
CHAPTER NINE

LIBRARY AS AN AGENT OF CHANGE

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Abstract

This study investigated library as an agent of change. The study concluded that the library has acted as a change agent in institutions of higher learning by fostering the creation of new academic communities on campus (virtual community), enhancing life-long learning, improving communication linkages and consultations between policymakers, policy analysts, and policy beneficiaries as well as supporting, managing and improving the institution's intellectual capital. After the transition of the information society, our world is in a fast and massive transformation in social, cultural, political and economical terms. This transformation process affects almost all organizational structures. One of the structures that is affected of this process is the library with its culturally and socially organizational characteristics as they collect, preserve and serve the information; spot the information as the focus and eventually aim to meet the information needs of the society. Based on the findings and the conclusion drawn from this study, the following recommendations were made; more funds and resources should be allocated to the library in order to improve the priceless and invaluable services rendered by the library, adequate staff development programme should be provided for library staff so as to adapt to the emerging roles and responsibilities of the library, more awareness and sensitization program should be organized for library users in order to increase their knowledge on the emerging roles and services of the library and the government should properly and adequately fund the libraries to enable them procure sufficient current books and other resource and information materials.

Keywords: Library, Agent, Change, Education.

Introduction

The word 'library' comes from 'liber' the latin word for "book", library has the collection of books and other informational materials made available to students for reading, studying and references (Akpan et al, 2018). A library is an agency, which engages in the collection, processing, preservation and dissemination of recorded information in the various formats most convenient to its target users (Olanlokun and Salisu, 2003). It can also be defined as a building established for the purpose of collecting and storing books and related materials for reading and research. According to Chamber's Encyclopedia (2007) the word library which is from the Latin word "liber" signifies a place set aside for reading or reference and by extension, a collection of books. Thus a Library can also be described as a collection of books and other forms of records housed, organized and interpreted to meet broad and varying needs of the people such as information, knowledge, recreation and esthetic-values. People all over the world have accepted education as an essential instrument for human development, and various means (such as schools and seminars) have been put in place to extend the benefits of education to all. However, there are some individuals or organisations that establish library for the general use of the people. A library is therefore a place that offers services to the public free of charge and it also provides educational, social and political information to people in a particular community. Generally, public libraries are accepted as a public good. The role of libraries is changing, and with it, the role of librarians. The main function of the library, however, is no longer to just house books much of its selection now resides digitally and those who work within the halls of libraries, which are the librarians, are adapting to these changes as well (Carleigh, 2013). The changes in technology using

electronically stored and retrieved information has changed the way patrons and students are able to access, retrieve and use information. The instantaneous access of information through the Internet has made vast amounts of information and data available to anyone with a computer, a modem and a provider (Leeder, 2013). Historically, libraries have been a research resource supported by a maintained 'physical' collection and archives. Today, the academic library is confronted with developments in technology, dramatically growing traditional collections and increased student and faculty demand. New and more independent 'student centered' learning methods magnify the role of the library in the higher institution of learning. While the job of cataloguing and archiving of information materials remains essential in the library, newer roles have emerged such as rendering of cloud-based services, online reference services, information literacy training and a host of other services. Academic libraries now generate large amount of data using computer assisted document. Without libraries, most data would be lost or would not be retrievable for lack of an indexing scheme. Also, with the current information explosion in different format (digital and paper), the library profession is now saddled with the responsibility of carrying out information literacy training for information seekers in order for them to be efficient users of information. In this information intensive society, libraries and librarians have recognized that the most critical divide is between those who have the understandings and capabilities to operate effectively in that society and those who do not and this constitutes the information literacy divide, of which the so called digital divide is one aspect. They also consider that more attention must be given in institutional education to how students recognize their information need.

This is because information literacy is a prerequisite for participative citizenship and social inclusion with the creation of new knowledge, personal empowerment learning for lifelong learning. However, with the current explosion in information and information resources in different format, libraries and librarians are now faced with newer responsibilities and roles such as designing instructional programs for information access; teaching students and faculty members how to access information in different format or location; serving as consultants on information resources, issues, and problems; developing and implementing information policy; creating information access tools; selecting, organizing, and preserving information in all formats; serving as leaders and facilitators in introducing information technologies and ensuring their effective use (Virkus, 2016). Fakomogbon et al. (2012) opined that school library helps to support the school curriculum by providing up-to-date information to keep teachers and students abreast of new development. The school library compliments the work of the classroom teacher with the ultimate goal of ensuring that each student has equitable access to resources, irrespective of home opportunities or constraints. School library reflects and encourages collaborative learning, sharing of ideas and provision of information on health, economic, culture etc. Library (or a school library media center) is a library within a school where students, staff, and often, parents of a public or private school have access to a variety of resources. The goal of the school library media center is to ensure that all members of the school community have equitable access "to books and reading, to information, and to information technology." (Wikipedia, 2020). Therefore, this paper will focus on the library as agent of change.

Library as an agent of change in Nigeria

Seymour (2000), says responsive library service is not simply a product of the Dewey Decimal system but it also requires intelligent planning, ability to learn from

experiences, and sensitivity to human needs. The library is essentially a medium of education. In fact, the various roles, which the library could play to ensure the realization of national development in Nigeria, include the following:

- i. Provision of information for planning,
- ii. Provision of educational, information and facilities,
- iii. Provision of political information,
- iv. Provision of economic documents
- v. Provision of health information.
- vi. Provision of research materials
- vii. Provision of cultural information.

Provision of Information for Planning

Adeyemi (2007) describes information as a basis to the life of man just as air, water, food, and shelter. Also, Stoakley (2002) notes that communication is a vital part of human life. According to him as a man develops, and his mental powers grows, the need for him to communicate complex ideas and feelings also develops. Therefore the provision of adequate and timely information is vital to the successful completion of every human endeavour, especially educational programme. With the development of civilization there is a need to transmit concepts more widely than is possible through the medium of the human voice and memory. Information on various aspects of literacy programmes in Nigeria abounds in journal publications and such is in form of research reports and bulletins. Libraries have the capabilities to identify and acquire library materials through purchase and exchanges. This type of information is needed by adult educators, community workers, researchers, politicians, educational planners, teachers, supervisors, evaluators, and civil servants who are involved in the educational development programmes. These resources should not only be acquired and made available, they should be professionally organised so that library users spend less time trying to locate relevant information from them. In today's information society, there is a transformation to a production form which is based on the computers and information technologies from the industrial production form of the old times' industrial society. Information society, unlike the production factors of the industrial society, indicates a new social structure that is shaped on the foundations of the information factor and the information and communication technologies contribute as the driving force.

The main features of this formation of society described as the "third way" by Toffler are the information centered and patented technological production as well as the utilization of the produced information in every field of the economy (Bayram, 2010). Information society expresses a society formation in which the information flows in a rapid pace at a global scale in every aspect of life and the trained individuals make a difference; that is ruled by the concepts as flexibility, diversity, creativity and innovation and a network comprised of sophisticated influences (Gultan, 2003) "is a society information which uses the computer and tools depending on the computer and where the individual and mass media communication reaches the beyond of the borders, basic economic activities are formed on the knowledge, the service that brings the producer and the consumer together is the information services, human capital gains prominence, the education is boundless, every information resource and centre is important and the international organizations are formed to control and dominate the information" (Rukanci and Anameric, 2004). In the information society, knowledge influences all segments of the society via technology. The use of the new management and automation techniques is a feature of this era. Information society emerges in

this regard. In the upcoming future, societies to achieve their aims and citizens to create newer opportunities for the communities and organizations are going to use the information technologies. In this setting, some of the features of the information are as follows: a massive growth and activity, globalization and speed, specialization and multi discipline, economical value and social division. Change in the status of the information is another characteristic of the information society. People know that when the information is assessed as a good or item, it is a source of the profit and a tool for decision taking with controlling. The need of the information abilities for the development of lifelong learning is the reason behind the emergence of information literacy (De Pedro and Gregui, 2006).

Provision of Educational, Information and Facilities

Libraries are one of the leading educational institutions which present the knowledge and materials to the people according to their needs. Except for the formal educational services at schools, libraries function as to support individual learning efforts at independent library halls and virtual platforms. Hence, the libraries have an important and unique role in the education of the society. Specifically, libraries are one of the important axes of the transformation to the information society. Because, in order to actualize the person centered learning paradigm, the individuals should go to the libraries on their own will and/or by not even going to the libraries, they should make individual researches via the enabled virtual services of the libraries. This individuality emphasis derives from the information society concept which is the centre of the power and represented by the knowledge which is the output of the human mind along with the people having this knowledge. In a society where the information and information economy takes the lead, individuals should also have access to the information, generate, update and use it in addition to the need of developing lifelong learning abilities via information literacy skills. That is why the libraries have an important place in the information society as the libraries are the institutions where in the information is gathered, compiled and distributed. Libraries have a vital role with their mentioned features and should raise the individuals that the information society needs (Yilmaz et al, 2001). Investment in education is everywhere under scrutiny. The days are long past when a simple and direct connection was assumed between investment in education and national development (Wali, 2001). If educators are to re-affirm their commitment to education and national development, they must be able to justify their belief that education is today not only a basic human right but also an essential tool for national development. The role of public library in this regard cannot be over-emphasized. Library also links the immediate community to the outside world as regards acquisition of knowledge. It also enriches the educational development programmes of the society by supporting continuous education programme, such as adult education programme.

Provision of Political Information

Doctor (2005) defines politics as listening to various groups, reconciling conflicting interests as far as possible, and thus creating a sense of security and participation among members of the society. The library disseminates information on the various political programmes in the society. It is regarded as a public relation institution. Political information is an essential component of national development. Library is next to the radio and the television stations where government passes information to the general public in various forms. It also provides political orientation and culture through the provision of information on government's policies. It is generally accepted as a public good in

terms of political information.

Provision of Economic Documents

Cassel (2004) defines economics as the science of the production and distribution of wealth, the condition of a country, community or individual, with regard to material prosperity. In economic classification, the establishment of a library is regarded as a social service. This is an investment, which does not produce a tangible good. However, public libraries play important role in the economic well being of the society as it provides information on goods and services. It also distributes books and film within the state. Public library at this level is making its contributions to the economic development of the modern society. Libraries could also develop local economic capabilities by making available necessary information on income generating projects, self-employment activities, credit facilities, state assistance schemes, schemes, etc. Therefore public library closely identifies itself with the aspiration of economic development of a nation.

Provision of Health Information

Library is trusted as an institution and information provider, it seems natural for patrons to use them for satisfying their health information needs. Additionally, research has shown that the need for health information exists and that there is enthusiasm among some libraries and library staff to fulfill this information need (Flaherty & Luther, 2011). National Library of Medicine (NLM) demonstrated an eagerness among library staff to receive training and resources in support of their patrons' medical information needs. Once training and resources were provided, half of the libraries willingly promoted these expanded services through community outreach (Wood, Lyon, Schell & Kitendaugh, 2000). Patrons have stated that the health information they found in school libraries was valuable and affected their health care decisions. Thus, whether they choose to be health information providers or not, school library staff will likely be in the position of addressing health queries. Libraries approach the role of health information provider in a variety of ways; levels of service provision in this area are not standard. Some subscribe to health databases and sponsor access to patrons, either onsite or through their websites. There are some that simply provide a link on their homepage to an established consumer health resource such as MedlinePlus. There are some that have created outreach programs to serve their communities' health information needs. On the other hand, there are some who are reluctant to take on the role of health information resource provider (Flaherty & Luther, 2011). If Libraries are serving as health information providers, and are becoming a "non-traditional component of the national public health system," it is important that we have a better understanding of what that will entail and how staff will react to this important responsibility.

Provision of Research Materials

Research is seen as a diligent and careful inquiry or investigation, systematic study of phenomena, and a scientific investigation (Cassel, 2004). It encourages the habit of personal and individual investigation and research, develops skills and resourcefulness in the use of books and other library materials. According to Dorothy (2007), library facilitates scientific studies, teaching and self-learning process. It also acts as a repository of knowledge and thereby stores and disseminates materials of research values in the modern society. Library serves as a stock to the society and it compiles bibliographies, on various aspects such as subjects, authors, and title.

Provision of Cultural Information

Furthermore, the library works as an integrated cultural factor (in a wider sense), which according to David (2014) distinguishes the roles, that the library have to fulfill social needs. According to David, the roles of the libraries consist of their performed functions in this changing information society. Libraries that fulfill this role, have to carry out the functions of: support and dispersion of cultural identity, versatile cultural understanding, support of the culture of local community, inhabitants' inspiration to participate in the local society.

Other Provisions

Libraries have been designed to hold the reading interest of the readers. This is done through special exhibition of materials that serve as reading resources both print and electronic (Wall, 2001). Library also serves as an avenue for in-house story telling hours and other extension services such as the establishment of book clubs, book services, organized debates, symposia, drama, and poetry. Libraries are also established to improve literacy and enhance effective utilization of leisure by children and adults in the society.

Conclusion

If the library is to occupy its proper place in the society, government and non-governmental organizations should invest more in libraries and ensure that competent hands are employed to manage libraries. Thus, qualified librarians should be more involved in the planning and implementation of library programmes so that they would have input into the programme and ensure that libraries are structured in a way that national development will be promoted. Librarians should also draw attention of the members of the society to the values of libraries especially how it contributes to the well being of the individuals and the enrichment of the quality of life through encouragement of self education and assistance in formal education. They should educate people on the supportive roles of libraries particularly to sectors such as education, information, economic, politics, and cultural practices. Libraries have vital roles to play in ensuring national growth; they are not part of the state propaganda machines per se but national infrastructural institutions which are established to facilitate national development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusion drawn from this study, the following recommendations were made;

1. More funds and resources should be allocated to the library in order to improve the priceless and invaluable services rendered by the library.
2. Adequate staff development programme should be provided for library staff in order for them to adapt to the emerging roles and responsibilities of the library.
3. More awareness and sensitization program should be organized for library users in order to increase their knowledge on the emerging roles and services of the library.
4. The government should properly and adequately fund the libraries to enable them procure sufficient current books and other resource and information materials.
5. The government should adopt regular supervision of the operations of the libraries as this will go a long way in facilitating effective service delivery on the part of the staff towards achieving the targeted goals.
6. Provision should be made for a stand by generator to augment erratic power supply recently experienced in the country.

7. Recent reference materials/resources should be acquired to up-date the obsolete ones now available in the library.
8. Library should be made to acquire and store modern information technological resources while the librarian should master the art and science of the profession in their work environment.

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