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LIBRARIANS INFORMATION CONSULTANCY: CHANGING FACE OF INDEXING AND ABSTRACTING

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Introduction

Information consultancy is a concept gaining ground in the librarianship profession. Many of the traditional library routines are being taken up by non-professionals and many of such people make money out of the profession without necessarily being information professionals. This situation notwithstanding, information consultancy is a means by which one can make a living out of performing different information or information services for a fee. Information seekers often seek services from information consultants or information brokers, sometimes referred to as Independent Information Professionals (IIP) to get what they want. These professionals perform different services for a fee and what they do is what is described as information consultancy.

Common uses for information brokers include market research and patent searches, but can include practically any type of information research. (Wikipedia, 2011). Information transactions or consultancy include information brokerage, infopreneurship and information management consultancy, amongst others. They are based on the concept of ascribing value to information that is, information for sale. Oduwole & Onatola (2008) consider them as viable avenues for augmenting ones living before and after retirement from paid employment.

This paper focuses on two types of information consultancy – indexing and abstracting - and seeks to find out the attitudes of library and information professionals to indexing and abstracting services in Ibadan. It also attempts to determine the prospects of indexing and abstracting services in Ibadan.

Indexing and Abstracting

Indexing is a precise art which provides an inroad into a book, piece of writing or literary work. An index, the product of indexing is a secondary source of information that falls into the series of guides to the literature. An index is a *alphabetical list of topics, names of persons, places, etc, mentioned in a **book** or series of books, indicating at what place or places they appear in the source documents, usually by page number (sometimes with an additional symbol denoting a position on a page) but sometimes by section or entry number (*International Encyclopedia of Information and Library Science, 1997; 169).

Wright (2005) notes that indexing is a mystery to many people who are writing and printing materials, the index being a way into the material, a subject finder and a detailed guide to the contents of the writing. *Indexing, however has been defined as 'analysing the contents of a document (**book**, pamphlet, audio-visual or machine – readable item, etc.) or collection of documents and translating the results of the analysis into terms for use in an index – an organized grouping of such terms to allow location and retrieval of information'.* (International Encyclopedia of Information and Library Science, 1997: 169). *Aina (2004: 207) describes indexing simply as "the technique of producing an index".* An index enhances easy retrieval of information, increases the quality of a **book** or publication, makes the reader more familiar with the contents of a publication, and makes a **book** more usable. *The purpose is to support readers in finding information, to save time and effort, and to prevent frustration* (Fourie, 2008). In the library context, the term metadata refers to the structured data used to arrange, describe, track and enhance access to resources. Library catalogue records, indexes and abstracts, finding aids etc. are examples of metadata for library use (Lam, 2002).

Csomai and Mihalcea (2007) describe a back-of-the-book index typically as consisting of the most important concepts addressed in a book, with pointers to the relevant pages inside the book. Although there is a certain degree of computer assistance, consisting of tools that help the professional indexer to organize and edit the index, there is however no method that would allow for a complete or nearly-complete automation in the indexing process. Manual and automated procedures are interwoven.

There are different types of indexes.

1. **Author Index:** This index is designed to serve as a guide to authors included in a publication.

2. **Subject Index: This index** is one that serves as a guide to the various areas of subjects, topic treated, alluded to or inferred in a publication.

3. **Title Index:** The title index is designed to serve as a guide to titles treated in a **book** or periodical.

4. **Keyword Index: T**he keyword index is designed to serve as a guide to the keywords used in the content of a publication. This index may be found in the natural language or standardized language.

5. **Citation Index:** This is an index of citations of articles. It brings out the popularity of an article. An example is Science Citation Index (SCI).

6. **Book Index: A book** index is an index found at the **back** of a **book. A book** index may also come in the form of a whole volume serving as a subject guide to many other volumes of books anchored together by a common theme or topic. An example is Index Medicus. It should be noted that apart from **back-**of -the **book** indexes, **book** indexes in volumes may be geographically or regionally delineated.

7. **Periodical Index: A** periodical index is that which is provided as a guide to the contents of a journal issue or series of complete volumes of a journal title etc. There are two types of periodical indexes; one attached to a single journal and the other type attached to several journals.

The art and skill of **indexing** is one that can be used to great advantage by information professionals since it is a good source or avenue of revenue generation especially for independent information professionals. Primarily one of the concerns and responsibilities of professionals in the library and information profession is to adhere to standard principles. A professional body exists such as the Society of Indexers in the United Kingdom that is concerned with principles of **indexing** and has even gone to the extent of establishing terms for the costing and negotiation of fees for **indexing** services provided. (The Society of Indexers, 2008).

Abstracts are a somewhat extended pointer to the content of a work. An abstract is a concise and accurate representation of the contents of a document, in a style similar to that of the original document (Rowley, 1988). An abstract refers to a form of current bibliography in which sometimes, books (mainly contributions to periodicals) are summarised (Igbeka, 2008; 57). An example is Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA) which was started in the 50s in the United States of America.

Types of Abstracts

1. **Author's Abstracts:** Abstracts prepared by the authors of the documents. Examples are the abstracts of thesis written by students for their work, or those of journal articles published.

2. **Critical abstracts:** These describe the content of the document, and evaluate the work and its presentation.

3. **Findings-oriented Abstracts:** This emphasizes the results of findings of an investigation.

4. **Highlight Abstracts:** These are captions preceeding the main work in some primary journals which are meant to attract the reader's attention.

5. **Indicative Abstracts:** These abstracts indicate the contents of the article and make general statements about the document.

6. **Informative Abstracts:** This involves more subject expertise than indicative abstracts and contains much qualitative and quantitative information in the document.

7. **Indicative-Informative Abstracts:** this combines indicative and informative abstracts qualities.

8. **Slanted Abstracts:** This is an abstract, slanted or geared towards the interests of a known audience.

9. **Mini or Brief Abstracts:** These abstracts just add a little information to amplify the title of the work.

10. **Statistical, Tabular and Numerical Abstracts:** These are means of summarising data using tables or other such devices.

Abstracts can be written by the author of a work, a specialist abstractor, an information officer, a subject specialist, librarian, experienced library officer or library assistant, or even a clerk (Igbeka, 2008). Experience on the part of the abstracter is necessary to be able to produce a good abstract. The same applies to the product of good indexes.

Experience in indexing has been known to help in other fields of work. Orna (2004) in an e-mail interview granted, recalls using indexing experience in a job involving being an editor of an education journal or Information Officer for The Association of Teachers in Technical Institutions (now The National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education). It is remarkable that Orna became an independent information consultant, with many specialities, one of them being an indexer. For Orna,

As far as information consultancy is concerned, I've worked in two main areas: thesaurus construction (a development of my interest in indexing) came first, at a time when terminology control was much pursued (it's been interesting to see the subject re-discovered in the context of meta-data and taxonomy!). After publication of the first edition of Practical information policies in 1990, I became involved in giving courses on developing organizational information policies, and on information auditing, and that led to assignments in those areas. Recent consultancy work on information auditing has often arisen from a commitment on the part of the organizations involved to move towards knowledge management (for which some are better equipped than others), and I've been able to take part in extending the scope of information auditing to a range of interesting areas. (Orna, 2004: 4).
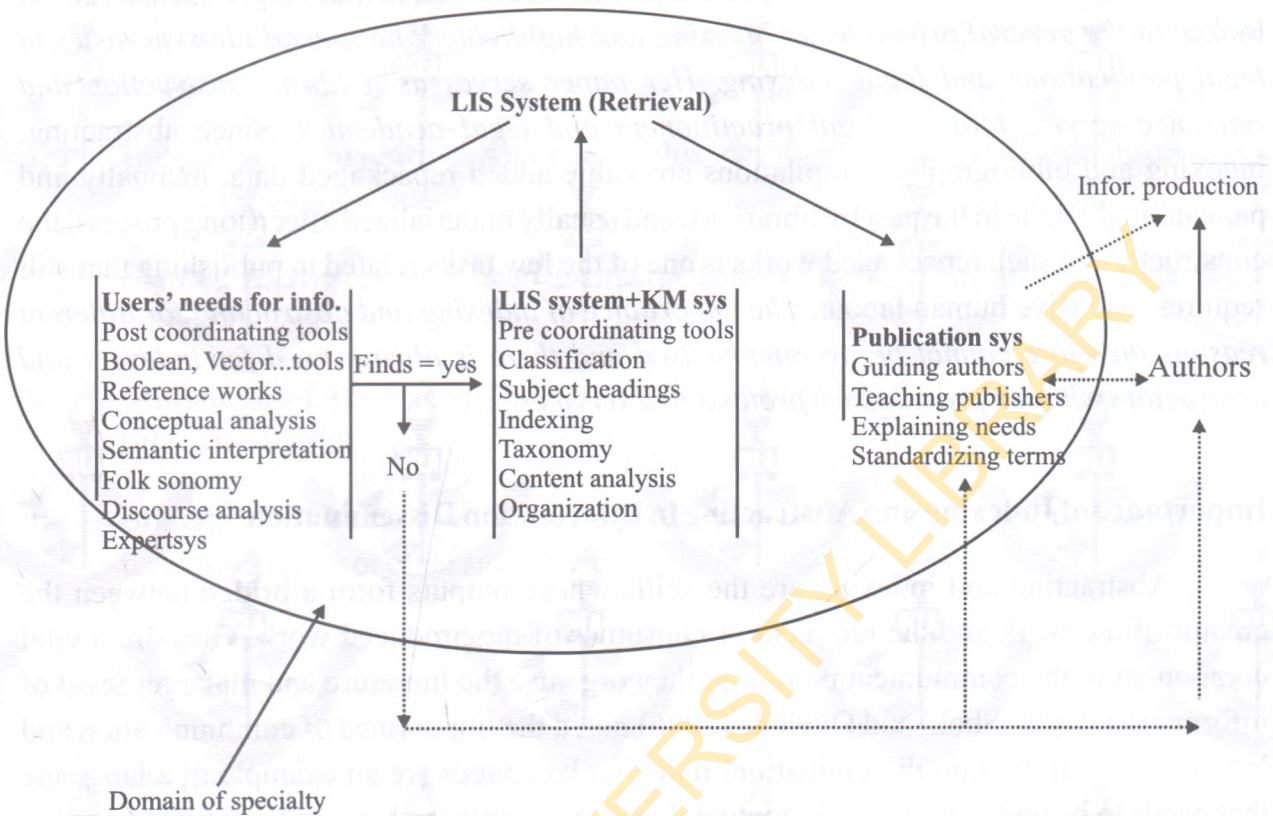
Aina (2004) enumerated some indices of measuring the quality of an index among others: These include: (i) Time spent on retrieval of information; (ii) Percentage of relevant information in the index; (iii) Precision and (iv) Cost involved in indexing. Fadehan (2004) looked at *the general principles of indexing and highlighted the special idiosyncrasies of legal publications and legal indexing. Her paper serves as a library instruction and reference service tool for legal practitioners and legal academics.* Since abstracting, indexing and bibliography compilations are value-added repackaged data, manually and painstakingly done in the past by librarians, and usually materialized after a long process, the construction of such repackaged works is one of the few tasks related to publishing that still requires extensive human labour. *The importance of indexing and abstracting for different reasons therefore cannot be overemphasised and there is always need for indexers and abstractors who can provide such professional services.*

Importance of Indexing and Abstracting in Information Dissemination

Abstracting and indexing are the skills whose outputs form a bridge between the creator of the work and the recipient or consumer of the produced work. They are a vital component in the communication link as they organise the literature and make retrieval of information easier. Shoki and Oyelude (2006) noted the importance of communication and language in information dissemination. Indexing languages are an example of a language that needs to be understood in this context. Indexers and abstractors are therefore trained or should be trained in what are the best terms to use in their indexes and abstracts. The simplest way is to use the terms used by the author and make cross references to them using standard thesaurus terms if need be.

Fadaie (2009) explained his views on the theoretical base of Library and Information Science (LIS) and in asking if information retrieval leads to information production, reiterated that **information** retrieval (of which indexing and abstracting are a part) is not always satisfactory and there are challenges to both indexer and user.

Fig. 1. The scope of LIS (retrieval) system and its subdivisions emphasizing on domain of specialty

LIS System (Retrieval)

Infor. production

Users' needs for info.
Post coordinating tools
Boolean, Vector...tools
Reference works
Conceptual analysis
Semantic interpretation
Folk sonomy
Discourse analysis
Expertsys

Finds = yes

No

LIS system+KM sys
Pre coordinating tools
Classification
Subject headings
Indexing
Taxonomy
Content analysis
Organization

Publication sys
Guiding authors
Teaching publishers
Explaining needs
Standardizing terms

Authors

Domain of specialty

* Source: Fadaie, 2009; 582

In the domain of specialty, indexing is part of the LIS system that leads to retrieval of information. Figure 1 (by Fadaie, 2009) illustrates this.

Indexes and abstracts make information retrieval very simple. Harris (1995; 67) puts it thus:

Indexers are the unsung heroes of the non-fiction book world. A good indexer can save a so-so book from total oblivion. Think about it for a second – what good is a book about insects or stars if you can't find the page about bumblebees or the Big Dipper? It's a fact – with nonfiction books, more people turn to the index first than to the table of contents!

Indexing and Abstracting in Publishing

Indexing an abstracting can be done electronically using software designed for such. These softwares can be simple or complex. Stand-alone indexing software allows indexers to write indexes without needing access to the writer's files. The software is specialized for index writing, and includes many features and shortcuts not available in the indexing

modules found in programs like Microsoft Word or Adobe PageMaker. It is one of the fastest ways to write an index. If one decides to hire an indexer to write one's index in stand-alone indexing software (not embedding codes), several things need to be done in order to help the indexer do the work most effectively. They are:

1.   Having firm page breaks and page numbers helps the process go most efficiently.

2.   Have the book's text finalized. If the indexer works from a draft, the indexing will have to be checked against the final text, and it is a time-consuming process.

3.   The indexer will need to know what style of index the client wants produced, whether run-in or nested. Here are examples of the two types:

Nested (indented)	Run-in
Barbie Midge and, 21;	Barbie; Midge and, 21
relationship with Ken, 23-26	Relationship with Ken, 23-26
relationship with Skipper, 34	relationship with Skipper, 34

The back-of-book index creation system provides a means of semi-automatic indexing for quality-conscious indexers and authors. An example of such a system is the TExtract software which offers a means to create the index for the printed or digital edition of a publication in three steps, using a unique combination of automated and manual indexing.

In the system, the initial index is created fully automatically. After this, the indexer needs to run through the text to add or mark index terms that are not needed. A PDF or paged plain text version of the document to be indexed is dropped onto TExtract and the index is edited using powerful in-context navigation, and selection and text editing features which are available in no other software. Then the formatted index is exported, reviewed and included in the document being indexed.

Indexing and Abstracting as Business

Libraries have always striven to share resources through union catalogues, indexing and abstracting services and interlibrary loan, but the Internet has provided opportunities for unmediated access to distributed resources in very many ways not dreamt of until a few years ago. Abstracting and indexing services constitute a vital component in the communications link between the information sources and the ultimate consumer of the information.

Through the abstracting and indexing services, information in newspapers can be organized so that users can identify documents of interest more easily (Oguntuase, 2004). Emevon (1984) twenty years earlier had called attention to the fact that indexing and abstracting of newspapers in Nigeria are conspicuously absent, and this Banjo (1984) regarded as a special issue that needed urgent attention. Adewuyi and Olaojo (2011) conducted a study and discovered that librarians in Nigeria are consultancy conscious but do not have much patronage from the public. Part of their findings from two hundred and two respondents was that a higher percentage (66.3%) of the professionals get consultancy for setting up new libraries than for book indexing (1%), newspaper indexing (7.4%), back-of-the book indexing (1%) and abstracting (2.5%) of the specialisation areas in consultancy.

Indexing and abstracting can be big business for a smart library or information professional. A busy author or one who has no skills of indexing will be unable to cope with indexing his/her own book. They therefore require the services of a broker or a specialist who will charge a fee for doing the job. Indexing services are usually charged on a per page basis. Harris (1995) advocated $15 - $40 per hour as charge for indexing services in the United States of America. In other countries, Nigeria for example, the amount to be paid per page of writing is determined and the amount made known to the client. It is just a case of multiplying the amount by the number of pages of the book (preliminary pages inclusive, since they usually contain indexable terms). Thus for instance, if the charge per page is N120, the cost for a 204 page book is 120 x 204pgs = N24,480. The indexer is thus required to produce an index to match the type of document. If the book is on geography and there are many places, and author names relevant to topic, a Name index may be added to the usual general index of such a book.

Abstracting services also can be big business if the abstracter happens to work for a publishing outfit that abstracts journals or one that produces slanted abstracts on particular subjects or interest areas. Some institutions may also contract out the abstracting of the thesis or publications of their students or staff. The charges could also be on a per-abstract basis. For example, charging N50 or more per abstract.

Indexing and abstracting in a business environment will follow pricing systems that suit the indexer or abstracter. Igbeka (2008) recognised that the pricing system for fee-based information services is affected by factors such as (i) the mission of the services i.e. if it is for total or partial cost recovery, for profit-sharing, for value added or for a subdivided service, (ii) institutional support, or (iii) discriminatory or uniform charges for all categories of users (Igbeka, 2008;109). No matter the pricing system used to determine the value of abstracting and indexing jobs, the business is one which can sustain a professional who has the right drive and right connections to publishing houses and authors.

Staff Development for Indexing and Abstracting Services in Libraries

Afolabi (2004) identified the various careers associated with library and information science and also identified new related areas. He noted that a re-training programme is necessary if library and information science graduates are to fit into the new information-related jobs and that African departments of library and information science should review their training objectives and curricula to cater for information-related jobs other than the training of libraries. In the work, it was reiterated that library jobs are becoming increasingly difficult to come by and there is a need to prepare the library and information science graduate for other equally profitable and exciting areas.

Toti (2000) suggested that a university course in infopreneurship could contribute to bridging the gap between the so-called security of full-time employment and the imagined insecurity of a privately owned information business. Boadi (2006) saw information consultancy and brokerage services and other income-generating activities as ways of generating funds for academic libraries in South Africa. Skills required for public librarians spans areas such as management, communication, handling interpersonal relations in the workplace, information technology, networking and interpreting and synthesizing information, e.g. customizing information products.

Emerging professional roles for public librarians include job labels like the net navigator, the educator, the information consultant, the gatekeeper, the electronic intermediary, the community network administrator and the social information worker. All these professional activities are ones in which the library staff can make money or become entrepreneurs. The student in library school can also learn and become independent. Library schools over the years have taught one or two courses on indexing and abstracting. The work of the Ahmadu Bello University especially in this area has been noted (Gwam, 2004). Indexing in particular was the main task of this institution in the early sixties to the late nineties when new technologies, lack of adequate funding and a few other factors prevented the vigorous activity of indexers in libraries. The attainment of academic status for librarians and its attendant problems as far as the academic content of professional librarians' work has added to this.

Indexes and abstracts are regarded as technical papers in academic institutions like the universities and are scored for librarians if they are substantial and published as entities. Bibliographies are also treated the same way. The fact that compilations of indexes and bibliographies are no longer counted as academic publications has thereby made the art of indexing and abstracting become unattractive and of little consequence on the librarianship scene. The few library professionals who had indexing and abstracting skills and who could afford not to have the indexes they put together taken as academic work seemingly quietly

made money on the sideline from publishers by engaging in providing back- of- the - book indexes for a fee.

The commercialization of the skills unfortunately did not augur well for training of prospective indexers and abstractors. However, special libraries or research institutes like the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) continue to provide abstracts of their journals for the special use of their clientele. They train their staff who work in the section where the indexing or abstracting is done. The entrepreneurship training that is needed for aspects of librarianship like indexing and abstracting is not present in the library schools of today in Nigeria. As such, indexing and abstracting is an area of staff development that is given little attention.

Forward Steps

Marketing of information materials and services is a management process, which identifies, anticipates and supplies users' requirements efficiently through response to user priorities. The concern is how consultancy can be done by individuals or libraries in the area of Indexing and abstracting for a fee. Information might be customized, packed and delivered to users through different library services. Awareness has to be created for this and the services properly and vigorously marketed. Social media and word of mouth remain the best ways to do this. Telephone calls, WhatsApp messages, in-house bulletins, local newspapers, Facebook, Instagram and so on are the usual means possible. Other marketing strategies include exhibitions, posters, in-house journals and newsletters, displays and talks. It can involve librarians going out of the library to present their specialization to the library users (Okafor, 2011).

The prospect for fee-based indexing and abstracting services is one that is of high consideration. The services are being demanded by publishing houses and individual authors, yet the possibility of getting good quality indexers, indexes, abstracts and abstractors is quite slim. However, as Petherbridge (1988) put it "This is not a profession to be taken up casually. Only a real student can hope to make a success of it; but to that privileged student the work is a delight". From the foregoing, it is conjectured that indexing is interesting work and also lucrative as well, but since not too many in the information profession are involved in the business, the way forward is to train more in the art of doing so and create more entrepreneurs out of librarians, than hitherto. Library Schools should redesign their curriculum to upgrade skills of their products to meet current trends. Entrepreneurship should be emphasized just as equally as professionalism. The changing face of the information profession needs to reflect in the effective training in Librarianship.

Retiring library and information professionals should consider serious overhaul of themselves and take consultancy services in indexing and abstracting more seriously. There is nothing wrong with updating themselves in the latest information technologies that produce indexes, abstracts and other automated procedures of the 21st century and imparting this knowledge for a fee as retirees. Or, indeed, as a respected colleague would say, "Be retired but not tired and also aim to become "Firing Librarians".

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