# Information Repackaging and Its Application in Academic Libraries

[1]JOYCE CHINYERE OYADONGHAN, [2]FELIX MMANUOMA EKE (PhD), [3]BIOKUROMOYE FYNEMAN

[1,3] NIGER DELTA UNIVERSITY, LIBRARY WILBERFORCE ISLAND BAYELSA STATE, NIGERIA
[2]FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY LIBRARY, OWERRI

*Abstract:* **This paper briefly reviews information repackaging, identifies the characteristics of information and discusses the various facets of the information characteristics as it relates to information repackaging. It concludes that the best service gives more than the customer expect.**

*Keywords:* **information repackaging, Library service.**

## 1.  INTRODUCTION

The library is that part of the institution of higher learning whose major aim is impartation of knowledge to train people's mind and reform their character, which eventually leads to self-development. However, library can achieve it's purpose and structure only when its product and services (materials) are fully utilized by the clients. These materials can be maximally utilized through information repackaging.

Information coming into the university should be filtered according to needs. Information is relative in the sense that what is information to one person may be data for another. This explains the relative nature of information.

In the University, information needed by a student may be different from the one needed by a lecturer and administrative heads respectively. The librarian therefore has the duty to understudy the different levels and varying needs of information users in his community and package information suitable for each of these levels to show professionalism and to save the user's time.

## 2.  THE INFORMATION REPACKAGING CONCEPT

Information repackaging means to repackage again or anew, in a more attractive format, to be effective in meeting the information needs of library user. Repackaging the information in a way that can be handy, readily understood; packaging information and arranging all these materials in a way that is appropriate to the user, thus combining two essential concepts inherent in the term repackaging, that is, reprocessing, and repackaging. The two strands of repackaging represented by Saracevic and Woods (1981) and Bunch (1986) respectively, that is the scientific/technical strand and the community information work strand, are still apparent in the literature and practice but merge usefully in development information provision for instance, health informatics, both in rural development and highly industrialized setting.

Library service tends to focus on means rather than ends (Buckland, 1992). With numerous sources of information, many library users have turned their backs on the library. For information professionals the focus should shift from provision of information to the satisfaction of information consumers. There is the need for a paradigm shift from holding to access. The clienteles' needs must guide the library strategy. In the recent years; there has been an increasing volume of writings focusing one way or another on the future of libraries and librarians in the face of electronic networking developments. Boadi (1984) suggested that information repackaging is not a new concept in library and information work manifesting itself as it does in such widely practiced activities as abstracting and indexing services, selective dissemination of

information translation services, bibliographies, special bulletins and other forms of current awareness services all of which are attempts to provide the available information in an acceptable and useable format. Asamani J.O. et al (eds.) (1987) confirms this, stating that librarians have long been involved in the repackaging of information for their clients and have accepted the idea that the real measurement of effectiveness of a library is not necessarily in the number of the books acquired but the extent to which these materials have been put to use.

The repackaging process depends on the availability of materials, the information content, to repackaging. This content can be from published materials; data from research institutions and government statistical services from electronic information acquired from online services and networks and from the peoples own body of indigenous knowledge (Sturges and Chirmseu, 1996). That is why academic librarians have been urged to go into consortium or resource sharing which is a co-operative research effort among companies, universities, industries and or government typically aimed at helping the participants maintain their leadership position or gain an edge over their international competitors in a particular industry (Lee and Lee, 1992). The essence of repackaging is to save the time of the user and to ensure satisfaction. In the evolving information explosion no single library can afford to capture and contain all valuable information available in the world-wide resource pool. Neither can a single library have the budget to do so. With the rising cost of and complexities of information resource, decreasing budgets and yet the imperative to provide the user community with optional access to needed information that repackaging became indispensable. For repackaging to be effective for enhanced service delivery, library automation should be encouraged. Librarians should lead their universities to adapting the change process of the electronic age.

To make this period of dwindling library patronage a thing of the past, we need to be clear what universities are for. In the words of Van Houwelling (1994), Universities assemble people together for the creation of new knowledge and the transmission of previously developed knowledge. Knowledge can only be created or transmitted through the use of information created, received and produced which is the role the library plays in the university. The library is to acquire, process and disseminate information. Information is a cornerstone for long-term organizational survival. It serves as a base for competent development (Hamrefors, 1996); reduces uncertainty (Ginzberg, 1980), and risks in decision-making (Gilad, 1996). Information is vital to planning and strategic decision-making. However, the trio  in their separate study observed that many of the difficulties associated with decision-making and problem-solving are information-based, and can be effectively tackled though a comprehensive approach to information management. This is the role repackaging   of information should play. Information generated internally or externally should be repackaged according to need.

An understanding of the nature of information is a prerequisite to the effective and efficient packaging of information to suit organizational needs. Information possesses characteristics and the information manager should be conversant with them in order to be properly guided in the collection, processing and dissemination of information for organizational decision-making.

Authors such as Blank and Ryan (1988), Burch et al in Ajewole (2001) and Martin (1988) have identified certain characteristics of information. However, the list provided by Senn in Opara (2003) will be used as theoretical framework for this discourse. Information is characterized by accuracy, form, frequency, breath, time –horizon relevance, completeness, timeliness and relativity.

## 3.    THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical frame work for this discourse is premised on the ten characteristics of information and information life-cycle (regeneration):

**Accuracy:** This refers to whether information is valid or within the acceptable variance level (Blank and Ryan, 1988). Information may be accurate or inaccurate, true or false. Information is accurate if it represents the situation level or state of an event as it really is, inaccurate errors that could have occurred during collection, processing or report generation. In Menkus (1987) view, it may be that the data have been drawn from the wrong sources, or the rules for their processing have been developed improperly. This is the essence of packaging and repackaging in the processes of packaging the information manager will be able to find the loopholes in the information generated and try to fill the gap by comparing from different sources. Compilation of bibliographies can help correct the error by linking the information seeker with other sources of information on that particular subject.

**Form:** According to senn in Opara (2003), the form of information refers to the actual structure of information. It includes the dimension of level of aggregate, and medium of presentation. A commonly used distinction is that between quantitative and qualitative forms. Quantitative information simply indicates how many or how much of a particular item or events have been measured. For example, sales may be described quantitatively through such measures as number of units or number or net naira sold. The mode of presentation of quantitative information is important. Chan (2001) has suggested the use of graphs and tables as two modes of presentation formats for displaying numerical information as was corroborated by Opara (2003).

**Frequency:** This refers to how often information is needed, collected or produced. It may be produced very frequently or seldom, depending on the need management has for using it. In order words, the dynamics of an organization dictates the pace at which information is produced, collected and utilized. University system is a dynamic organization therefore; the information manager is required to scout for information both internally and externally and repackage it to meet  present and future needs.

**Breath:** This refers to the scope of events, place, and things that are represented by information. It has to do with whether information is broad or narrow. Management may have need for broad information. In this case, the mode of presentation should be considered. The information manager should repackage the information to suit the circumstance.

**Origin:** By origin of information we mean the source from which information is created, received and collected.
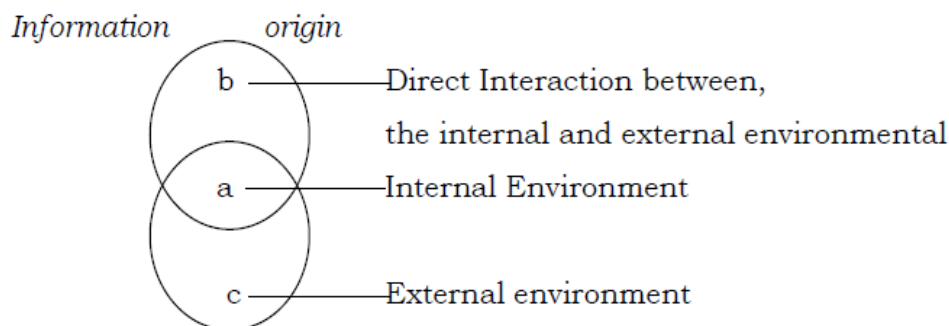


**Figure 1:**

Information can originate internally from within the organization or externally as shown in fig. 1 above. Information can originate from formal and informal (grapevine) sources within the organization. The common problem associated with informal sources of information is questionable credibility. Menkus (1987) noted that wrong sources are possible causes of error in formation generation.

The formal sources are not free from error and should be checked to ascertain the accuracy and reliability of the information emanating from them. Hence, the information manager should filter the information created or received from internal or external sources either by formal or informal means-through repackaging.

**Time Horizon:** This relates to whether information is on past event (historical information), present situations; toward future activities and events. Information provides a perspective on what happened at an earlier time. It may be examined to see if progress has been made or if situations have improved since then. Universities frequently examine historical information to see if teaching and learning have improved or remained the same compared with those of the past. Historical information is thus valuable in the evaluation of the university's performance. However, it is critically important to evaluate the trustworthiness and accuracy of historical information. To avoid misleading results information managers should repackage information to suit the environment.

**Regenerates:** Information is a unique resource in that it is not depleted with use. The more information is used or shared, the more it is created. This makes information regenerative which is associated with information life-cycle-the evolutionary process of information. There appears to be no consensus on the number of stages or processes involved in the cycle. For example while Marchland and Horton (1986) identified requirement definition, collection, transmission, processing, storage, dissemination and use as the states involved, another school of thought enumerated the following stages, origination, capturing, storage and presentation. For the purpose of this study Marchland and Horton's ideas will be borrowed. We can now conceptualize information life-cycle as shown in the diagram below. *6*

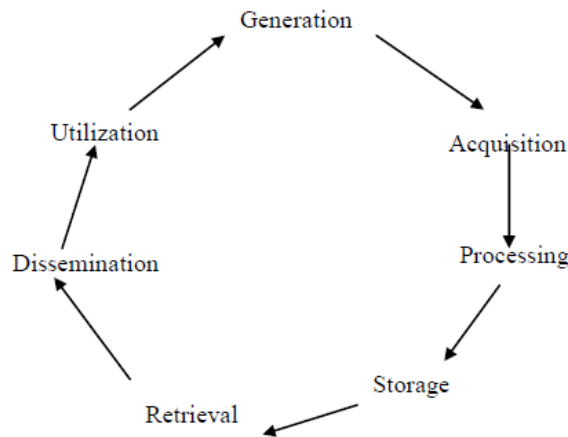**Information life-cycle:**



**Figure 2:Marchland and Horton's(1986)**

This diagram shows the cyclical nature of information. That information can be acquired, processed, stored and later retrieved and disseminated and utilized. Processes of information include packaging and repackaging for effective use.

**Relevance:** Information acquired should be relevant in all dimensions. Saracevic and Kantor (1997) have identified three facets of relevance thus: Topical, Cognitive and Situation Relevance. This paper picked on situation relevance which is the relationship between the task or problem at hand and the objects retrieved or in the files. It is related to usefulness of information in decision-making with which the information manager can monitor the situation and to package information that can proffer solutions.

*7*

**Completeness:** if a report leaves an individual with a number of unanswered questions, it is an incomplete set of information. Complete information should be able to tell the user every thing he needs to know about a particular situation. In order to achieve information completeness, information managers should be encouraged to carefully select and package information from the vast pool available.

**Relativity:** Information needs is relative in the sense that what is information to one person may be data to another. The relative nature of information can be better illustrated at the three major levels of information management in an organization.
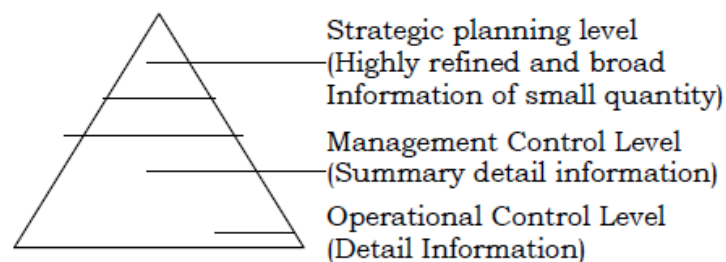
**Management Hierarchy:**



**Figure 3: Information relativity in organization**

In the performance of the different functions at the different levels of management hierarchy (see fig 3), there is need for information relevant to each functional level. For example at the strategic planning level, the information required is for strategic planning and goal setting. This information seldom comes directly from an information system. Such information, according to Nwankwo (1985), is often the product of perceptions, personality, aspirations, background and environment (social political, economic) of the top-level decision-maker and the organization concerned. The information that comes to this level is selected, filtered and packaged. Top management decisions are thus made on the basis of highly refined, broad information of small quantity. This is because the decisions at this level are more fundamental and affect the organization broadly.

At the management control level where the desired performance is evaluated against the actual performance so as to take actions to eliminate unwanted deviation, the information need is usually such that would facilitate comparison between objective and performance. It may be necessary for example, at this level for the information manager to repackage to meet with the needs of each level. At the operation control level the information required is factual and detail reporting of periodic developments, operation or activities, such as number of books borrowed, number retuned per day. Such information has the characteristic of being cyclic because it is information that will be used and reused.

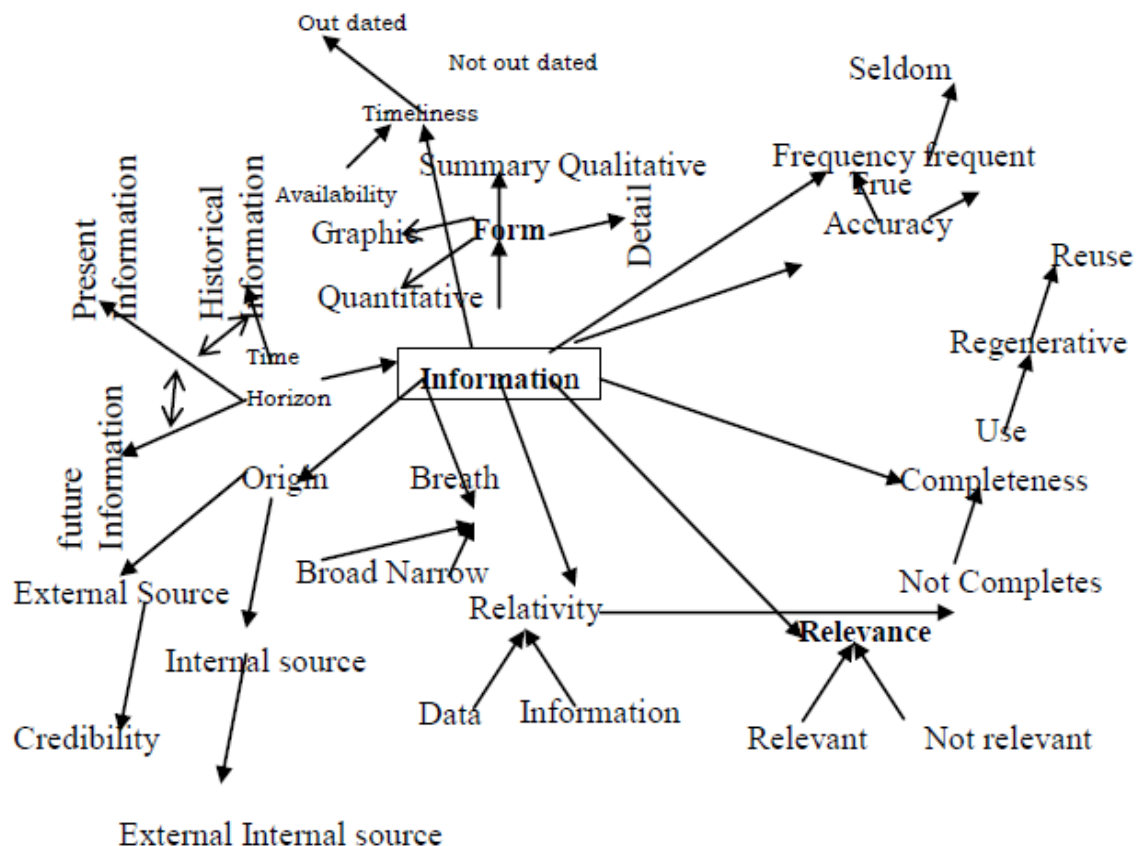**Nature Complex of Information:**



**Figure 4: Complex nature of information life-cycle**

Sumarily,Fig 4 above shows the characteristics of information and their various facets as discussed in this paper. The form of information presents the highest number (seven) of facets. This is followed by Timeliness, time horizon depicts the fluidity of those facets. Present and future information, can become historical information if well packaged. Furthermore, present information can be processed to be oriented towards the future. The three facets of information origin are depicted by a, b, and c, fig  1, The facets of information characteristics as delineated in fig. 4 may not be exhaustive. Nevertheless, they are sufficient to give us insight into the complex nature of information.

That the form or mode of information presentation presents the highest number of facts shows how versatile information is. The choice of a format should be guided by the type of information, the person using the information and the task for which the information is needed.

## 4.    CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The best service gives more than the customer's expects, therefore, librarians have to justify their existence and make a case for why their functions should not be outsourced. Information repackaging is a way of improving library services, particularly in this era of electronic information. Librations must take information repackaging very seriously with the intent of implementing it in routine library services to users.

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