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The Roles of University Libraries: A Paradigm Change Perspective

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The paper explains some of the nascent development in the field of library and information science. The old and new paradigms of librarianship were cited to reflect the roles played by university libraries of this contemporary 21ˢᵗ century. The paradigm change role shows that university library users can be better served from the comfort of their destination.

Keywords: Paradigm Change, University Libraries, Knowledge Management, Document Delivery Service, Digital Commons

INTRODUCTION

Education systems throughout the world are undergoing a process of massive change, revolving around information or what is better known as the knowledge economy. The onus of assimilating this changing trend lies with all stakeholders involved in steering the affairs of education in Nigeria. At a higher level of education, our universities alongside their university libraries must keep abreast of the vicissitude of education so as to ensure the universality of scholarship.

Universality of scholarship means no one should be left behind on issues bordering on educational development. It requires that there should be a holistic transformation, rationalization, restructuring and sharing of improved learning and teaching methods. As an integral part of university education, the university libraries in Nigeria will be profoundly affected by changes in their operation. Virkus and Metsar (2004) pointed out that; "during the last decade; technology, globalization, and competition have caused the ground to shift under higher education worldwide, defying national borders by calling into question honoured and unquestioned assumptions of learning".

In recent times, Jain (2013) highlighted that; "the old concept of book-oriented librarianship has long been taken over by user-centered librarianship". This means that there is a new discerning paradigm change that has reformed the traditional thinking around library and information service delivery to what is better referred to as the *user centered library service*. Thus, it would not augur well for university libraries if; lecturers teach their student using modern ways of learning while the university library remain in the shadows of its past. It is important that while an academic library is preoccupied with managing internal affairs within the university library, it holistically looks outward at the new student-centered paradigm of education so as to create its user centered roles and responsibilities for information service delivery.

Accordingly, the author of this paper intends to highlight

the nascent paradigm changes in library and information service delivery so that university libraries in Nigeria and beyond would contribute to higher education, by realigning to the modern realities of performing their roles of information service delivery in a meaningful manner.

Background to the Paradigm Change in Library and Information Service

Paradigm is a term that was popularized by Kuhn (1970) in his study of scientific revolutions and has become widely used in the social sciences. Kuhn noted that; a mature science, experiences alternating phases of normal science and revolutions. In normal science the key theories, instruments, values and metaphysical assumptions that comprise the disciplinary matrix are kept fixed, permitting the cumulative generations to hold water. Whereas in a scientific revolution the disciplinary matrix undergoes revision, in order to permit the solution of the more serious anomalous puzzles that disturbed the preceding period of normal science. Accordingly, Kuhn (1970) defined paradigm as "the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community".

Library and information science is a profession that is guided by paradigm. Library and information science of the contemporary was initially just known as "Library Science", a profession predominantly known to collect, store, organize and disseminate recorded knowledge. The first renowned philosophy of library science was proposed by Shiyali Ramamrith Ranganathan in the 1930s. The paradigm simply revolved around the book and its user. At that juncture the paradigms were;

- Books are for use
- Every book its user
- Every user his book
- save the time of the reader
- the library is a growing organism

The earliest paradigm that preserved library and information service for quite long has fallen to the glory of modernization; it is obvious that global development of the library profession has come with a greater responsiveness to technology, precisely the information and communication technology. Thus, it is precise to say that our procedures and materials as librarians have been found and lost and found again, invented and re-invented, named and re-named, as have our titles changed repeatedly. But the tradition of the librarian as a critical mediator in the flow of knowledge between creators and clients of tablets, scrolls, manuscripts, books, documents, recordings, pages and files has endured the test of time (Herold, 2001).

The impetus of Information and communication

technology in education is fast cloning librarianship; just as in education, a user centered approach is now in vogue. Jain (2013) noted that "The major impetus behind this change can be attributed to: rapid advancement in Information and communication Technology (ICT), evolution in education system, changing user needs, emergence of social media, and changes in scholarly communication", resulting in an unprecedented progress of digitizing the existing content of the traditional libraries system, so as to free up shelf space and make more information available to more people not only within the confines of (libraries) their physical location Hendrix (2010).

In recent times, and to portray what is to be meant by the modernized view of library and information (service) science, Michael Gorman (a British born librarian) is noted to have viewed library and information science with a need for paradigm change; as a result new paradigms were expounded to reinvent the focus of librarianship in line with modern practices. The following are the paradigms;

- Libraries serve humanity.
- Respect all forms by which knowledge is communicated.
- Use technology intelligently to enhance service.
- Protect free access to knowledge, and
- Honour the past and create the future.

The Philosophy of University Library Service

The university library is a subset of a collection of libraries (such as those in colleges, polytechnics and other higher intuitions of learning) which are collectively referred to as academic libraries. The University Library is a sophisticated and highly developed information system; it inhabits a collection of information resources on all the knowledge areas pursued by a university (Yusuf and Iwu 2010). It is both a knowledge producing and utilizing facility that supports the attainment of literacy by those (Students and lecturers) in its parent organization. The mission of university libraries is to create and enhance a learning environment in which both faculty members and their students are provided with an adequate variety of information resources to achieve academic excellence in teaching, learning and research, (Eze and Ugozie, 2013).

University libraries are traditionally seen as the heart of the university, they serve the academic community of its parent institution with knowledge supporting materials and services (Ajibero, 1995). University libraries are a legacy to each generation; they convey knowledge of the past and the promise of the future. Irrespective of wherever they are in the world, the university library is a citadel which promotes the free flow of ideas in the

interest of a nation's thriving culture, economy, religion and democracy (Bundy, 2004). Evidence from the literature confirms that an academic library is integrally an indispensable facility in the existence of a university (Okiy 2005; Yusuf and Iwu 2010).

The nascent place of university libraries in the scheme of higher education depicts advancement in information service delivery. Virkus and Metsar (2004) highlighted that at the start of the 21st century university libraries now tend to explore a series of new roles that clearly shows their relevance in the scheme of affairs that could lead to the growth of a nation. In essence, university libraries now do more than supporting its parent institution with information resources only; they are now treated as an integral part of university education that have a department or faculty status especially because their strategic roles are now keyed towards;

- Serving an increasingly heterogeneous student population
- Engaging in Publication and scholarly communication
- Promoting the extensive use and delivery of digital resources
- Supporting ICT-based mode of study including both distance learning and e-learning, with which libraries have had little involvement in the past
- Replacing the initial high support for traditional (print) resources with conventional e-resource (via user education)
- Guiding students in preparing their literature reviews
- Promoting e-research initiative

The Paradigm Change Roles of the University Libraries

In the wake of the 21st century, scholarly discussions about changes in university libraries are focused on certain themes that include;

- Embracing the use of ICT applications (facebook, twitter, wikis, blogs etcetera) for enhancing library operations
- Digital information resources (e-book, e-journal, e-publishing) and their implication on library operations
- The effect of IT enhanced learning and teaching approach on library service
- Information literacy

The expectations arising from those themes are reforming enough to promote an efficient library service that would instill confidence and satisfaction in the mind

of users. Many in the community envision future library services that incorporate new philosophies, new technologies, and new space to meet the needs of all users more effectively than ever before. These changes go beyond merely incorporating technological advances to include rethinking the very core of what defines a library—the sense of place, of service, and of community (Hendrix, 2010).

Document Delivery Service, Digital Commons and Knowledge Management are the three basic paradigm change terminologies that have re-informed library and information service. These three nascent terms creates a synergy between the required services and roles of library and information science from a university library perspective.

Document Delivery Service (DDS): is an initiative that places a responsibility on librarians to fetch and provide information to library users at their desired destination. It is a unique service that ensures document retrieval and delivery by the librarian to students and faculty staff members for their academically related work activities (Igwe & Onah, 2013). With document delivery service, librarians are enjoined to take the library to their users and not necessarily that the users come to the library. Unegbu (2011) corroborates that; gone are the days when one had to visit the library in order to retrieve information stored in various media (scrolls, parchment, vellum, books, cassettes, etc.) that are housed in the library for use, people can now stay at their homes and make request and get whatever information they want. The modus-operandi of DDS allows a request to be initiated by a user while the library supports the user with the precise identification, location and the consequent delivery of what is requested to a user.

Digital Commons

The contemporary mandate of supporting Open Access to knowledge and information by librarians focuses on supporting an open source digital publishing infrastructure through an online partnership with Knowledge vendors. In essence, the impetus of Scholarly publishing landscape now makes publishing a venture that is amenable to information and communication technology via an online initiative known as Digital Commons.

Digital Commons is an open access publishing outlet that shows content of scholarly publications owned and produced by an institution, for an institution or about an institution of learning. It provides a suite of open access to enable scholars associated with it to have direct control over the creation and dissemination of the full range of their scholarly write ups. It enables combining traditional institutional repository functionality with tools

for publishing. Digital Commons repositories is systematically optimized for access because of the librarians' indexing and abstracting effort that makes it accessible via major search engines. Promoting digital commons among librarians promotes wider access and alleviates libraries from incurring extra financial cost to digitize resources that they acquire. Digital Commons is enabled via communication technologies such as email facebook, twitter, wikis etcetera that provides user notification tools and options for social sharing. These include RSS feeds and automatic email notification for reports of newly published content, mailing list manager to announce newly published research and social sharing buttons. Digital Commons also provides individual readership statistics through its Author Dashboard.

Knowledge Management

Knowledge management entails embracing the use of ICT applications in creating knowledge and enhancing library operations. Raja, Ahmad & Sinha (2009) highlighted that knowledge management deals with four steps which entails knowledge creation, organization, data protection and presentation and the dissemination of information. The authors noted that the main objective of knowledge management is to ensure that the right information is delivered to the right person just in terms of

- Promoting the collection, processing, storage and distribution of knowledge
- Promoting the use of ICT to organize and retrieve knowledge for effective scientific research
- creating knowledge repositories and the management of knowledge as an asset
- Protect intellectual property right in the information

CONCLUSION

If university libraries should be seen as having anything meaningful to offer to the development of university education and the nation at large then they should be tilted towards paradigm change initiatives by enhancing the use of ICTs to support education only, they now need take the library to the very door step of their users. The paradigm change roles of university libraries are far beyond the idea of ensuring access to the physical book by its user, the new roles are technology enhanced and are keyed towards the use of ICTs for universality of education. There is therefore the need for university libraries both in Nigeria and beyond to evolve and provide differentiated (distinctive) service that goes beyond the user while in the library, the trend is now user centered by initiating knowledge management, promoting digital

commons and by providing document delivery service to users to ensure the that university libraries are accessible by users even from the convenience of their homes

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