents agreed with all the items on the table. Items 54, 55, and 61 had the highest values of mean (X) of 3.98, 3.79, and 3.68 respectively.

### **Discussion of the Findings**

This section discusses the data presented on the tables above concerning the research question raised for the study.

**Research Question 1:** The result on table 1 revealed some of the activities of library personnel in most libraries. Some of these activities include; current awareness service, Online reference services, answering reference queries from library users, user education, giving information



about library among others. Reference unit of any library is the mirror of the library. This is in agreement with the findings of Tanawade (2011) who asserted that library personnel package current information sources and delivers them to user on point. This strategy serves as his bait to attract clients and by doing so fixes the idea in their minds that the library is a source of incalculable value.

**Research Question 2:** The result from table 2 showed some of the tools use for effective reference services. Some of tools as put in by Stephens & Collins (2007) include blogs, social networking sites, podcasting, instant messaging and lots more. These tools are not just socially inclined, but help interact with the library users electronically at the comfort of their zones. Although, it was deduced from the table that some library personnel were not familiar with some of the tools especially the mashups.

**Research Question 3:** The result from table 3 revealed that there are three major skills required by library personnel in the 21st century, these include general skill, technology skill and personal skill, without which no library personnel can excel in his profession especially in this century. Some of the skills required of general skill include IT skills, research and publish, Search skills, questioning skill, marketing and repackaging of information resources etc. This coincided with the study of Tennant (2009) who identifies that no one told library personnel that they need serious marketing skills and salesmanship but they have an idea, it often has to be sold to administrators, IT, faculty, colleagues, students and other users. He stressed further that reference librarians need to showcase their skills to increase patronage and quality service delivery in the library.

On the other hand, some of the technology skills required as indicated on the table include programming, online searching, web maintenance, social networking among others. This finding aligned with the findings of Khan and Bhatti (2012) who states that technologies provide more opportunity for library personnel to reach out to communities, target specific audience, and give them a chance to interact with your library. By using social networking, library personnel can engage their clients on issues of interest and enable them make inputs especially as it affects library services. This can improve the library's image.

It is also important to note that some personal skills needed to be exhibit by library personnel. This was revealed from the table to include intense listening from patrons, approachability, Sense of humour, communication, working in teams, Instruction/Teaching skills, Adaptability/flexibility, and others.

**Research Question 4:** The result on table four depicted some challenges that often lead to professional incompetence of some library personnel. It was discovered that the most intensive challenge ranged from poor funding of reference unit, lack of training of library personnel, attitude of administrators to the welfare of library personnel, inadequate facilities, poor internet connectivity, and even technophobia. It is not surprising that lots of libraries are not performing optimal as expected. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Nwalo (2016) who states that the major problem inhibiting libraries in effective service delivery in African include apathy and inadequate government funding. Funding is essential to excellent library services he maintained. Also, Adepetun (2012) on separate study identified that poor facility and power supply crisis in most libraries have found expression in the expenditure profile, as most institutions expend huge amount of money providing alternative facilities and power source, effective information service delivery cannot thrive in this type of scenario. These are some of the factors attributing to deficient professional incompetency among some library personnel in the 21st century library operation.

## **Conclusion**

Library personnel render to library users' personal assistance by providing them needed information in the most suitable format. Reference services were traditionally offered to users at a designated desk within the library building, over the telephone, or through correspondence. As libraries advances the services emulate the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in delivery her services electronically via the World Wide Web (www), e-mail, internet and even two-way videoconferencing. The task of library personnel becomes increasingly tedious with the adventure of ICT where the professionals are expected to be vest in the use of technologies to maintain competency in the profession. The result from the findings of the study indicates that some of the newer technologies tools used by library personnel include blogs, social networking sites, podcasting, instant messaging etc. For library personnel to be successful in delivery services via these tool, it was also discovered that s/he need to equipped

himself/herself with some special skills which include IT skills, research and publish, Search skills, questioning skill, marketing and repackaging of information resources, programming, online searching, web maintenance, social networking, intense listening from patrons, approachability, Sense of humour, communication, working in teams, Instruction/Teaching skills, Adaptability/flexibility, and others.

However, the acquisition of some of these skills for professional competence of library personnel are confronted with some challenges as identified for the study. Some of these challenges include poor funding of reference unit, lack of training of library personnel, attitude of administrators to the welfare of library personnel, inadequate facilities, poor internet connectivity, technophobia etc. For library personnel to be competent in their profession, there is high need of government and other stakeholders to change it orientation to the profession to avail them the opportunity of quality service delivery to humanity especially in the 21st century that is high in need of competency.

### **Recommendation**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- \* Government should note the importance of information in decision making at any level and the danger of such information not been available for any reason, as such, change its funding attitude to library.
- \* Library management should invest more in reference unit because library personnel are the mirror or image of any given library, as such, library personnel should be equipped with all the needed training and skills that is capable of availing them competence in discharge of their services.

The library personnel should accept and get involved in the use of the available technologies that is capable of enhancing their professional competence. Those who are technophobia should be aware that discharge of reference service cannot be successful without the involvement of technological tools.

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