

Full Length Research

Libraries: Infinite Possibilities For Development

Dr. Lily Oluebube Ezeala *CLN*

Library And Information Science Unit, Department of Social Science Education, University of Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria

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Building an ideal nation requires a holistic approach. All facets of human activity must be harnessed while all indices of nation building must be taken care of. In doing this, all academic and professional disciplines are involved. Libraries are not exception. This paper looks at various types of libraries and their basic functions, their roles in national development and in particular, how library services can be used to translate development goals to reality.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is conceived as a powerful tool which is instrumental in bringing about the desired changes on the social and cultural life of a nation. Mankilik, (2017) explained that education helps cushion high rate of literacy effect, emancipate the individual from the shackle of ignorance, equipping them with cognitive skill to induce development and make them aware politically, economically and socially. This kind of education can only be attained through teaching, which is directly anchored on library services.

Information and a conducive environment of its free flow is a vital tool in all forms of human endeavour (Achitabwino, 2007). It is the link pin of national development. For a nation to develop, it needs to have and provide relevant, updated and adequate information on all the government development goals such as food security, good health, education, youth empowerment, gender equality etc. Libraries are there for proper management, provision and dissemination of such information.

The word "library" seems to be used in so many different aspects now, from the conventional to the digital library aspects. Haruna (2017) described library as `custodians of information in all formats`, while Agbo and Onyekweodiri (2014) referred to library as the `heart of an

institution, the mind of a society, the only effective repository of knowledge, the racial memory, a live depository of cultural past, a sustained of the intellectual activities that anticipate the future`. In *The Librarian's Book of Lists* (ALA, 2010), George Eberhart offers this definition:

A library is a collection of resources in a variety of formats that is organized by information professionals or other experts who provide convenient physical, digital, bibliographic, or intellectual access and offer targeted services and programs with the mission of educating, informing, or entertaining a variety of audiences and the goal of stimulating individual learning and advancing society as a whole.

The Library as an institution is a collection of books and other informational materials made available to people for reading, study, or reference. However, library collections contains everything one needs to progress. Contemporary libraries maintain collections that include not only printed materials such as manuscripts, books, newspapers, and magazines, but also art reproductions, films, sound and video recordings, maps, photographs, microfiches, CD-ROMs, computer software, online databases, and other media. In addition to maintaining collections within library buildings, modern libraries often

feature telecommunications links that provide users with access to information at remote sites Aina, L.O, Mutulu, S.M & Tiamiyu, M.A (2008).

In all these definitions, the central mission of a library are to collect, organize, preserve, and provide access to knowledge and information. In fulfilling this mission, libraries expose users to the best source of information, whether it's a book, a web site, or database entry. The library preserves a valuable record of culture that can be passed down to succeeding generations, provide people with access to the information they need to work, play, learn, and govern.

Like in division of labour, libraries are classified according to the services they render to their users for efficiency. **School** library takes care of information need of users under pre-tertiary institution such as nursery, primary, and secondary schools with the mission of contributing to the intellectual development of pupils and students.

Special libraries take care of big corporations and industries by serving them the needed information to achieve their aims and objectives.

Academic libraries are varied and distinctive as the institutions they serve. They include college libraries, polytechnic libraries and university libraries. Academic libraries are to aid academic and research programs.

Public libraries were established to make every member of the community to get their desired information needs. They also have varied responsibilities, ranging from promotion of individual development, commerce, technical progress, and social and cultural advancement.

The **National** library is official repository of printed works, a general access library: information – bibliographical centre and a centre of coordination, planning and stimulation of the entire library system of the nation. The national Library service has been championing the provision of relevant information materials to different communities through the establishment of rural libraries with the element of supporting adult literacy as well as helping in the establishment of an informed society. Through such small libraries, people who were deprived of information are capable of reading and writing.

Importance of the Library

Libraries play a great role in the support they offer to the education sector. It is an irrefutable fact that without libraries, there as well can be no universities hence the creation of professionals` drought. All professionals, whether graduates or not, are capable of utilising their skills through the knowledge they acquired through books from conventional or digital libraries. Lawyers safeguard the flow of justice and foster constitutional developments; teachers support literacy campaigns; doctors support

health issues, the list is endless.

Another essential role of libraries is propounding and propagation of a political ideology for national development and cohesion. Effective citizen action is possible only where citizens know how to gain access to information of all kinds and have the skills to become responsible and informed participants in democracies. This is especially so as e-government evolves. Libraries offer real and virtual civic spaces where citizens can speak freely, share similar interests and concerns, and pursue what they believe are in their public interest.

Development

Development has been defined variously, according to people's point of views. Some scholars see development as normative and synonymous with progress, others see it as multidimensional, involving changes in structures, capacity and output. Others still see development in terms of the growth and mastery of the natural environment by man. Thus development of any society today has come to be measured by its socio-economic, political and technological advancement. Agbo and Onyekweodiri (2014) agreed with Mimiko (1998) that development is a process implying deep and double changes in social structure in the functioning of institutions and in the cultural values of great masses of people. Aremu (2003) in his own view sees development as a process of enhancing the productive forces of a country for the actualization of more prosperous and meaningful life for all its citizens. Thus, development emphasizes growth or advancement, with a positive cultural and socio-economic tendency towards a self-generating and self-perpetuating utilization of people's potentials.

Development is important to the growth and sustenance of any nation. A country is said to be developed, when it is able to provide qualitative and sometimes quantitative life for its citizenry. Nigeria has not been able to engender (produce) meaningful development in spite of her huge human and natural resource endowments. This has greatly affected her quest for improved quality of life of her citizens. Poverty, unemployment, and starvation still pervade the nook and cranny of the country.

Access to timely and useful information is a fundamental human right that can break the cycle of poverty and support sustainable development. Libraries, therefore seems to have the impetus to further development by helping people get the information they need to address every problem.

Library, As Engine of Development

It was observed that some people believe that libraries

are so abstract that it cannot have any impact on people's practical life. Such people believe that libraries are irrelevant to development. This is because, they are ignorant of what library is all about. Their philosophical views of library as a profession is ` a building with information resources`, they believe that marketing is not an aspect of librarianship, that librarians can only work in the library and that cataloguing, indexing, classification and user education can only be performed within the library. They fail to realize that library is the intellectual wealth of the world. In fact, the presence of libraries in a society will certainly enhance positive human activity in that society through different services of the library. Ezeala (2012) argued that a country's educational system could be as strong and as weak as the library resources that support that system. This is because the library is the only place in many communities where people can access information that will help improve their education, develop new skills, find jobs, build businesses, make informed agricultural and health decisions, or gain insights into environmental issues. It further said that "Life without required information is like wallowing in darkness".

Libraries support development through the innovation and re-invention of their services. Innovation implies introduction of new things, ideas or ways of doing something that has been introduced or discovered while re-invention means, ability to present something in a new form or with a new image that has not existed before.

Improved services of the library are really impressive. It has made the library important development partners, both by providing access to information in all formats and delivering services and planned programmes that meet the needs for information in a society.

Access to information from the library according to Lyon Declaration on Access to Information and Development, supports development by empowering people to learn and apply new skills, like Internet search, Indexing and Abstracting, Cataloguing, Classification. ICT use, Research, Website design/Library software design, online book/journal publishing, and Electronic data entering skills; Make decisions and participate in an active and engaged civil society; Create community-based solutions to development challenges; Ensure accountability, transparency, good governance, and empowerment; Measure progress on public and private commitments on sustainable development. All that is required of the librarian is entrepreneurship characteristics like, Integrity, Focused, Unique, Change-compliant, highly determined and discipline with decent dressing.

Translating Development goals to reality through library services

Information promotes and empowers citizen's participation in the democratic process; it maintains the rule of law and creates a viable outlet for the injection of public opinion. Information informs the policy-making process of political leadership, all of which nurtures the building of sustainable peace for the enhancement of the country. If for instance, Nigerian government set goals to achieve in leadership tenure, the library can support all of them through different suitable information services.

Let's assume that **goal one** of a country is **Zero poverty**,

Libraries will support this goal by providing information on public access to information and resources that give people opportunities to improve their lives;

- Training in new skills needed for education and employment;
- Information to support decision making by governments, civil society, and businesses to combat poverty.

Goal two: Zero Hunger

- Agricultural research and data on how to make crops more productive and sustainable
- Public access for farmers to online resources like local market prices, weather reports, and new equipment

Goal three: Good Health and Well-Being

- Research available in medical and hospital libraries that supports education and improves medical practice for health care providers
- Public access to health and wellness information in public libraries that helps individuals and families stay healthy

Goal four: Quality Education

- Dedicated staff who support early literacy and lifelong learning
- Access to information and research for students everywhere
- Inclusive spaces where cost is not a barrier to new knowledge and skills

Goal five: Gender Equality

- Safe and welcoming meetings spaces
- Programmes and services designed to meet the needs of women and girls, like rights and health
- Access to information and ICT that helps women build business skills
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Goal six: Decent Work and Economic Growth

- Access to information and skills training that people need to find, apply for, and succeed in better jobs

Goal seven: Clean Water and Sanitation

- Access to quality information and good practices that support local water management and sanitation projects

Goal eight: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

- Widespread existing infrastructure of public and research libraries and skilled library professionals
- Welcoming and inclusive public spaces
- Access to ICT like high-speed internet that may not be available anywhere else

Goal nine: Reduced Inequalities

- Neutral and welcoming spaces that make learning accessible to all, including marginalized groups like migrants, refugees, minorities, indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities
- Equitable access to information that supports social, political, and economic inclusion

Goal ten: Sustainable Cities and Communities

- Trusted institutions devoted to promoting cultural inclusion and understanding
- Documentation and preservation of cultural heritage for future generations

Goal eleven: Peace and Justice

- Public access to information about government, civil society, and other institutions
- Training in the skills needed to understand and use this information

Developmental goals can go on and on; but, the ability of the library to supply information to solve the problem is infinite or endless.

Challenges

The greatest challenge to information provision by libraries to promote development is illiteracy rate. Others are poor reading habits, lack of resources, financial constraints, inadequate library services, poor distribution network of libraries and lack of viable publishing industries

CONCLUSION

Information is the link pin of national development" (Achitabwino, 2007). It is also a basic truth that no nation prospers without information and no information can be properly managed and disseminated without libraries and librarian. So, In order to grow more efficiently in all aspects of societal development, countries must collect and provide access to adequate and up-to-date "information on the required áreas. In this regard, it is imperative that all hands must be on deck for the proper management, provision, and dissemination of information for national development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the library needs advocacy, support and recognition by the populace. To achieve this, government should include libraries in national development plans, partner and work with libraries to raise awareness about development goals and what they mean locally. This will enhance positive human activities for faster societal development.

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