Foreword

I was very happy when my colleague Adeyinka Tella asked me to write the foreword to this very interesting and significant book. Dr. Tella has been a contributor to the peer-reviewed open access e-journal *Library Philosophy and Practice* (LPP) and to a number of other scholarly journals originating in Africa, North America, Asia, and elsewhere around the globe. The globalization of librarianship is a phenomenon I began to notice in the very early days of LPP, which was founded in 1998. We began to receive submissions from Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Malaysia, and a number of other countries. Those same international authors began to appear in other LIS journals, and a scholarly conversation began among librarian colleagues everywhere in the world. It became apparent that we all faced the same issues and challenges and that we all had the same goals. It has also been an opportunity for librarians in the US to gain a greater understanding of the library and educational environment in countries that are less familiar to many Americans. We gained new friends and colleagues who made us aware that countries like Nigeria, India, Iran, and so on, are very populous and have a large number of tertiary institutions with thousands of students, faculty, and librarians.

This global perspective is essential for understanding and appreciating this volume whose topic is one of the most crucial and perennially interesting in all of LIS: information-seeking behavior of library users, in particular information seeking in a digital age and in digital libraries. These fifteen chapters focus on the general and the particular, on the digital environment and the mixed (print and digital) environment of most libraries, on specific places and individual libraries, on particular occupations and user groups, and on the effect of demographics (such as socioeconomic status) on information-seeking behavior. This book uses many lenses to examine this important topic and provide an array of observations and insights, from authors in Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, and other places.

Tom Kwanya of the Technical University of Kenya inaugurates the topic of information seeking in digital libraries with a look at the current information environment, exhorting librarians to “follow library users into their digital echo chambers,” rather than trying to bring them back to conventional library spaces and services.

Many of the authors in this book present the challenges for digital libraries from an African perspective. E.M. Ondari-Okemwa of the University of Fort Hare in South Africa looks specifically at digital libraries in Sub-Saharan Africa, finding that digital libraries are still a relatively new phenomenon in this region. Ondari-Okemwa looks at “digital literacy” as it contrasts with traditional definitions of literacy and considers the impact of socioeconomic factors on digital literacy in Sub-Saharan Africa.
As in many regions of the world, higher education in Kenya has expanded drastically without increases in infrastructure. This has led to a rise in distance (online) education that requires the use of digital resources. Licensing requirements for these resources have important legal ramifications that librarians must strictly observe. Japhet Otike of Moi University in Kenya considers the legal aspects of using digital resources to support distance learning by universities in Kenya.

Copyright is one of the most crucial legal issues in the provision of digital library resources. Pedro Pina of the Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra, Portugal, explores this important topic. Pina describes the tension between the democratization of information represented by access to digital resources and the rights of authors and publishers to control and profit from their works.

Adeyinka Tella, Saheed Oyeniran, and Olubokola James Ojo of the University of Ilorin, Nigeria also look at copyright and digital libraries, focusing on issues such as fair use, reproduction, and interlibrary loan, which can be challenging in the digital environment.

Three librarians and scholars from the University of Putra, Malaysia, look at different models of information seeking in the context of digital libraries. Zeinab Zaremohzzabieh, Seyedali Ahrari, Prof. Bahaman Abu Samah, and Prof. Jusang Bolong examine existing models and their applicability to the digital environment.

Bibliometrics and scientometrics can reveal interesting patterns in scholarly communication. Akakandelwa Akakandelwa of the University of Zambia takes a bibliometric approach to the literature on information seeking that is available on the Web. The author used Google Scholar to look at the growth of publications, collaboration patterns, impact, and citation patterns.

Like bibliometrics, a review of the literature can also unearth issues and challenges presented from varying perspectives and using different methodologies. Olaronke O. Fagbola of the National Open University of Nigeria presents a literature review on indexing and abstracting and information retrieval for digital libraries, exploring the impact of indexing and abstracting on the retrieval of electronic information.

Barriers to information seeking are an essential part of the study of information-seeking behavior. Felicia Yusuf, Owolabi Sola, Aregbesola Ayooluwa, Sunday Oguntayo, Foluke Okocha, and Eyiolorunse Toluwani of Landmark University, Omu-Aran, Kwara State, Nigeria, look at the barriers to information-seeking in the digital environment. The authors consider demographics, socioeconomic factors, and cognitive skills, all of which may have a negative effect on the ability to seek and retrieve information.

Ajai Ayo Oluwaseun of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, also looks at barriers to information seeking, looking more generally at the things that prevent users from accessing information.

Information seeking is different for people in different professions, language communities, age groups, and so on. Joel O. Afolayan of the Michael Imoudu National Institute for Labour Studies, Ilorin, Nigeria looks at the information-seeking behavior of trade unionists and reviews challenges to success and the impact of information on industrial relations and worker satisfaction and productivity.

Femi Titus Akande and Akinade Adebowale Adewojo of the Nigerian Stored Products Research Institute, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, also look at a particular group of information seekers, in this case farmers. The authors surveyed a group of 28 farmers and found a low rate of literacy that co-exists with a need for information for successful farming.

A case study or survey of one institution can shed light on issues that are generalizable to a larger population. Michael Terver Upev Kwaghga Beetseh, and Joy Asibi Idachaba, of the Federal University of Agriculture Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria present a study of the usability of digital resources in one particular Nigerian academic library. The authors surveyed library staff and discovered what kinds of
resources are digitized by the library and used by its patrons, as well as the challenges to digitization and use of digitized resources. Challenges included a need for more standardization of processes and more sophisticated equipment.

While nearly a generation ago a library website was enough of a digital presence, libraries must now use Web 2.0 tools to interact with library users. Ganiyu Ojo Adigun of Ladoke Akintola University Library, Ogbomoso, Nigeria, explores the use of social networks by libraries.

Prakash Dongardive of Mekelle University, Ethiopia, examines the growth of digital libraries since the 1990s and considers whether digital libraries are now the predicted “information super highway.”

These fifteen chapters help us assess the current library environment and answer the question, “Is the ‘digital library’ the same thing as a ‘library’?” Have print collections become secondary or even non-existent in some cases, and the electronic resources now the default format and collection for libraries and library users? There is no easy answer to that question, and digital libraries present some significant challenges, including funding, management, access issues, infrastructure, and training for librarians and library users. There are intellectual property issues as well as seemingly-mundane but actually quite pressing problems such as the unreliable power supply experienced by some libraries. The authors of this volume present us with information, analysis, and recommendations that will help us make progress on these issues and do the thing we are all so committed to doing: connect people with the information they need, and in so doing, make their lives better.

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