

THE ROLE OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper examines the importance of library and information services for socio-economic development in Nigeria. The paper further discusses on the major functions of the information services that improve and encourage reading and writing cultures to the Nigerian citizens. The paper also discusses on the forms and types of information services available in libraries and with the view to identifying the challenges affecting the development, availability and access of these services to the production of various literatures. The paper reveals that, lack of adequate, relevant, current information resources as well as professional personnel and conducive learning environment and study accommodation undermine the effectiveness and efficiency in reading culture and promoting of socio-economic status among the Nigerian societies. The paper finally concludes by providing appropriate recommendations for achieving socio-economic developmental goals.

Keywords: Library, Information Services, Socio-economic Development

Introduction

National development is development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising future generations to meet their socio-economic needs of various societies of different kinds. For any nation like Nigeria to develop, it has to provide relevant and adequate information resources and services to its citizens in open and accessible methods. Libraries, irrespective of kinds, are reservoirs of information resources responsible to provide such access through their various services, keeping the people well informed of developments and ensuring its sustainability. Despite this significant role by libraries, inadequate funding, infrastructure, facilities, inadequate library services, poor reading culture and so on are some of the challenges militating against libraries achievement towards socio-economic development in Nigeria.

In today's world, information services are very important component for

national development. Current information is also very essential to managers; hence they depend or rely heavily on authentic information resources to meet their information requirements. Libraries, being the information providers, have been subscribing different forms and types of information resources in various disciplines in accordance with the thrust of the communities irrespective of the level of education, sex and socio-economic status. But with the tremendous growth of specialization in various disciplines, the number of information services being subscribed is increased. The prohibitive factor for the library is the escalating cost of these collections and the stringent library budget particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. These resources, therefore, are vital to the teaching, learning and research effectiveness which may likely influence national socio-economic advancement at large. It also, however, plays a significant role in the development

of the community. Jonas (2011) opined that, through information service-based institutions, administrators acquire skills to collect, analyze and organize information, problem-solve and communicate their understandings to the larger societies. The library, as a centre of information, has a pivotal role to play in promoting social and economic development. Information centres, therefore, exist in most nations of the world and are often considered as essential part of promoting an educated and literate population". They are addressing issues on literacy, workforce training, prosperity of small-businesses and quality communal life.

National development, on the other hand, has been defined by Newman (2004) as a process that includes all what humanity and nature require for their existence both at present moment as well as the future. It can, therefore, be seen as developments harnessing both human and natural resources to achieve self-reliance, job opportunities, and economic growth, promotion of general welfare, insuring efficiency and effectiveness in all public and private sectors for the benefit of all. According to IFLA/UNESCO Library Manifesto (1994) as in Bichi and Abdullahi (2014) states that, the library is the local gateway to knowledge, which provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision making and cultural development of the individual and social groups. It is a living force for education, culture and information and an essential agent for the fostering of peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of men and women. A library is a collection of books and other forms of records and resources housed, organised and interpreted to meet the broad varying needs of educators and others for information, recreation and inspiration. Lozano (2002) agrees that, the general library's role is to provide information about its community,

acquisition of knowledge, and thus, help a public to dispel ignorance. As such, library is to serve as a centre for information where people acquire the needed knowledge to reduce their ignorance.

A library continues to bring man in contact with the word in the fulfillment of its function as a repository, informational, educational and socio-economic roles in all forms and shapes. It has also become, over the years, a dynamic centre for research, social, political and economic development among nations, including Nigeria. Library should be an integral part and should be regarded as the "Life-Wire" of such nations which could be used to foster and sustain the development of those nations.

An Overview of the information Services

When trying to define the term information, one is confronted with semantic, terminological and conceptual difficulties to mean information which belongs to informatics, to management information systems, to objective and cognitive documentary information. It can also be seen as information belonging to public relation as subjective activity as well as documentary or recorded information with which the libraries are primarily concerned. Simply put, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2004) defined information as "facts or detailed about things". It is further regarded as collection of data. Professionally, information is regarded as a group of data in a comprehensible form aimed at passing a certain message which is simply understood.

Information services also are the activities or responsibilities carried out by a librarian or supporting staff to satisfy the informational, educational, recreational needs of the school library patrons. In the ancient period, access to libraries had been strictly limited to those in power. Kings had controlled knowledge in order to establish

social, religious, cultural and political power. They maintained a significant number of collections and records of royal families, military histories and other unpublished materials such as owner's notes, letters, photos, writings, etc. For instance, library of Alexandria founded in the 4th century B.C. was a treasure of written manuscripts, maintained by monks and used by privileged classes. The evolution of school libraries could be said to have begun there. Because, an early print format was used by school children for reading instruction called horn-book up to eighteen century. The concept of books created specifically for young people was established with works as the first picture book called orbis sensualium pictures (Aina, 2004). Sote, Aramide and Amotoso (2011) opined that, "a standard information institution offers a wide range of resources that can answer the question for developing the mind of the researchers". The Frontier of information resources in a society is concisely described also by Lawal (2001) as information resources that could be found in a community. These include audio, and audio- visuals, first books, fiction, reference books such as encyclopedia, dictionaries, biographical sources, periodicals like newspapers, magazines and others.

In view of the aforementioned citations, research community becomes critical thinkers and effective users of the information in all formats and media, ranging from pictorial to documentary from prints to non-prints. An information institution is, therefore, expected to provide a variety of resources that will satisfy the informational, educational and recreational needs of the school community members (mainly teaching/non-teaching staff and students). Ogbonna (2009) posited that, information resource is operationally defined as "the materials housed by a library which enable the library to meet its goals

and objectives." Simply put, information resources refer to the collection of different kinds and forms carefully selected, acquired, organized, disseminated and easily accessible by library users to satisfy their educational, informational as well as recreational needs among community members where the library is located. Despite the significance of these valuable resources, there is inadequacy, out of date, irrelevant as well as poor organisation and non-professionals in the management of information institutions in the schools.

The problem is getting worse due to factors like poverty, environmental variables, users' personality factors, socio-economic factors and problems associated with clientele's roles and learning environment, particularly, lack of school effective information resources and services for the teaching and learning in Nigeria.

Information Services Available and Socio-economic Development

Basically, all libraries are very similar in their functions and activities. However, different libraries must satisfy the information needs of their communities, teachers, students or even individuals. The historical evolution of libraries and the dynamic nature of different human activities account for the types of libraries that exist today. The library and information centers are mainly established for studying and teaching with no emphasis on research and documentation. The major objectives to be achieved in their formation include:

1. Provision of background materials, which would supplement informational, educational, political and recreational needs of the communities.
2. It should get the citizens acquainted with books so as to broaden their

ideas and stimulate their appetite for knowledge.

3. To prepare the users to work independently so that when they leave school, they can carry on with their education with less dependence on guidance.
4. The library should aid the students in making reasonable use of their leisure hours.

The library should and can contribute immensely to enrich all the educational, cultural and socio-economic aims and objectives to develop the Nigerian socio-economic status which are as follows:

- a. To impact knowledge as a foundation for further self-development.
- b. To inspire a desire for self-development and discrimination.
- c. To inculcate the standard of value and conduct intellectual, moral and social as well as economic needs.

The term information services, according to the Minimum Standards for School Libraries in Nigeria (2004), refer to those basic library services such as reference service, current awareness services, selective dissemination of information, circulation services, etc provided to researchers, teachers and students. The essence of any information service is to provide self-development. The library is expected to bring its service within the reach of every member of the school community where every child irrespective of his/her social and economic background to various levels or classes. Typically, economic development is most commonly defined as the creation of jobs and wealth, and the improvement of quality of life. Randal (2004) cited from Michael (1990) described economic development as a process that influences growth and the restructuring of an economy to enhance the economic well-being of a community. The national economic

development involves economic growth, modernization, equitable distribution of income, national resources and social-economic transformation for improved living standard of people through the use of country's human, natural and institutional resources (Brooks, 2005).

A nation is said to be developed economically when its citizen reaches the high possible standard of living. The key role of information towards the attainment of socio-economic development has made qualitative education a key component of the sustainable integration. This in turn requires well-equipped information institutions to improve our social and economic systems.

These institutions are continuously bringing man in contact with the world in the fulfilment of its functions as a repository for knowledge in all forms and shapes. The realization of the enormous power of information service also has made library and information resource centres inevitably present in many sectors of Nigeria's economy. The level and quality of information services participation in a populace such as education, agricultural activities, health and commercial activities are paramount contributory factors to the level of socio-economic and all development of Nigeria. It is, therefore, important that information service should be given a stakeholder roles for the Nigeria's development.

A nation that is unable to provide itself good things of life because of its limited knowledge of science and technology, culture, norms and social organizations, is said to be under-developed. Whereas nations that are in the fore front of acquiring, improving and applying human knowledge, science, technology and humanities in making available the highest possible standard of living to its citizens are said to be economically developed (Todaro, 2005).

The information service serves as a tool for developed nation so also for a developing country, namely a tool for intellectuals' freedom and economic development, a gate-way to political, economic and social happiness and survival. Freedom in its various dimensions means the absence of ignorance of situations.

Oguntuase (2004) stressed that: "quality of library services in Nigeria will be largely influenced by the availability of human, materials and financial resources". He further suggested that:

Every library in societies should be able to provide adequately the following level of services: selection and acquisition of Library materials, organization of stock, circulation or loan Services, current awareness services, reference services, Production of instructional materials, promotional activities, and library use education.

Markless and Streatfield (2004) hinted that school libraries are established in order to support the educational curriculum of school which could only be achieved through the provision of various means such as; the provision of relevant information resources which are relevant to the school curriculum and provision of various information services ranging from technical to readers services. IFLA and UNESCO (2000) consented by enumerating some of the core services of libraries which are important for the development of literacy, information literacy skills, reading habit, teaching and learning processes as follows:

1. Supporting and enhancing goals as outlined in the community mission and visions.
2. Developing and staining in children habits and enjoyment of reading and learning and the use of libraries throughout their lives.

3. Offering opportunities for experiences in creating and using information for knowledge, understanding, imagination and enjoyment.
4. Supporting all students in learning and practical skills for evaluating and using information, regardless of communication within the communities.
5. Organizing activities that encourage cultural and social awareness and sensitivity.
6. Working with students, teachers, administrators and parents to achieve the mission of the school.
7. Proclaiming the concept that intellectual freedom and access to information are essential to effective and responsible citizenship and participation in a democracy.
8. Promoting reading, the resources and services of the library to the whole school community and beyond.

In the words of Usoro and Usanga (2007), library should provide the following services so that every user gets information that will meet his/her particular needs thus, include:

1. Inviting authors and subject specialists for lecture and informal talks.
2. Organizing educative recreational film shows and radio book talk. Children and youths would be directed towards continuous and lifelong learning.
3. Displaying of books and posters to reflect current events, fellow students' creative works and children in other parts of the world. These types of activities

- will create awareness and curiosity.
4. Friends of the library club: The activities of these clubs include reading together with children and helping them prepare library guides, simple teaching aids and reading competition. Excursions to other schools and libraries are also beneficial.
 5. School library Magazines: Articles for the magazine should be from the school children, to help develop writing skills.
 6. Other activities include story hours, book talk, and the like. These activity when, well planned, will provide much opportunity for advising and guiding the children in their reading and for developing the habit of lifelong learning.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) as outlined in the National Policy on Education provides the following information services to be provided in the Information Institution as:

1. Selection and Acquisition of Information Resources:

Selection and acquiring school information resources like any other library types can be done through direct/indirect purchase; donation/gift; and exchange of information resources with other libraries.

2. Organizational Services

Organization of library may be accomplished through various means, notably, cataloguing and classification using Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR), the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC), Scheme, indexing, abstracting, compilation of bibliography and computerization.

Current Awareness Service (CAS)

This may be accomplished through regular preparation of accession list, periodical articles, title list, abstracts, bulletin as well as periodical circulation and display.

Reference and Information Service:

The school library staff should offer reference and information assistance to the students, circulation or loans services to broaden information access and its utilization. The library should lend its materials to students with the exception of reference materials and other designed restricted items.

Promotional Activities:

Promotional activities such as library week, library display/exhibition, book talks, reading competitions, book sharing clubs, films-shows, story etc should be put to maximum use.

Library User Education:

Conventional time should be allocated on the school time-table to enable the students participate fully in the effective utilization of the library materials. This is usually designed to inculcate in them the necessary skills for using the library and its information resources and finally improve students reading culture.

However, library services in Nigeria are yet to make required impact on users due to inadequacy of funding and qualified personnel to man the school libraries, have devastating impact on school library development are well established fact. These have made the school library information services still in its formative stage. Obajemu (2002) buttressed that, "the provision of school library services in Nigeria has been neglected. The books are old, disused and unorganized". Ebiwolate (2010) justified the

view that, library services are ignited by poor infrastructure, inadequate funding, and lack of human resources and so on.

The Challenges Associated with Information Services

The following factors are considered to be responsible for slow development of the libraries and information services at various sectors:

1. Lack of relevant, current and adequate collection
2. Lack of trained staff.
3. Administrative problems.
4. Publishing problems.
5. Absence of established and conducive standing structure for library services.
6. Lack of modern Information and Communication Technologies.
7. Poor reading culture.
8. Poor library orientation programmes.

Most of the Nigerian citizens who enter universities have never used the library effectively during their primary and secondary school days. It can, therefore, be suggested that, teaching of basic instructional skills like library orientation, rules and regulations for using the library, proper use and handling of books among others, should be carried out.

Conclusion

The essence of having information services in communities is to impact them positively. It is of paramount importance for Nigerians to get effective information services that will enable them make intelligent improvement on socio-economic life of individuals and societies. Information resources and services generally should rise to the occasion and provide relevant and current ideas to those writers to boost the socio-economic development in Nigeria. The libraries of all kinds must be on the increase on the provision of the relevant

information materials, awareness and accessibility increased considerably. Therefore, libraries and information services should closely identify themselves with the aspiration of socio-economic development of Nigeria. These institutions must make it a top priority to provide relevant and current information facilities to Nigerian societies.

Recommendations

The greatest resources for any development are the human resources. Hence, no nation can develop in isolation of her human resources without standard information institutions. The level and quality of research and socio-economic development, as well as its productivity to a populace, are important contributory factors to the overall development of any nation. It is therefore, pertinent that information institutions should engage in the following:

- i.** Be equipped by employing information professionals, who are graduates so they can give quality contributions to national socio-economic activities in spheres of life,
- ii.** There is need for government to take information services as tools that aid the enhancement of nation development.
- iii.** The local, state and federal governments should collaborate in funding information management centres and make them more responsive to researchers' needs in the country.
- iv.** There should be a well collaboration with Librarians, Information Scientists, Researchers and Extension Agents to proper orientations on the use of information resources and services at all levels of education. This will also accelerate the economic transformation in Nigeria.

v. Information specialists should seek partnerships with community, non-private organizations, academic institutions, other libraries, for adequate funding and information resource provision.

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