

Repositioning of the National and Public Library in the 21st Century towards National Development

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Abstract

This paper addresses the state, role of the national and public libraries and their statutory functions in the 21st century. It also highlights these functions and suggested ways to ensure that these libraries live up to expectations of her users. As we know, Library is also a place where informational materials are “acquired, organized and interpreted to meet broad and varying needs of the people such as information, knowledge, recreation, culture. So many countries have accepted education as an essential instrument for human development, and various means (such as schools and workshop/seminars) have been put in place to extend the benefits of education to all categories of people”. One of the role of library is to ensure that information about its community is provided, while its objective is to serve as a center where needed knowledge are acquired to enlighten people from ignorance about their environment. National library as a type of library coordinate the network of other kinds of libraries throughout the country, in addition to collecting materials and making them available for their community. Thus, both National and Public library in their role provided a platform where people irrespective of their diversity can unite as a result of the change-oriented information thereby helping to foster national integration for development. The paper suggests among others that proper attention must be given to these national assets and there is a need for Attitudinal change by leaders in favour of library development in other for them to be able to meet the demands of the 21st century users towards national development.

Keywords: *Public Library, Information Management, Records Management*

Introduction

A library is a place which involves in the acquisition, processing, organizing, preservation and dissemination of recorded information in the various formats most convenient to its target users (Olanlokun and Salisu, 1993). Library is also a place where informational materials are acquired, organized and interpreted to meet broad and varying needs of the people such as information, knowledge, recreation, culture etc. So many countries have accepted education as an essential instrument for human development, and various means (such as schools and workshop/seminars) have been put in place to extend the benefits of education to all categories of people. Sobalaje & Ogunmodede (2015), “view that the general role of library is to provide information about its community while its objective is to serve as a centre for information where people acquire the needed knowledge to reduce their ignorance about their environment”. National library has one of the types of library of library coordinate the network of other kinds of libraries throughout that country, in addition to collecting materials and making them available for their community. One of the roles of national libraries includes the building the national information infrastructure, coordinating the infrastructure for different types of publicly accessible libraries, such as public libraries and academic libraries and striving towards joint aspect of this infrastructure (Savenije, 2010). Thus, the national and public library, “provide literacy programmes, reader development promotions and act as an information point for the availability of local public services. Typically they collect and preserve a wide range of materials relating to the history and development of the locality. Special services have been developed to serve the needs of particular groups such as children (including story telling programmes), housebound people, and the visually impaired. Public libraries in particular strive to serve all sections of their communities without discrimination” (IFLA 2003). Thus, both National and Public library in their role provided a stage where library users regardless of their background or identity can unite as a result of the change-oriented information thereby helping to fostering national integration for development.

The National Library

The National Library is also known as the Apex library. This library serves as the primus inters Paris in functions and services to other libraries. National libraries, in this sense, are the stewards of the nation's intellectual history, organizing, accessing, and preserving the national imprint in all media" (IFLA, 1997). Typically, they are funded by taxes levied by the government. However, like some public services around do supplement these monies with funds obtained from a variety of sources, such as sponsorship, charging for specific services, selling publications, and so on.

The concept of a national library has grown beyond its traditional functions of obtaining, storing, and maintaining the nation's intellectual legacy to wider dimensions of searching for and disseminating information outside geographical boundaries. National libraries, on the other hand, are typically mandated to collect and preserve the country's national publishing output, ensuring that it is accessible not just to present users, but also to future generations. They often feature elaborate preservation and conservation programs. This component of their job is made more difficult by electronic publishing. They keep working on ways for collecting, archiving, and making electronic publications available. National libraries are frequently tasked with making literature published in other nations, particularly scientific and technical publications, available to the public (IFLA 2001). International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA, 1997), describes national library responsibilities as varied from country to country. This include:

The collection via legal deposit of the national imprint (both print and electronic) and its cataloguing and preservation; publishers have to make copies of their publications available to them free of charge.

The provision of central services (e.g. reference, bibliography, preservation, lending) to users both directly and through other library and information centers;

The preservation and promotion of the national cultural heritage;

The acquisition of at least a representative collection of foreign publications;

The promotion of national cultural policy; and leadership in national literacy campaigns.

Other functions are:

Responsible for issuance of ISBN and ISSN

Provides intellectual support to the Nation

They ought to be the chief cataloger of materials and assigning catalogue number, which publishers use for catalogue in publication

They stimulates the nation's library development

Public Library

It is a non-profit library that is supported and maintained by the government or the general population. The public library meets the requirements of the general public by making all types of knowledge and information available to all members of the community, regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion, language, disability, economic situation, or job status. Other services that it may provide to their communities include children's storytelling, after-school programs, language instruction, seminars, workshops, and other community services.

Public libraries have been around since the beginning of time. Greeks, Romans, North Africans, and Middle Easterners all knew and used them. They didn't appear in Europe and America until the 18th and 19th centuries (UKEssays, 2018). Many private donors, such as Andrew Carnegie and Benjamin Franklin, contributed to the establishment of public libraries in the United States and Europe. Both Benjamin Franklin and Andrew Carnegie, like other philanthropists, knew that books and the knowledge they convey should be used to serve the public and anybody who wished to learn. Similarly, public libraries' role and mission have moved from recreational reading to active educational, economic, and social agents.

Functions of Public Libraries

The role of public library in the community and society at large cannot be overemphasized in accessing information and a place for knowledge creation. Public libraries play the roles of communal information dissemination, educational and promotion of cultural and social heritages. According to Wijentunge and Alahakoon (2005), the functions of the public

libraries has brought the public library from the periphery to the centre of information power and acquiring of knowledge, This is to support the public education through the provision of books and other materials for people to read and use. The materials are education and may lead to self-development to develop basic literacy skills. The educative role of public libraries has expanded to include supporting both formal and informal education.

Public library also helps to develop in both young and adult people in the society the habit of reading both for pleasure and for the purpose of gathering information for themselves. As the concept and contents of education continued to systematically and rapidly change over the years, and the advancement in the standard of living of people, the functions of public libraries have also rapidly changed and expanded to include the following:

a. **Provision of Information Services** One of the information services rendered is in the area of organizing outreach programmes within the host community to ensure adequate publicity as to avail the people of the information resources and services available to them through the library. Various media are also explored to enhance publicity to the grassroots.

b. **To support non-formal education system.** The non-formal education is an unsystematic form of learning and educational activity that occurs outside of traditional organization or institution. Adeyemi (2010) describes the public library as welfare centre, which provides useful services to the community by fostering education, promoting culture, and recreation and dissemination of information to all sections of the society. He seen the public libraries as the most appropriate centers through which non-formal education can be achieved. Systematically organize its materials for easy retrieval, access and utilization.

c. **To enhance the economic development of the nation.** Public libraries do not only promote education but also contribute immensely to the economics of the nation. As a result of the economic development and globalization, public libraries started by supporting business and economic development through discharging effective economic service through the provision of entrepreneurship literature that

develop individuals on the area of business, to be able to provide effective business service, resource and literacy programs to their business communities (Liu, 2004).

Library in the 21st Century

The 21st century is noted as the “millennium of information. It is seen as the era of explosion of information output and information sources”. It is referred to as the beginning of the knowledge age. In the 21st century library, “the emergence of ICT has redefined the library’s role. Print materials are no longer sufficient to store information. CDROM databases, electronic document delivery, automated cataloguing, circulation systems and online information retrieval” (OPAC) have become the norm and most of these storage facilities are already becoming obsolete.

The libraries in the 21st century are gradually changing to fit into their user’s information seeking patterns (Emezie & Nwaohiri 2013). The situation has brought about the establishment of digital libraries to compliment traditional ones. This is evidenced in the attempt to digitize library resources to cater for the information needs of new generation users that is, the 21st century library users who exhibit much dexterity in using new sources and new technologies. Moghaddam (2009) view that “as information technologies, information systems and information networks have been developing”. Ahmed, Umar & Dewa (2020), sited that this century has “witnessed a dramatic change in user’s information seeking pattern” and library services delivery in the following ways:

Information packaging: “Packaging of information in various formats has become the norm in the digital era. This has created new opportunities for the library to provide value added services in the academic environment”. Library users in this century are comfortable at using electronic sources of information which allows multiple use by different users of a material at the same time.

Reference service: “Reference service is the assistance given to a user in search of information in a library. In the Nigerian situation, many users shy away from the catalogue because they do not know how to use it. Some are oblivious of the importance of a

catalogue in the retrieval process”. The failure to find the needed material could cause frustration and apathy to continually use the library.

Smart Devices and phones: Smart “devices like cell phones have improved communication and enhanced the way information is being created, delivered and accessed. The 21st century librarian can provide effective library services through mobile telephones like the GSM (Global Systems for Mobile Communication)”.

Social Media Platforms Services: Social media creates virtual reality for libraries, a web manifestation of the library as a place, taking library service online through social media networks such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, Messenger, Twitter, LinkedIn, Podcast, and Flickr etc, it provides creative ways in which libraries can offer effective information services to meet user’s expectations. The social media tools require are computer, internet connectivity and a trained professional to manage the system via interactive, collaborative and dynamic technological space.

Current Awareness Service (CAS): This is a service for alerting users and the people in the community on new publications acquired by the library. It’s a service directed towards all users of the library services, these may include accession list (a list of recent acquisitions), bibliographies, literature surveys, table of contents of periodicals received in the library, current awareness bulletin, etc. Current awareness service is a source of information dissemination. For example current pages selected in Newspapers, Magazines, Periodicals, or Textbooks are produced via photocopy and sent to the users.

National and Public Library in the 21st Century towards National Development

According to Gboyega (2003), described development “as an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications” and also implies improvement on the material well-being of all citizens. Nwanegbo and Odigbo (2013) assert that “development could be seen as the process of empowering people to maximize their potentials and the ability to exploit nature to meet daily human needs. It can also be seen as a process by which quality of human lives and capacity to surmount daily needs are considerably improved”..

However, both nation and public library in Nigeria have been repositioning in this 21st century towards national development, improve quality and better human living standard because the library can handle nearly all the activities that can enhance the development of the people in community including: preservation of cultural heritage, knowledge and histories of the past and tourist centre (artifacts, world book of records etc), collaboration and scholarship thereby sustaining readership, research, and publishing output, promotion, creation and publishing of digital content through electronic databases, digital commons, repositories, which can enhances education, science, public health and environmental issues in any nation. Thus, libraries are the major determinants in repositioning towards national developmental activities since it engages training citizens in various capacities to enable them become critical thinkers, problem solvers, lifelong learner and independent information seekers, poverty eradication and equality, “family planning, HIV/AIDs, personal hygiene etc, initiative skills in the area of agriculture, entrepreneurship skills, unemployed youths empowerment programmes that will avail them the opportunity of developing the creative minds for the conversion of jobs creations” (Ahmed, Umar &Dewa 2020).

National library services have been repositioning in the 21st Century through the integration of digital services into their functions. Collections are stored in digital formats, as opposed to prints, microforms or other media, and are accessible through computers. Their contents may be stored locally or accessed remotely. Most national libraries have keyed in to this initiative. These collections enhance wider outreach to users nationally. In the 21st century digital efforts and initiative need to be effectively coordinated at national and global levels for visibility and impact. More so, high bandwidth internet connectivity should be increased for quicker access.

Challenges Facing Repositioning of the National and Public Library in the 21st Century towards National Development

National and public libraries in Nigeria face some problems in their efforts to promote national development. In agreement with Ebiwolate (2010), a slew of issues plague

Nigerian national and public libraries in their efforts to deliver effective services. The following are some of the difficulties:

Inadequate Funding: Finance is a major issue influencing the activities of Nigeria's national and public libraries. The government does not fully fund these libraries, which has resulted in numerous issues. It obstructs the delivery of effective and efficient services. According to Ebiwolate (2010), this issue might be compared to a lack of political will. He noticed that a lack of political will leads to government neglect in adequately funding public libraries, budget non-approval, and budget non-release or non-implementation (where approved). Inadequate funding has resulted in poor service conditions, a shortage of professional employees, poor human resource management, old structures and facilities, antiquated resources, difficulty in extending services to remote areas, and other issues.

Insufficient ICT Infrastructure and Staff technical knowhow: ICT skills are lacking in the majority of national and public library workers. Inadequate levels of ICT literacy have constantly been identified as one of the primary issues confronting libraries in Nigeria as they transition into the twenty-first century. Poor ICT infrastructure development and finance, as well as a lack of ICT skills among workers, have been identified as issues (Ebiwolate, 2010).

Competency: Some librarians in Nigeria are unprepared to take on the hard duty of delivering information services in the twenty-first century. They despise technology and consider the use of computers in libraries to be an abnormality. Because of this, people are hesitant to adopt new technology. Many librarians, according to Tanawade (2011), lack the confidence to face the challenges of this millennium as regard information and technology.

Power supply: Nigeria's power situation is a disaster. A continual power loss has hampered the effective delivery of information services. To operate, most libraries depends on alternate sources of electricity, such as power generators. However, these machines have maintenance issues, as well as expensive diesel and gasoline costs.

Poor Conditions of Service and Prospects: In some public libraries, there is a shortage of employees due to poor service conditions. Young librarians prefer working for the federal government for the following reasons: higher compensation, more opportunities for

advancement, and paid study leave, which is not available in public libraries. Poor service circumstances contribute to poor personnel employment, which can obstruct service delivery.

The National and Public Library: The way forward

For the national and public library to actualize their mandates, they need to be adequately supported by the establishing authorities as well as by members of the community for whom it is established. Some concrete strategies to achieve these are:

1. **Adequate funding:** Adequate budgetary allocation is needed to cover stock building and other overhead costs. The library fees that public pay, should be used specifically for running the library. This was supported by Ayeni and Oyebonji (1997) who noted that improved budgetary allocation to Nigerian public libraries will definitely reflect positive changes in their service and resources.
2. **Attitudinal change by leaders in favour of library development:** There should be attitudinal change by all citizens of Nigeria in favour of all types of libraries especially national and public libraries also, Integration of ICT to the libraries. Libraries need to be computerized and internet facilities provided.
3. **Cooperation between various stakeholders:** The various stakeholders in the educational sectors should cooperate to see that public libraries are built in towns and cities and also made functional.
4. **Specialized Agencies:** The help of specialized agencies like the Non-governmental organizations (NGOS) should be sought so that public libraries are built in towns and cities and equipped with ultra-modern facilities with recreational activities that can attract the Nigerian child to be a habitual user of the library.
5. **Nigeria Libraries Association:** The Library Association which is an arm of the Nigerian Library Association should be empowered as a regulatory body for libraries in Nigeria with the responsibility of ensuring that every town and city has a functional library that meets IFLA standards.
6. **Recruitment of qualified librarians:** Both national and public library should employ qualified librarians that have the competent skills needed for the provision

of efficient library service. Also, librarians are expected to make personal efforts to improve their skills like “computer literacy skills, metadata skills, information literacy skills etc should be acquired”. These skills are desired to efficiently serve users and remain at our best in order to defend their profession.

Another solution is that librarians has to be trained and retrained in the 21st century by ensuring that they are exposed to seminar, conferences and workshop. This is due to the fact that the development of the library service depends on the caliber of staff. As information providers, they are expected to be capable and well-informed.

Conclusion

National and public libraries have a brighter future in their operations and services and the advent of information and communication technologies has changed the face of these libraries. These two libraries, play a key determinant in repositioning libraries in the 21st century towards national development in our society in terms of national, political, economic, educational, social and cultural value towards improvement in the general well-being of citizens. Library services play a significant key role in contributing improvement of equitable quality and better living standard through a number of services provided some are; providing intellectual support to the nation, providing recreational facility for the “public reference and information service (RIS), answering users questions, user education (UE), internet services, web tools services i.e. emails, video conferencing, social media platforms”. These services are key to a survival of human and a better society in areas of community public health and emergencies, quality education, agricultural innovations, environmental issues like climate change, girls child education, drug abuse, and security. All these and more are the key determinants in repositioning of Libraries.

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