

## CHAPTER SEVEN

ACADEMIC LIBRARIES AND THE PROMOTION OF  
HIGHER EDUCATION FOR CHANGE IN NIGERIA**Adio Emmanuel O. CLN**

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**Introduction**

The term 'academic library' has been described by many authors as a repository of knowledge, a place where documents are stored, preserved, processed, organized and disseminated for public use. It is also for recreation, enlightenment and leisure purposes. As agents of change they are responsible for the transmission of knowledge, as well as preservation of civilization. Ibiam (2010) opines that a library is the mind of the society, the racial memory, depository of the cultural past, and the sustainer of intellectual activities that anticipate the future. The above statement implies that academic libraries are the store houses of knowledge of the past, that anticipates the future. It also infers that academic libraries are usually seen as the heart of any "higher institution".

Academic libraries therefore refer to libraries attached to tertiary institutions of learning, that shoulder the responsibilities of knowledge depository which are kept for present and future use, and for the development of mankind i.e. universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, schools of health technology etc. The role of academic libraries cannot be overemphasized in the pursuit of knowledge for excellence. Academic libraries serve as the nerve centre of learning where students and lecturers consult physical books, e-books, audio-visual materials and other information bearing materials needed for their assignments and papers. Adio (2007) argued that for academic libraries to be responsive now, and be relevant in the future, the libraries (without gainsaying) must be dynamic in the provision of their services. He continued by stating that they cannot continue to use old processes. For this reason, it is quite imperative for librarians in Nigeria to re-examine the organization of the library, and the roles they play in view of increased use of information technology, and its effects on the user. Traditional method of charging and discharging, cataloguing and classification, reference services, and acquisition of library's materials is no longer satisfactory to meet the needs of patrons in academic environments, if the libraries are to be up-to-date in dissemination of information.



## Academic Libraries as Agent of Change

The education system of Nigeria has passed through different phases and stages. With these myriad of changes, one wonders if these changes were worthwhile. Although change is expected and inevitable, as all natural phenomena in life are, the education system in Nigeria has experienced many challenges and problems in terms of continuity and inconsistency due to restructuring of the system from time to time. Nwagwu in Oyesiku et al (2009) stressed that Nigeria has experienced growth without development. He opined that looking at the past and contemporary endeavors in education; one sees an apparent lack in synergy and interactive harmonious relationship between educational growth and educational development. Similarly, Moja (2000) noted that for over a decade, the political instability in Nigeria generated a negative effect on the education system.

The political unrest plagued not just the education system, but the library system in particular. As the nerve centre of any tertiary institution, academic libraries are established to support the teaching, learning and research activities of their parent institutions. It therefore becomes imperative that they acquire materials that support the various programmes being offered in those institutions. The specific objectives of academic libraries are;

- To provide comprehensive and balanced information resources from all formats relevant to the academic activities of the parent institutions.
- To organise knowledge acquired for easy storage and retrieval.
- To store and preserve knowledge for use of posterity. Clapp (2004) cited by Adefunke A. and Abudulazeez Y.T. (2010).

Oyeleye and Idogwu (2012) thinking along the same line, stated that the basic role of a library should include; provision of information, educational roles, research functions, recreational/entertainment functions, and promotion and preservation of culture. This is done through selective acquisition, organization, preservation and dissemination of informative materials stocked in the library. He went further to stipulate some of the basic functions of academic libraries, which include,

- Provision of information materials required for the academic programmes of the parent institutions,
- Provision of materials that are needed for learning,
- Provision of resources for recreation and for personal self-development of users,
- Provision of all information sources needed for carrying out effective teaching, learning and research activities,



- Provision of material which will aid teaching, learning and research activities in their institutions,
- Provision of materials that will improve the workforce that is supportive of the academic staff to improve their productivity,
- The functional roles of academic libraries according to include:
- Acquisition of materials for teaching and research.
- Providing attractive and comfortable reading facilities that encourage students to spend some proportion of their free time in study.
- Circulation of materials from the general collection, and to reserve/reference collection.
- Encouraging student to develop lifelong habits to reading good educative materials.

According to, the role of an academic library is as wide as the subject interest covered by the parent institution which it serves. The library maintains a balanced stock in all fields, and especially those in which the institution is particularly interested. The primary role of an academic library is to serve the reading, reference and research needs of the academic community, which is made up of undergraduates, graduate students, faculty members and visiting scholars. They went further to highlight additional roles, which include;

- Providing attractive and comfortable reading facilities that encourage the patrons to spend a good proportion of their free time in studying.
- Providing reprographic services.
- Selecting books and other materials, and organising them for easy retrieval by users.
- making provision for user education.
- attending to requests/enquiries from users.

Change refers to an act or instance of becoming different. Education makes one different in many ways. Education is seen as training of the mind. A successful library manager needs to acquire considerable leadership skills to effect needed changes. It is therefore necessary to acknowledge the need to carefully manage organizational dynamics in order to ensure that undue resistance to change is not allowed. To achieve this, library managers need to clearly identify in clear terms individual patron's needs, and that they are carefully addressed to their satisfaction; create a new vision, and also facilitate the implementation of the new vision. The world today is growing rapidly, that the watchword for the modern world is change.



relationship or departure from the norm, negative reactions are more likely to come up. Library managers need to understand that changes can either be negative or positive, depending on how the changes are handled. It is the duty of library managers to know the need of its users and staff within his/her purview. Ability to proffer solutions to those needs will bring about positive action, which will in turn bring the desired results. It is pertinent to note that in managing change three things must be put into considerations;

- i. clear communication of strategies to achieve objectives and corporate value,
- ii. involvement of heads of unit in implementation of decisions made,
- iii. commitment of senior management, and thorough involvement of management, to goal processing.

### **Tools for Academic Libraries for Promotion of Higher Education**

Before and after independence, Nigeria's higher education institutions witnessed lots of changes. In the past decade, since the introduction of information technology in Nigeria, libraries have had a lot of innovations come into being. Libraries use a lot of technology to meet the need of their patrons in the past. Among which are cataloguing and classification, Machine Readable Catalogue (MARC), arrangement of books were done according to physical size, color and subjects. Numbers were assigned to them for the purpose of easy location and retrieval by their users. Decades ago handling of this information requires a diverse collection of practical tools and processes. According to Burke, J. J. (2004) trends in library technology can be classified into three main groups;

1. Those created specifically for libraries and library work.
2. Those created for the larger society, and adapted for use in libraries and,
3. Those created for the larger society, and brought into libraries without much alteration.

The first group of technology takes into consideration development of Dewey decimal classification system, the card catalogue and machine readable cataloguing. The second group of technology is the creation of library systems that offer online catalogue and managing circulation by vendors to fit library need; and libraries own alterations for internal purpose. The third group of technology is the technology such as telephone, fax machines, photocopiers, bar-code readers, and many other computer applications and internet services used by others that staff in the library make use of. It is noteworthy that academic libraries need to be vast in handling new innovations that can satisfy patrons' needs. Among the tools that can facilitate use of library are:



1. **Cloud Computing:** It is a platform that allows prospective internet users to access information services through the cloud. It is a free open access source to users. Carl (2009) noted that cloud computing is a natural evolution of the widespread adoption of virtualization, service-oriented architecture, autonomic, and utility computing. Details are abstracted from end-users, who no longer have need for expertise in, or control over the technology infrastructure "in the cloud" that supports them. Similarly, David (2010) opined that cloud computing differs from the classic client-server model by providing applications from a server that are executed and managed by a client's web browser, with no installed client version of an application required. He also argued that centralization gives cloud service providers complete control over the versions of the browser-based applications provided to clients, which removes the need for version upgrades or license management on individual client computing devices. Any computer or web-friendly devices connected to the internet may access the same pool of computing power, applications and files in a cloud-computing environment. Users may remotely store and access personal files such as music, pictures, videos and bookmarks; play games, or do word processing on a remote server. Data is centrally stored, so the user does not need to carry any strange medium such as a DVD or flash drive. Desktop applications that connect to internet-host e-mail providers may be considered cloud applications as offered by Gmail, Hotmail, Ymails etc. Cloud computing has advantages of resources pooling, broad network access, on demand self-service, rapid elasticity, and measure services. It also has availability of information resources at all times. Security and disaster recovery capabilities are built into cloud computing environments. Back-up and recovery are also made easy.
2. **Collaboration in Academic Environment:** This is an idea hinged on minimizing cost, which makes it easier for two or more libraries to pool their resources together; so as to achieve positive results, especially today when Nigeria is faced with economic downturn. Collaboration among libraries therefore helps to save cost, and make information resources widely available for easy retrieval and dissemination. It also allows lecturers from different institutions to share ideas on any subject of interest, without barrier of distance. Areas in which libraries can collaborate are:
3. **Inter-library Loans:** The practice of borrowing books from other libraries had been long before the advent of information communication technology (ICT) or computer age. The traditional method of borrowing books has a lot



of disadvantages which computer, with internet, has made easier. Books and other library materials can be easily accessed anywhere through internet. For example, postal service, courier service, fax, articles for journals, periodicals, book chapters, etc can be transmitted via internet. Scanners allow for digitalization of documents and their transfer.

#### 4. **Information Commons**

5. Information commons are central to the idea of the social library. Gbage (2007) opines that a new concept of delivering services to users has emerged known as information commons (ICs). Information commons are a collection of coordinated facilities providing comprehensive access to information technology. According to Bennet (2003) information commons are "spaces where learning is the primary activity, and where focus is on facilitating social exchanges through which information is transferred into knowledge". Hass and Robertson (2004) and the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) in (2004) gave three characteristics of ICs as shared by most information commons as:
  1. The availability of both research and computing assistance;
  2. A "one-stop shopping" location for varieties of library services; and
  3. A staffing model that includes "librarians, computing professionals, and other public services staff".

Gbage (2015) citing Adeyemi (2005) noted that the platform creates rooms for creativity and flexible space in academic libraries. It will enable patrons to perform multiple tasks with a number of technologies in an environment conducive to learning. Similarly Davey and Bible (2006) reported oral interview from a student who was satisfied with the ICS at the University of Tennessee, where the first phase of its information commons was open. His comment, "Every time have been packed full of students same students were finishing assignment and same just relaxing with friend the group study area are the perfect numbers and size, and the computers have all the program I could need an them". Literature on the implementation of this innovative service that is ideal for African countries is sparse and new, as reported by Boakye (2010). "In Ghana, and in most parts of Africa, the Research Commons concept is relatively new, and some of us have not even heard about it. It has thus been described as the "new kid on the block", except in South Africa. Daniel, Darchand De-Jager (2010) reported the establishment of Research Commons in University of Cape Town in September 2008 on the upper floor of the main library of the University. It is only open to post graduate students (in US terminology, graduate students) and academic staff in its faculties. It is equipped with state of the art computer workstations; printing and copying facilities

individual study cubicles, sound-proof group seminar rooms, as well as a lounge area with a small collection of some current periodicals of general interest, and tea and coffee. It is staffed with two permanent staffers. It has proved to be highly successful". The project was funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Gbaje (2007) identified five of the seven learner centre information commons as follows;

- a. It encourages cooperation among students
- b. It encourages creative learning
- c. It gives feedback
- d. It emphasizes time task
- e. It respects diverse talents and ways of learning.

Mac Whinne (2003) observed that "even without objection, it is evident that ICT has been a success in the academic libraries. Gbaje (2006) admits that effectiveness of information commons can be measured through assessment of quantitative outcomes. Funding of academic libraries must be given priority. Where there is no funding, no development, such as physical structures and information resources, can take place.

### **Use of Appropriate Social Media in Dissemination of Relevant Information**

This enables patrons to contribute meaningfully to topics of interest through social media, where either parties or groups can discuss intellectual topics. It should be noted that not all thoughts published on social media e.g. Facebook, Bookmarks, Goggle doc. Wikipedia WhatsApp YouTube, Twitter, Second Life, Skype etc. can be adopted for academic purposes.

### **Recruitment of Qualified Professional Librarian and Supporting Staff in Academic Environment**

It has been observed that many libraries do not recruit the right staff to work in the libraries. Professionally, ethics in libraries demand that libraries should have the right peg in the right hole for effective running. Patrons need relevant information without unnecessary delay.

### **Adoption of new Skill Required to Meet the Current Information Dissemination**

Libraries need to embrace new technologies to enable them to meet the challenges of their patrons in dissemination of information to them. As librarians, it expected of them to be current in meeting the needs of their host communities or parent institutions.



### **Resource Sharing**

It entails the sharing of information resources among cooperating libraries. Since the 1980's, Nigerian librarians have been clamoring for cooperation among libraries, to facilitate consortium. Successful efforts that led to common acquisition policy, unified catalogue and inter-library loans, online public access catalogue, and other library databases have come as they were envisioned. OCLC (2012) opines that when a library belongs to a sharing networks, more information is readily available, and customer satisfaction is enhanced. Milpas (2009) identified benefits of resource sharing. He stated that for more than a century, libraries cooperation in United State has enabled individual libraries to save cost, while expanding the reach of local collections and services.

### **Professional Skills**

There are skills that are needed to address the information need in this present information age. Various innovations came into education setting that needed professionals' aid to successfully bring about teaching and learning information to teachers and students. Technical skill is the ability to work with information resource provided in a particular area of expertise. It is the duty of the manager/librarian to be proactive in solving their challenges as they arise. Conceptual skill refers to ability to know theory and practice of the job, and doing it without any supervision. It includes the ability to manage human and material resources.

### **Leadership Skill**

The manager must know how to manage human and material resources for the smooth running of the organization.

### **Communication Skills**

There should not be communication gap in an organization. Where there is loop-hole, crisis always arises. Any information given should be clearly stated. However some information might be written, while some might be oral. The most important thing for manger/Librarian to do is to monitor the activities going on in the library.

### **Decision Making**

Heads of units need to be kept informed about any decision that affects staff working under them. Before any decision is taken, the staff should be well informed about the purpose the decision is to achieve.



**Controlling Skill**

It is the duty of librarians to learn how to control staff working under them. As leader, he or she can be democratic or autocratic in decision making, depending on the situation at hand.

**Selective Dissemination of Information**

This is a system that librarians adopt to select necessary information needed by library users. Modern library users are interested in getting what they need in the library without delay.

**Benefits of Academic Libraries for Promotion of Higher Education for Change**

"Education for all" project is expected to be sustained for the overall literary advancement of the ever growing society. But no matter the lucid nature of the educational policy, it can only be successful with the integrated role of the academic library, and not by lip service.

- a. Citizens that are well informed will behave in a manner that will bring about positive development to the nation,
- b. There will be enough experts to compete with other nations of the world, both technically and theoretically,
- c. It will enable researchers to be well informed when carrying out research which is of common interest around the globe,
- d. It brings an increase in knowledge, Information is life. People around the globe want to know more,
- e. It makes life easier for mankind, since the purpose of education is to carry out research that have direct impact on man and his environment.
- f. Education promotes peace and harmony among citizenry.

**Constraints to Promotion of Higher Education towards Change Agenda**

Funding of academic libraries is a major problem to the development of higher education, Ola (2011). The norm assumes that 10 % of university recurrent budget will be allocated to the library for development. That is not the practice, however. In practice what the universities get is a paltry 10% of the overhead cost of their recurrent budget; overhead cost being a sub-head in the recurrent budget of universities. This is the case with Polytechnics, College of Education and other institution of higher learning in Nigeria. Similarly, there is shortage of staff in the



libraries. Most of the institutions have shortage of professional librarians and support staff to assist in running the libraries; and that with poor remunerations as well. One of the ways to curb the problem is to recruit more staff that are relevant to the system. Most often those posted or recruited to the library do not have the interest of the job.

### **Lackadaisical Attitude of Management Support**

More often than not, management of the institutions pay little attention to the libraries attached to their institutions. It is when they support the libraries that they can be able to achieve the vision and mission the institutions.

**Library Buildings:** Library buildings are not befitting in most of the institutions. It is therefore imperative that at the planning stage, the institution's librarian should be carried along when designing the library building. Most libraries are not purposefully built to house the library. Some were converted to become a library in some of the institutions. Library buildings should be conducive for learning for readers.

**Digital Divide:** Most library staffers are not computer literate. Library staff in most of the institutions of higher learning lack computer literacy skills. Traditional methods of dissemination of information to patrons is no longer fashionable. There is the need to insist on computer literacy among library staff. Librarians and all other supporting staff should be well trained in applications and use of computer to carry out their duties.

**Disparity among institutions of Higher Learning:** There is discrimination in the remunerations of staff in institutions of higher learning. Those that work in federal government owned universities earn better pay than those who work in polytechnics, and colleges of education, etc.. The issue affect smooth running of institutions in Nigeria.

**Strike actions by various unions** i.e. ASUU, ASUP, NASU, and SANU, It is saddening to note that many staff of government owned institutions of higher learning still embark on strike for non-payment of allowances etc. Governments have always been insensitive to the requests of staff.

**Government Policy:** Some government decisions do not really have positive impact in improving higher education.

**Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND):** Funds are not easily accessed because of some obnoxious conditions for accessing them. Many institutions could not meet the stringent requirements for accessing the fund. Much of the funds are still in government coffer, thus denying the institution of the privilege to make use



of the funds to aid teaching and learning. There should be a law to guide the utilization of subventions and other monies for capital projects.

**Students' Attitude to Learning:** Reading among students is no longer fashionable. Many of the students no longer study to show their worth. Libraries in Nigeria witness low patronage due to the use of information technology innovations. Libraries witness high patronage only during examination periods. When the examinations are over the libraries record very low patronage.

**Lack of Cooperation among Cooperating Library in Resources Sharing:** It has been discovered that no library can meet its need in terms of provision of information resources required to aid teaching and learning. Cooperating libraries can meet their needs through resource sharing. On most occasions however, libraries fail to fulfill their obligations either in terms of payment of dues or resource sharing. This can discourage intending libraries in academic environments to be serious in their desire to collaborate.

**Lack of Internet Connectivity:** ICT in most of the institutions lack connectivity for internet access. This era of information communication technology calls for the attention of individuals and groups to be vast in the use of communication technology. Most of the institutions fail to provide fund for provision of internet connectivity. It is worthy of note that hardly is there no information needed that cannot be found on world wide web. Students and lecturers are expected to make use of these resources to improve their learning and lectures respectively.

### **Recommendations and Conclusions**

Since education will continue to be the most outstanding tools for development in Nigeria and other nations of the world, more attention should be given to its development. The truth is that only the literate in any society can contribute meaningfully to the society politically, socially, economically, and technologically. Developing information handling skills is basic to lifelong education. Ability to manipulate and use information communication technology will go a long way to increase the knowledge of users of information. Right information will save individuals, and groups from uncertainty. The following recommendations are proffered:

1. Academic libraries in Nigeria should embrace collaboration among themselves for improved productivity.
2. More funds should be injected into our academic institutions of higher learning.
3. Library users should be allowed to make use of any sites of their choice; rather than restricting them to particular sites.



4. Government should make library conducive for teaching and learning for students and staff.
5. Government should discourage strike action among unions in all academic libraries.
6. Internet connectivity should be made available in all academic libraries.
7. Provision of regular public power supply with standby generators for higher institutions in the country must be a priority.
8. Qualified librarians and supporting staff should be employed to oversee the running of our higher institutions' libraries.
9. Library staff should endeavour to learn to use new trends in technology innovation in vogue for effective library service delivery.

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