

THE DETERMINANT OF TASK SHIFTING AMONG LIBRARIANS IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated the determinants of task shifting amongst librarians in Cross River State, Nigeria. In particular, examine the extent to which librarians' perceived professional competencies and information and communication technologies (ICTs) competencies can predict task shifting amongst librarians in Cross River State. This research was guided by survey design. The population for the consisted of 736 librarians within public and private libraries in Cross River State. A sample of 259 librarians was selected using the Taro Yamane sample-size formula with a 0.05 level of precision. Stratified random sampling techniques were employed in sampling the respondents questionnaire developed by researchers with the title "Determinants of Task Shifting among Librarians Questionnaire" (DTSLQ) was used as the instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was face and content valid as assessed by some specialists in Library and Information Science and in Measurement and Evaluation. A Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was obtained which were 0.83, 0.85 and 0.87 for the professional competencies, ICT skills, and task shifting subscale respectively. Data analysis was carried out using simple linear regression at $\alpha = 0.05$. It was discovered that librarian's professional competency has a significant positive influence on task shifting and explained 57.2% of its variation. Librarian's ICT skills on the other hand, a significant predictor of task shifting in the State and it explains 30.2% of task shifting variability. Conclusion: The findings showed that professional competencies and skills in ICTs contribute to the efficiency of librarians in carrying out of expanded roles and new tasks. The

study therefore recommended, the provision of modern and relevant digital information infrastructure, Librarians' ability to undertake professional certification on other courses as well as, capacity building on ICT related courses.

Keywords: ICT Skills; Librarians; Professional Competence and Task Shifting.



Introduction

Libraries are pivotal components of learning institutions as they provide information resources and services required to facilitate teaching, learning, research, and intellectual stimulation of the library users. The contemporary education system has transformed libraries from traditional storehouses of books into modern-day vibrant information access centres, digital resource management points, knowledge-sharing points, and lifelong learning centres (Anele et al., 2024; Adie et al., 2026). Therefore, librarians' roles have expanded significantly to keep pace with increasing demands in education, technological advancements, and evolving information needs of the users. Consequently, the duties and responsibilities expected of librarians include provision of instructional support, managing digital resources, user education, facilitating research activities and making significant inputs into efficient delivery of education services (Eze et al., 2026; Idaka et al., 2024). All these have consequently engendered occasions where librarians are assigned tasks beyond their traditional job description thus escalating task shifting to a significant level in library administration (Ogba et al., 2025; Otu et al., 2026; Ita et al 2025).

Libraries are recognized important pillars supporting educational development due to provision of resources that are necessary for teaching, learning and research (Aliyu & Izah, 2023; Uchegbue et al., 2024; Out et al., 2025). The contemporary educational scenario has redefined libraries from traditional repositories of books into centers of information literacy, digital resource management, knowledge organization and academic support services (Ajani et al., 2022; Adie et al., 2026). It is librarians' duty to support teaching by assisting the teachers and students in the identification, and use of appropriate instructional resources and information sources (Oyovwe-Tinuoye et al., 2021; Adie & Kenneth, 2026). Also, librarians support research through reference services, information retrieval activities, and advising users on ethical use of information resources (Oyovwe-Tinuoye et al., 2021; Adie & Oshie, 2026). In addition, escalating transformation in ICT facilities coupled with ever changing demands on educational institutions and clamor for efficient information services, has increased the role expectation on librarians (Ajani et al., 2022; Amalu et al., 2023). These have in a number of institutional settings caused shortage in staff number combined with increasing demands on services, hence Librarians often carry out task shifting to meet demands (Egaga et al., 2025; Muokwelu, 2025; Egaga & Adie, 2025; Meremikwu et al.2022; Adie et al 2019; Ibu et al.2019).

Task shifting is defined as the re-distribution, devolution or allocation of responsibilities from one group of staff to another, necessitated by varying institutional demands, service loads, staff shortages, technology changes (Ekarika et al., 2022; Muokwelu, 2025; Arikpo & Ekpo, 2026). In librarianship, this implies that librarians perform the jobs of other categories of library assistants or administrators, or support staff carry out tasks previously expected of professional librarians (Ajani et al., 2022; Onah et al., 2023). If implemented systematically and with proper support structures, task shifting can result in service continuity, increased adaptability, responsiveness and institutional efficiency (Sunday et al., 2022; Das et al., 2023). Conversely, poorly planned task shifting can result in role overload, decreased service quality, role stress, lack of professional commitment and low professional satisfaction, weak accountability and ineffective information service delivery

(Muokwelu, 2025; (Arikpo & Yahaya-Idinye, 2026; Arikpo & Otu, 2026). These consequences point to the fact that the degree of competence and supporting resources of personnel contribute to success in task shifting (Ebele & Agbade; 2020; Effiong, & Agbade, 2016; Ihekoronye et al. 2020).

Empirical studies have affirmed that role re-arrangement demands appropriate skills and adequate knowledge. Das et al. (20223, used an umbrella review design and in Primary Health Settings discovered that adequate training and supervision improve service delivery as a result of task shifting. In similar research using a systematic review; Muokwelu (2025) discovered proper planning, supervision and appropriate role definition were critical to task shifting. While both studies were not based in library settings, they confirmed that personnel carrying out additional responsibilities need skills and support. In an investigation regarding the influence of ICT on job performance of librarians in South-South Nigeria, Oyovwe-Tinuoye et al. (2021), used a descriptive survey design where ICT competence was significant in improving job performance of librarians. Similarly, Osiesi et al. (2022) used a descriptive survey and found that professional development and training have a positive influence on the job performance of library staff at Federal University Oye-Ekiti. These studies confirm the significance of skills and competence to success in service delivery. However, they dealt with job performance and professional development rather than task shifting and largely concerned with university librarians as a subject population (Ogunode, & Agbade, 2023; Olofu et al. 2019; Opara et al.2020; Agbade & Ironbar, 2017).

Review of available literatures demonstrates agreement among research communities that role expansion/change and re-arrangement requires personnel's competence, professional training and support structures (Muokwelu, 2025; Adie et al. 2022; Ibu et al. 2019; Igyu et al. 2022; Adie, et al. 2026; Meremikwu et al. 2022; Osiesi et al., 2022; Oyovwe-Tinuoye et al., 2021). There are differences in methodological approach; some employed systematic review while others utilized descriptive survey designs. There are also differences in study location and subjects considered in both studies; in the healthcare system professional nurses were the subjects while in libraries university librarians were concerned. Moreover, most studies are focused on job performance and/or ICT digital literacy and professional development rather than task shifting and this gap suggests the need for more research, especially regarding librarians in education zones, such as the Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State.

The degree of professional competence possessed by librarians may affect how they perform, accept and execute expanded roles. Professional competence represents the knowledge, technical skills (i.e. Library cataloguing and classification), reference services skills, information management capabilities, communication ability, ethical attributes and administrative know-how needed for effective library practice (Akobe et al., 2026). Professional competence means Librarians have the required skills; this ability impacts positively on their task shifting capacities and service quality (Osiesi et al., 2022). Low levels of professional competence are likely to inhibit librarians' ability to perform new roles and compromise quality of service (Muokwelu, 2025).

Empirical studies have demonstrated a strong connection between competence and librarians' effectiveness. For example, George et al. (2022), using a correlational design among library staff in North Central Nigeria, reported that professional development programs had a significant influence on job performance of librarians while Osiesi et al. (2022), studying library staff in Federal University Oye-Ekiti using a descriptive survey, found that orientation, seminars, and in-house training contributed positively to job performance of librarians. All these studies suggest that increased competence significantly affects librarians' performance. However, the research works were solely focused on librarians' job performance and professional development without direct implication to librarians' task shifting. They are based in universities and do not take into consideration

other educational settings such as education zones in Cross River State. As a result, the correlation between professional competence and task shifting among librarians in Calabar Education Zone, Cross River State has not adequately been investigated.

Information and communication technology (ICT) skill also significantly affects task shifting by Librarians as more responsibilities are channeled through technology in modern libraries. ICT skill is identified as the competence or proficiency of librarians in utilizing information and communication technology equipment, online searching mechanisms, library software packages, digital resources, digital catalogs, electronic databases and other web-based resources for their professional tasks (Oyovwe-Tinuoye et al., 2021). Librarians who acquire appropriate IT skills are able to execute new, dynamic roles, reduce time taken, automate tasks, improve digital literacy and address users' evolving demands on the libraries effectively (Ajani et al., 2022). Lack of ICT skills in librarian's work can affect his or her ability to effectively perform emerging tasks and remain competitive (Oyovwe-Tinuoye et al., 2021).

Different researchers have explored the relationship between ICT competence and effective service delivery of librarians. For instance, Oyovwe-Tinuoye et al., (2021) used a descriptive survey of 233 librarians in South-South Nigeria and found that ICT skills enhancement of library service delivery, management and job performance of the librarians. Ajani et al. (2022), in a survey study, discovered that Nigerian academic librarians exhibit a level of awareness regarding artificial intelligence and emerging technology, although readiness levels to embrace and integrate this technology varied among libraries. The study of Dekka (2022), stated that the various level of training of information professionals, staff and resource availability have had an impact on knowledge sharing behaviour among them in South Asia. The studies highlight the significance of ICT competence of librarians in their professional roles, although they differed in perspective by focusing on technology readiness and knowledge management/job performance, but none of these has assessed ICT competence as being a determinant to task shifting for librarians.

A review of empirical studies on ICT competence reveals that ICT competence increases librarians' efficiencies, digital literacies, and library service quality (Ajani et al, 2022; Oyovwe-Tinuoye et al, 2021) though many of the existing studies focused on their impact on job performance and library technology acceptance rather than on ICT competence influencing their capacity to take up additional responsibilities. Much has not been done on ICT as a determinate to task shifting among Librarians, most of which have been on University libraries, which gives a context difference for librarians working in Cross River State. Therefore, empirical evidence in the area to know to what extent ICT skills can determine task shifting among Librarians in Cross River State will make an essential contribution.

The study is thus justified as relevant prior literature has investigated professional competence, skills, ICT competence, and service delivery among the information professions, although the task shifting dimension of these attributes is poorly articulated on to the relationship with these variables amongst librarians in Cross River State, Nigeria. Determining the factors of task shifting for librarians could assist institutions and the profession make crucial decisions concerning efficient organization of services, the professional efficiency of service, the users' experience satisfaction of service, the impact of institutional productivity, the use of technology to boost education as well as accelerate digital development. Thus, this research will be highly useful for school heads, library manager, relevant stakeholders in education sector, policy makers, library professional associations, and others to provide an insight for better ICT-based task-shifting policies or programs to make library services relevant. This study will add to knowledge and policy literature on determinants of task shifting for Librarians in Cross River State.

Purpose of the Study

This study purpose examined the determinants of task shifting among librarians in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. assess the influence of librarians' professional competence on task shifting among librarians in Cross River State, Nigeria.
2. examine the influence of information and communication technology (ICT) skills on task shifting among librarians in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions are formulated to guide the study:

1. What is the influence of librarians' professional competence on task shifting among librarians in Cross River State, Nigeria?
2. How do information and communication technology (ICT) skills influence task shifting among librarians in Cross River State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses are formulated for the study:

1. Librarians' professional competence has no significant influence on task shifting among librarians in Cross River State, Nigeria.
2. Information and communication technology (ICT) skills have no significant influence on task shifting among librarians in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Methodology

The study was carried out using a survey research design of descriptive research approach. This research design was considered appropriate for the study because it gave the researcher an opportunity to study a population in a natural setting, making it possible to derive data that were representative of a sample thereby enabling an investigation into the predictors of task shifting among librarians in Cross River State, Nigeria. In other words, it enabled us to study the effects of the professional competence and the information and communication technology (ICT) competencies of librarians on task shifting among them. The population of the study is all the 736 librarians in public and private libraries located in Cross River State of Nigeria. Using the Taro Yamane sample-size formula, for $N=736$ at 0.05 Level of Precision, 259 respondents were obtained as the required sample size using the formula: $N/(1+Ne)$. Respondents were chosen using a stratified random sampling technique where the population was stratified based on the types of libraries in Cross River State and some identified types of librarians, then respondents were randomly selected from each stratum to obtain a representative sample for the sub-sample involved in providing library and information service delivery. The research instrument for the study was a structured questionnaire titled "Determinants of Task Shifting among Librarians Questionnaire (DTSLQ)". The questionnaire is designed to solicit information about their perceived professional competence (section A), their information and communication technology (ICT) skills (section B) and their perceived task shifting practices in the library (section D).

The items in the questionnaire were developed using a modified four-point Likert-type scale format: Strongly Agree (SA =4), Agree (A=3), Disagree (D=2), Strongly Disagree (SD =1).

The questionnaire went through a rigorous validation exercise. Content and face validation was carried out by a panel of five experts drawn from Library and Information Science, Educational Management, Information and Communication Technology, as well as Measurement and Evaluation. An attempt was made to establish the reliability of the instrument using a trial test among some librarians (who were part of the sample from the two universities who met their participation criteria) not part of the main sample. The data from the pilot study were analysed using the Cronbach's Alpha technique to determine the

reliability coefficient, which stood at 0.83 for librarians' professional competence items, 0.85 for information and communication technology (ICT) items and 0.87 for task shifting items. These coefficients assured internal consistency of the instrument. The data collected were coded and analysed using simple linear regression to test the hypotheses at an alpha (α) of 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research hypothesis one: Librarian professional competence has no significant influence on task shifting among librarians in Cross River State.

Table 1: Simple linear regression analysis of the influence of librarians' professional competence on task shifting among librarians

Source of variation	SS	Df	MS	F-ratio	Sig.
Regression	3689.535	1	3689.535	343.943*	.000
Residual	2756.464	257	10.726		
Total	6445.999	258			
Model	B	Std error	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant	5.974	.531		11.253	.000
librarians' professional competence	.741	.040	.757	18.546	.000

*Significant at .05 level, $R=.757$, $R^2=.572$, Adjusted $R^2=.571$

To test this hypothesis, a simple linear regression analysis was carried out with librarians' professional competence as the independent variable and task shifting among librarians as the dependent variable. The results, as presented in Table 1, revealed a correlation coefficient of ($R = .757$), indicating a strong positive relationship between librarians' professional competence and task shifting among librarians. This suggests that as librarians' professional competence increases, the effectiveness of task shifting among librarians in Cross River State also improves. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .572$) and adjusted R^2 (.571) indicate that approximately 57.1% of the variance in task shifting among librarians can be explained by librarians' professional competence. Further examination of the ANOVA results revealed that ($F = 343.943^*$, $p = .000$), which is significant at the 0.05 level. Since the p-value (.000) is less than .05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This shows that librarians' professional competence has a significant influence on task shifting among librarians in Cross River State. The identified equation explaining this relationship indicates that task shifting among librarians is equal to $5.974 + 0.741$ (librarians' professional competence).

Research hypothesis two: Information and communication technology (ICT) skills have no significant influence on task shifting among librarians in Cross River State.

Table 2: Simple regression analysis of the influence of information and communication technology skills on task shifting among librarians

Source of variation	SS	Df	MS	F-ratio	Sig.
Regression	1947.248	1	1947.248	111.240*	.000
Residual	4498.750	257	17.505		
Total	6445.998	258			
Model	B	Std error	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant	11.183	.636		17.578	.000
ICT skills	.491	.047	.550	10.547	.000

*Significant at .05 level, $R = .550$, $R^2 = .302$, Adjusted $R^2 = .299$

To test this hypothesis, a simple linear regression analysis was carried out with information and communication technology skills as the independent variable and task shifting among librarians as the dependent variable. The results, as presented in Table 2, revealed a correlation coefficient of ($R = .550$), indicating a moderate positive relationship between information and communication technology skills and task shifting among librarians. This suggests that as librarians' information and communication technology skills increase, the effectiveness of task shifting among librarians in Cross River State also improves. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .302$) and adjusted R^2 (.299) indicate that approximately 29.9% of the variance in task shifting among librarians can be explained by information and communication technology skills. Further examination of the ANOVA results revealed that ($F = 111.240^*$, $p = .000$), which is significant at the 0.05 level. Since the p-value (.000) is less than .05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This shows that information and communication technology skills have a significant influence on task shifting among librarians in Cross River State. The identified equation explaining this relationship indicates that task shifting among librarians is equal to $11.183 + 0.491$ (information and communication technology skills).

Discussion of findings

Librarians' professional competence and task shifting among librarians

The findings revealed that librarians' professional competence had a significant positive influence on task shifting among librarians in Cross River State. This implies that librarians who possess adequate professional knowledge, technical expertise, communication ability, problem-solving capacity and service-delivery skills are better prepared to undertake responsibilities beyond their conventional duties. Professional competence enables librarians to adjust to redistributed functions, perform newly assigned tasks effectively and maintain the quality of library services when roles are transferred or expanded.

This finding agrees with Krier (2021), who reported a significant relationship between the professional competencies of academic librarians and their job performance, indicating that competent librarians are more capable of handling diverse workplace responsibilities. Similarly, Schellinger et al., (2021) identified several knowledge areas, behaviours and practical competencies required for librarians to perform expanding outreach responsibilities, demonstrating that successful role expansion depends on relevant professional capabilities. Aslam (2022) also found that librarians' digital skills significantly influenced their acceptance and use of technology, suggesting that professional competencies facilitate adjustment to emerging technology-related tasks in libraries. Furthermore, Gross et al. (2024) established that continuous reskilling, adaptability and collaborative learning enable library personnel to assume emerging responsibilities associated with artificial intelligence and digital transformation. These supporting findings confirm that librarians' ability to accept and effectively perform shifted tasks largely depends on the professional competencies they possess.

Information and communication technology skills and task shifting among librarians

The findings revealed that information and communication technology skills had a significant positive influence on task shifting among librarians in Cross River State. This means that librarians who possess adequate skills in computer operations, digital information retrieval, library automation, electronic resource management and online communication are more capable of undertaking new or redistributed responsibilities. ICT skills enable librarians to move beyond traditional activities such as shelving and manual cataloguing to emerging functions involving digital reference services, database management, institutional repositories, virtual user support and automated library operations.

The finding is consistent with Hamad et al., (2021), who found that librarians' digital literacy and knowledge-based competencies were essential for the effective performance of technology-related responsibilities in Nigerian university libraries. Similarly, Ahmed & Ibrahim (2023) identified computing, library automation and digitisation skills as essential competencies required by library and information science professionals to perform evolving duties in the digital environment. Kaffashan Kakhki et al., (2022) also established that information technology skills are increasingly required in information institutions because many contemporary library tasks depend on digital technologies. Furthermore, Dube et al. (2024) reported that continuous development of librarians' technological competencies strengthened digital transformation and enabled academic libraries to provide improved technology-driven services. These studies support the present finding that librarians with stronger ICT skills are better equipped to assume shifted, expanded and technology-based responsibilities within library organisations.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that the technical competencies, professional knowledge, and ICT skills are important factors that contribute to task shifting among librarians in Cross River State. Library professionals who are well equipped with adequate professional knowledge, technical competence and digital skills can take up additional new responsibilities. This enhances professional and digital competencies enabling librarians work more efficiently and in conformity with up-to-date library operations. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made to optimize task shifting among the library profession.

Recommendations

1. University library management and the Cross River State Library Board should regularly organise professional development programmes to strengthen librarians' competence and enable them to perform shifted responsibilities effectively.
2. University management, the Cross River State Library Board and relevant government agencies should provide modern ICT facilities and continuous digital skills training to improve librarians' capacity to undertake technology-driven tasks.

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