

# A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF LIBRARY SERVICE IN NIGERIA: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

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## ABSTRACT

In the month of June, 2002 when the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) celebrated its anniversary commemorating its 40 years of service to the Nigerian nation, friends and well-wishers of the association congratulated librarians and wished them many more fruitful years of service. This paper highlights the landmarks of these years of service from 1962 when the first library started in Lagos to the present day. Have these been years of toil and achievements or years of resting on oars? The paper examines library service to the nation through the different arms of the association highlighting what has been achieved so far. These different sectors and arms include: The Academic and Research Library Sector; The Public Library Sector; The School Library Sector; The Special Library Sector; The National Library of Nigeria, etc. It also identifies the problems facing librarianship in the country, proffering solutions to them. The methodology used in this research is the descriptive survey methodology. The finding is that Information and Communications Technology (ICT) will transform information delivery in Nigeria for the better. It concludes by asserting that there is a very bright future for Nigerian libraries and Librarians in an ICT-driven information acquisition, processing, storage, dissemination and delivery in a 21<sup>st</sup> century globalized economy.

**KEYWORDS:** Historical perspective, library service, Nigeria, problems, prospects.

## INTRODUCTION

The 40<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the Nigerian Library Association was an epoch-making event, which engaged the minds of librarians in Nigeria, and their overseas friends back to forty years of service to the nation. An old adage asserts that a man who is wise at forty, remains wise to the end of his life and so with this celebration, librarians hope to register achievements as a continuous process in the life-span of the profession.

This anniversary was celebrated with pomp and pageantry at Topo, Badagry in Lagos State of Nigeria from June 16<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> in the year 2002. It was tagged "EKO 2002". Many librarians from different parts of the 36 states of the Federation of Nigeria attended the occasion. Apart from the fact that it was the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nigerian Library Association, it was also its 40<sup>th</sup> Annual National Conference and General Meeting (AGM). It had the theme: "40 Years of Library and Information Service to the Nation (1962 - 2002)". Among other events, it had in its programme, presentation of papers based on the theme of the conference; Council meetings; Meetings of the professional sections of the association; A colourful opening ceremony which had the Executive Governor of Lagos State and the Royal Father, The Akran of Badagry in attendance; the Business Section of the conference which is the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the association in which members of the new executive were sworn in. It was rounded off with a formal dinner where recipients of Nigerian Library Association awards were honoured. This was followed by a tour to Cotonou, a commercial city of neighbouring Benin Republic. It was partly an emotional occasion with many retired members showing up to rejoice with their former colleagues and partly an occasion for sober reflection on how the past years could positively influence the present and the future of the association. Many past Presidents of the association addressed members with words of encouragement. By the time the conference ended, members were convinced that the association has actually rendered good service to the nation within the years even though there were besetting problems here and there.

### The Development of Libraries in Nigeria

According to Harris (1970), there were libraries in the North before the existence of the geographical expression

called Nigeria, even though it cannot be reliably dated. But the Lagos Public Library, which is regarded as, the first library in Nigeria dates as far back as 1932 with the support of a grant from the Carnegie Corporation. There were also resources from Tom Jones private library, which he donated to the public library. The British Council operated this library on behalf of the Lagos town council for a good number of years before it was handed over to the Lagos town council in 1950 (Oyegade, 2002). The close interaction with the British Council motivated the administrators of the Lagos Public Library to think of training indigenous staff who would eventually manage such libraries. This resulted in plans of sending Nigerian staff overseas to train as librarians. Kalu Okorie who was the first beneficiary of this scheme was long retired from service having become one of the first recipients of NLA award of Fellow of the Nigerian Library Association (FNLA)

According to Oyegade (2002), a UNESCO Seminar, which was held at the University College Ibadan from 27<sup>th</sup> July to 21<sup>st</sup> August, 1953 with the theme: "The development of Public Libraries" mark the beginning of the development of public libraries in Nigeria. Extensive discussions were held by participants on the establishment of public libraries on regional and national basis; the provision and use of publications; audio-visual materials in public libraries; and professional training of librarians. This seminar, among other achievements, facilitated the establishment of the first library school in Nigeria at the University of Ibadan and the provision of public libraries in the capital city states of Nigeria

It was highlighted in the seminar that only Ghana and South Africa had public libraries in the whole of the continent of Africa. With the formation of West African Library Association (WALA) in 1954 comprising of Nigeria, Ghana (Gold Coast), Sierra Leone and Liberia, it was believed that other countries of Africa would follow suit to establish not only public libraries but also Library Associations

### PUBLIC LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT IN THE REGIONS

In the Northern part of Nigeria, there were initially reading centers established and maintained by the British Council. These were later handed over to the Native Authority and in 1952, they were all brought together under the umbrella of the Northern Regional Library Service founded by the Ministry of Education.

The Western Regional Library was greatly enhanced by the Free Primary Education Scheme of the Regional Government of the 1960s and 1970s which vigorously pursued, sponsored and funded the public library system of the region to support educational programmes.

In the Eastern Region, the government gave full support to the establishment of public libraries both at the urban and divisional levels. The region went far ahead of the other regions by promulgating laws on libraries and developing their public libraries to an enviable status. However, the libraries were badly damaged during the civil war of the later part of the 1960s. With the 36 states of the Federation of Nigeria, there are now 36 public libraries often referred to as state libraries, as well as a few branch libraries situated at the local government headquarters. All these now have their library services backed up with laws of the state governments. At the national level, there is a strong and viable National Library of Nigeria with branch libraries in the different states of the federation. It was established with an act of law in 1962 with an amendment in 1970. These Laws, Acts and Decrees have helped a lot in shaping the development and growth of librarianship in Nigeria. The British Council and the United States Information Service (USIS) played tremendous roles in nurturing this growth and development.

### SCHOOL LIBRARIES

During the UNESCO Seminar on the development of public libraries in Africa held at the University College, Ibadan in 1953, it was resolved that among other things, public libraries in Africa should provide effective services for children and young people including requisite services for schools. A few years later, Regional libraries were established in Nigeria, which took over the provisions of reading materials for children in schools and colleges. Initially, this took the nature of loaning out books to school children.

With the break-up of the West-African Library Association (WALA), into national associations and the subsequent debut of the National Library of Nigeria as well as the Nigerian Library Association, the regional divisions of the Nigerian Library Association started planning with the Federal Ministry of Education on a programme for school library development in public schools. The first conference to be held on this issue had the theme: "The Management of School Libraries" and it took place in Ibadan from 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1964. It was organized by the Western Division of the Nigerian Library Association, supported by UNESCO, the British Council and the Western Region Ministry of Education. Participants included librarians, school librarians, and teacher-librarians. Emphasis during the conference was laid on the needs and functions of school libraries; standards for school libraries; and library use in education for both pupils and teachers. The conference also succeeded in inaugurating the school library section of the Nigerian Library Association which later set up a committee to compile a standard list of books for primary and secondary school libraries.

The Department of Library Studies (now Department of Library, Archives and Information Science) University of Ibadan gave an overwhelming assistance and support to the school library section of the NLA especially with the setting up of the Abadina Media Resource Centre in 1972 as a laboratory to train school librarians and as a research center to investigate the problems of school librarianship. By 1978, the Resource Center had achieved a lot, which included the establishment of standards for Nigerian School Libraries and designed syllabuses for effective use of books and libraries for teaching library skills in schools (Elaturoti, 2002).

Like the West, the Eastern division of the Nigerian Library Association got a lot of support from both UNESCO and the British Council. They provided money, personnel and library materials for the libraries in the region. Between 1964 and 1968, they constantly organized refresher courses that trained over 300 teacher-librarians to run the school libraries.

The Eastern Nigerian School Libraries Association (ENSLA) became highly dynamic especially with their periodically published ENSLA BULLETIN. In the 1970s, it became a trailblazer by publishing the minimum standards for school libraries. The Regional and State Ministries of Education worked very closely with ENSLA to influence government policies on school libraries. According to Obi (1998), the ENSLA achieved a lot this period and these include: The approval of a minimum amount of money as library fee per student for the maintenance of school libraries; the reduction of the teaching load of teacher-librarians to enable them run school libraries more efficiently; the adoption of minimum standard for school libraries by the state government; sponsorship for teacher-librarian refresher courses and vacation induction courses for state library staff; and the appointment of a senior librarian to take charge of the model school library in the Ministry of Education, School Library Service Sector as well as liaise with the ministry in all issues concerning the school library system.

The Eastern Nigeria School Library Association continued to wax strong even after the region had been divided into nine states. Within each of these states, many landmarks were recorded in school library development. Many of the state governments recognized not only the important roles of teacher-librarians in schools and colleges, but also established library studies departments in institutions of higher learning with the aim of producing enough teacher-librarians who will man the numerous school libraries that were springing up. Best School Library Competition became initiated by the Anambra State Library Board to encourage hard work among teacher-librarians. At the same time, campaigns for the promotion of school libraries were vigorously pursued by the association.

In the Northern Region, the story was different. There was no strong school library section but rather, book loans in boxes were provided to primary and secondary schools and teacher training colleges. In 1969, the Regional library compiled a select list of books and periodicals for schools in Northern Nigeria to help them build up balanced library collections. It also circulated to its members, the minimum standards for school libraries. It could not go further than this because the Regional Library became transferred from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Information. However, under the new ministry, the state libraries have continued to thrive and to compete with other state libraries in terms of resources, facilities, library personnel, equipments and management strategies. Perhaps, some of the largest public library buildings in Nigeria are found in this region. Regional Library services have given way to state library services with the creation of 19 states within the old region.

### ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH LIBRARIES

Academic libraries are perhaps, the most developed libraries in Nigeria in terms of quality, quantity and meeting of user needs. Although academic libraries include University, Polytechnic, Colleges of Education and Technology and Research Institute libraries, for the purpose of this paper, it will be tailored down to libraries of tertiary institutions, which include Universities, Polytechnics, and Colleges of Education. Apart from supporting the teaching and learning processes of these tertiary institutions, these libraries provide materials to uphold and support postgraduate, faculty, college, institute, external and collaborative researches. They are also involved in community service (Oluyemisi, 2005).

Academic libraries originated in Nigeria in 1934 with the library of Yaba Higher College, a kind of vocational university. In 1947, the college was transferred to Ibadan where the library formed the nucleus of the University College Library established in 1948 as an affiliation to the University of London. In 1960 the University of Nigeria, Nsukka was established. In 1962, the University of Ibadan became a full-fledged university and in the same year, three other Federal

Universities were established, namely, Ahmadu Bello, Zaria, Lagos and Ife Universities. More Universities and their libraries came to be established as years rolled by with the result that in the year 2002, there were 46 universities and university libraries in Nigeria. The establishment of private universities since then has increased the number of Academic and research libraries in the country to 78.

Academic libraries support, enhance and facilitate the teaching and learning processes of these universities by providing materials and resources in the different fields of learning. According to Ifidon and others (2002), the traditional functions of universities are teaching, research and public service. These are complemented by other services, which include the provision of intellectual leadership, manpower development, promotion of social and economic modernization and international understanding. The objectives of the different University Libraries are derived from these general functions of the university system. Current performance of University Libraries, especially in the application of IT through CULNU, and their foreign sponsors and Agencies, has led to phenomenal growth in academic information dissemination.

### THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NIGERIA

The first legislation which was enacted in September 1964 and cited as The National Library Act, 1964 in Nigeria led to the official establishment of the National Library of Nigeria. The groundwork started as far back as 1962 when the Nigerian Library Association was formed, when Dr. Carl M. White, a scholar/librarian representing the Ford Foundation came to Nigeria with necessary technical personnel from the United States of America to assist in setting up the National Library of Nigeria. The 1964 Act was later examined by the first National Library Board which was constituted in 1966 and proposed substantial amendments and modifications. In 1970, the Act was repealed and substituted with the National Library Decree No. 29 of 1970. This is the law, which governs the National Library now. It had undergone minor amendments in the years 1976 and 1987.

The National Library of Nigeria has been providing several services to the nation. It has been providing resources for information acquisition, storage and delivery in all fields of human endeavour. As a national bibliographic center, it produces the national bibliography of Nigeria. It is a legal depository for the nation for all items published in the country. It compiles a Union Catalogue for the nation. The NLN has the intention of establishing branches in the 36 states of the country and has already done so in 14 states. These libraries perform national roles in library affairs in the states where they are established as against the state libraries which are established by the state governments and perform state roles. It ensures that Government Publications are stocked in the national library and made available to libraries within the country. It also stocks other items such as African Government Documents and Rare Books in its libraries. Within the Nigerian context, rare books are those books about Nigeria published anywhere in the world before the year 1900.

The National Library of Nigeria has been maintaining its national leadership role in professional practice and standardization for all libraries in Nigeria. Within the National Library System, National Centres have been established such as the Nigerian ISSN Centre, the Nigerian ISBN Agency, National Centre for Library Statistics and the National Centre for Inter-Library Lending. The National Bibliography of Nigeria which used to be published by the University of Ibadan till 1970 when it was handed over to the National Library continues to be produced to portray Nigerian publications as they emerge. As a National Bibliographic Agency, the National Library prepares and publishes catalogues, indexes, and abstracts. The National Union Catalogue houses cards of over 104 libraries in the country. By the de facto role of the Nigerian Library as adviser to the Federal and State Governments in

matters pertaining to the growth and development of libraries, it has made a lot of contributions such as: evolving a minimum standard for school libraries in Nigeria; the development of a blue print for the Virtual (Digital) library; the inauguration of Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria; ETF financial support to all libraries; convincing the government on the important role of libraries in the actualization of the Universal Basic Education (UBE); Readership Promotion Campaigns to inculcate in Nigerian citizens a reading culture – an annual event every first week of November.

### GOVERNMENT LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION CENTRES

Government Libraries and Information Centres are established by the government for Ministries, departments, and extra-ministerial parastatals. It is necessary that government's activities be brought to the knowledge of the people and so, government publications which constitute a sizable percentage of the resources in government libraries serve as an effective means of disseminating government information as well as interactive constant flow of information within the government circle. Apart from acquiring, storing, processing and disseminating information, the librarians in these libraries provide other services such as bibliographic compilation, database creation, indexing and abstracting services, document delivery, translation, etc. Sonnaik (1994) lists these government publications which include reports (annual or periodic), charts, enlightenment pamphlets or leaflets, in-house journals, gazettes, etc.

Even though Nigerian Government Librarianship began in the 1970s when the library schools in the country started to turn out professional librarians from their institutions to man such libraries, Oguarah (1975) asserts that the oldest organized government library can be traced to Lagos as far back as 1886 while at the same time he identifies a Department of Agricultural Research Library which was founded in 1889. In as much as it may be wrong to regard such libraries as Nigerian Government Libraries since the country, Nigeria, was not in existence then, the truth still remains that the bulk of the resources were colonial papers about some territories which later merged to become the Nigerian nation.

Government Libraries in Nigeria are believed to have fared worse than other types of libraries, in spite of their proximity to the government, especially when the Federal Government was situated in Lagos. Ogundana (2000) decried the willful neglect of government libraries which constitute the repositories of national records. According to him, this could bring about the mismanagement, and/or loss of the national memory of the past endeavours of the nation. He condemns government's attitude of lack of documentation, poor funding of government libraries by the government which owns them; and poor accommodation which faces such libraries. According to him, sometimes these problems could become so stifling that the library personnel are discouraged to the marrow and have no more inspiration to demonstrate standard practice. These early years of the development of government libraries were characterized generally by inadequate acquisition, storage, processing and even dissemination of documented instruments of administration, which represent past achievements, present transactions and projects and perhaps future prospects.

However, the years 1974 to 1991 were regarded as the glorious era of government librarianship in Nigeria because of the expansion policy of the government which affected libraries. More government libraries were established and equipped and the library personnel were encouraged to strive to become achievers. Proper documentation of government publications came into being. Their acquisition, storage, processing and dissemination became adequately addressed. This excitement among government librarians and information

personnel did not last for too long. When the capital city of Nigeria moved from Lagos to Abuja and the Ministries moved in 1992 the situation changed. First of all, there was acute accommodation problem facing everybody at Abuja especially the government itself. Ogundana (2002) complains that since the Federal Capital moved from Lagos to Abuja, it has not been well with government librarianship. The lack of accommodation in Abuja made it almost impossible for government libraries to exist. Many of the ministries which transferred to Abuja had to leave their libraries behind in Lagos for lack of accommodation. At the same time, he believes that the inconveniences will only last for a short time because the democratic government of Nigeria is already aware of the tremendous support and enhancement government libraries could give to its administration and will do everything possible to change the situation. The rate at which new buildings are being set up in Abuja is so high that accommodation problem will soon become a thing of the past and the ministries will call back their libraries.

## NIGERIAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Library service in Nigeria could not have been what it is today but for the very strong support of the Nigerian Library Association (NLA). The association was inaugurated on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1962 as a successor to the defunct West African Library Association (WALA) and since then, it has been the major force behind librarianship in Nigeria (Ehigator, 1992). It has over 5000 individual members drawn from all types of libraries – National, State (Public), School, Academic, and Special libraries. Membership to the association is open to practising librarians and library officers, information scientists and all those interested in the profession. It is made up of personal members, institutional members, student members, corresponding members, affiliated organizations and fellows of the association.

The highest administrative body of the NLA consists of the Governing Council, which is elected to office by votes of members and is headed by the President of the association. Other elected officers of the Council are First and Second Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary and Publicity Secretary. There are also Financial Secretary and the Ex-officio member who is the immediate past president. Part and parcel of this governing council are the Editor-in-Chief of the Associations publications, the Assistant Editor, State chapter chairmen, Chairmen of Sections of the association and eight councillors elected on the floor of the house. One can see that a council meeting of the Nigerian Library Association constitutes a full house whose activities are directed towards promoting library and information services in the country. Following the appointment of a full-time secretary since 1989, the association has been able to coordinate its affairs more successfully. It has waxed stronger and has put in place a lot of innovations in its activities. The Association holds its conference and General Meeting yearly to discuss issues concerning libraries and librarians in Nigeria. This year's conference – the 44<sup>th</sup> NLA National Conference and Annual General Meeting – was held at the National Centre for Women Development, Abuja from 18<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 2006 with the theme: "Libraries: Dynamic Engines for the Knowledge and Information Society". The author of this paper was a delegate to the conference. More than 300 delegates attended the conference from different parts of the country. Six members received the award of Fellow of the Nigerian Library Association (FNLA).

NLA has two important publications, namely, *Nigerian Libraries*, *Journal of the Nigerian Library Association* and *NLA Newsletter*. They are bi-annuals with the objective of celebrating Nigerian Librarianship through the provision of news and views and scholarly publications on librarianship.

Many state chapter also have their chapter journals for example, *Lagos Librarian* belongs to Lagos State Chapter while *The Library Practitioner* belongs to the Cross River State Chapter.

The Nigerian Library Association has been struggling to set up a permanent secretariat since its inception but has not succeeded in doing so. This situation actually retarded the progress that should have been made by the association because it poses problems of coordination in a country as large as Nigeria where the executive has to deal with 36 states and a Federal capital territory. However, it was announced in this year's conference that the association has secured land from the Federal Government for its permanent site at Abuja. If members of the association support the project en mass, a befitting permanent secretariat building will be completed in a few years time and the association will sit squarely in Abuja with the government and be in a position to contribute its very significant quota in building up an information society in Nigeria.

Perhaps, the single most important achievement of NLA in recent times is the Federal Government Decree No. 12 setting up Librarians' Registration Council in 1995 and the inauguration of the council members by the Government in the year 2002. It is strongly believed among members that, among other things, the council will regulate standards in Library Practice as well as harmonize Library Education in the country.

The landmarks of the achievements of the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) in the history of its existence up till date could be listed as follows:

1. The enactment of the National library Decree of 1970 establishing the National Library of Nigeria with branches in each state of the Federation.
2. The registration of NLA as a professional body under the Land perpetual Act Cap of Nigeria.
3. The development of different types of libraries in Nigeria which include Public libraries, the National library and its branches, School libraries, Academic libraries, special libraries and their services to the nation.
4. The appointment of a full-time secretary for the association, which has helped to coordinate more effectively the affairs and activities of the association.
5. The institution of awards within the membership of the association which include Fellow of the Nigerian Library Association (FNLA); and Eminent Service Award (ESA). Other awards are the Merit Award, the Best State Chapter Award, the Best State Public Library Service Award, E. B. Bankole Librarian of the Year Award, Dr James O. Daniel Award for the most Innovative Library-Based ICT Project of the Year 2005, and the newly instituted NLA Award for young library and Information Professionals (YLLPs). These are yearly awards which are highly competitive and vied for by all interested members. The 2007 FNLA award, had the University Librarian of University of Calabar, Prof. O. O. Lawal as one of the recipients.
6. The inauguration of the 36 state chapters of the association which have since then been poised for grassroots development.
7. The establishment of more Library Schools for manpower development within the profession.
8. The institution of 13 special interest sections of the association which help in running the association from different angles of the interest groups. These include: Academic and Research Libraries (ARL), Association of Government Libraries (AGOL); Association of News-media Librarians of Nigeria (ANLON); Association of Women Librarians of Nigeria (AWLIN); Association of Cataloguing, Classification and Indexing Librarians of Nigeria (CAT & CLASS); Nigerian Association of Law Libraries (NALL); Library and Information Science Teachers

(LIST); Public Libraries (PL); Association of Libraries for Visually Handicapped (ALVH); Preservation and conservation (PC); Aids Information Centre International (AICI).

9. The establishment of library Boards at the state level as the highest administrative body in charge of libraries within the state.
10. The establishment and inauguration of the first batch of 539 chartered librarians that were published in the Punch Newspaper in May 2005. More librarians will become chartered and registered as time goes on.

### PROBLEMS FACING NIGERIAN LIBRARIES

**Accommodation of Resources:** The problem of accommodation is perhaps the most sensitive problem because library resources must be organized and this should be done where rain and sunlight will not destroy them. Many libraries in Nigeria have accommodation problems. With some types of libraries, accommodation problem is quite acute while with some it is no longer as acute as it was about two decades ago. For example, academic and research libraries which are usually found in institutions of higher learning have good accommodation since they constitute one of the basic infrastructure in the University system because of their role in the teaching and learning processes of such institutions. A few of the university library buildings have been described as among the best in West Africa. State libraries are also well accommodated, especially, those in the State Capitals. Some state governments have been able to extend branches into the local government areas either by means of mobile libraries or by housing the resources in the well constructed library buildings. The newly built state library of Kano which has been described as the best in Africa, South of the Sahara is an edifice that can stand the test of time. Proper accommodation of library resources paves the way for good management strategies in information processing and delivery.

It is in the sectors of school libraries and government libraries that there are acute accommodation problems. According to Ogundana (2002), no other government library has adequate accommodation in Abuja except the library of the Secretary to the Federal Government. This assertion is very serious because the Nigerian Government library is a very sensitive infrastructure which the government needs to be able to work more effectively and efficiently. Elaturoti (1998) also asserts that the Federal Government is yet to implement its policies on the establishment of school libraries, and as a result, no serious accommodation has been provided for the few schools that have libraries.

**Staffing:** Many libraries in Nigeria are inadequately staffed. The inadequacy has to do with a lot of things which include shortage of staff, inexperienced and unskilled staff, poorly trained and ill-equipped staff, etc. There is shortage of staff all over the libraries because of the Federal government's embargo on employment in the past few years as a result of dwindling economy. Executives within the arms of government stopped employing new hands on the job causing shortage of staff all over the place. This also means excess workload for the employees already there. This attitude of overworking staff has its repercussions of grumbling, dissatisfaction, etc. Inexperience and lack of skill result from poor training and retaining of staff. However, the situation is gradually changing both quantitatively and qualitatively as many librarians now possess postgraduate degree qualifications. The para-professionals in the system have the motivation to improve on their qualifications with the very keen competition going on in the library schools. It is believed that the government embargo on employment will be lifted as soon as the financial situation of the country improves. By this, more people will be employed to adequately standardize the staffing system as well as assist in the achievement of effective service in information delivery and dissemination.

**Poor Funding:** Poor funding is, perhaps, the greatest problem that faces Nigerian Libraries. In spite of the fact that the Federal and State governments have set up most of the libraries by Acts of Law, their funding of these libraries leaves much to be desired. Even when lofty budgets are drawn and approved, only a small percentage of the amount is actually released to be spent by libraries. The case of funding of University Libraries in Nigeria is an open secret where 10% of the fiscal budget of the University is, by law, sanctioned to be spent on the library alone, but when the money comes, it is diverted to areas other than the library by the central administration. During Nigerian Library Association meetings and conferences, Nigerian University Librarians have complained unceasingly. At a point, this 10% became legally backed by law that it should be paid into a separate account for the Librarian to use to attend to the needs of the library. In spite of all that, the 10% library fund still remains a general fund to meet urgent financial needs of the university system. What we are saying here is the universities in Nigeria are seriously underfunded and that is the reason why the central administration constantly tampers with money earmarked for library use. We would want to believe that the problem of poor funding of libraries in the country will become a thing of the past in the near future when the financial situation of the country turns around.

Poor funding has continued to be the fate of many libraries in Nigeria with the result that there is inadequate provision of current journals in the libraries. This dearth of current journals has continued to bother librarians in Academic and Research Libraries with the result that they are looking for a way out of the predicament either through international organizations or through NGOs. Very recently, the World Bank, through the Federal Government, has been a great support to these libraries by providing money for developing the resources of the University Libraries in Nigeria. They have gone further to uplift a number of Nigerian University Libraries to the status of being their legal depository. From time to time, their publications are sent to these libraries to boost their collection and assist in research activities. University of Calabar is one of these libraries.

### Inadequate Application of Information and Communications Technology (ICT):

Information and communication Technology (ICT) has contributed a lot in the globalization process which has overtaken the world in recent times (Adimorah, 2005). Unfortunately, not much has been achieved in Nigeria in its application in spite of the fact that the government and its people are very much aware of the implications of ICT in the global economy. Library automation in Nigeria has been discussed, analyzed and articulated at different levels since the 1970s but up till now only a few libraries have been fully automated (Dada, 1999). It has generated a lot of seminars, conferences, and workshops, according to Aguolu (1998), Mohammed (1999), Idowu (2000), Akande (2001), Ebijuwu (2005) but the recommendations presented to the government have not been implemented as a result of lack of funds. The application of ICT in information acquisition, processing, storage, delivery and dissemination is definitely a cost effective venture in any developing nation such as Nigeria but at the same time, it is worthwhile since the advantages outweigh the inconveniences. According to a recent study by Oketunji and others (2002), ICT in libraries has been accepted by the Nigerian Government and Nigerian Libraries as the most realistic way of providing timely, accurate and efficient information services, hence the elaborate plan to automate all libraries and get them inter-connected to the Internet which is often referred to as the NuNet Scheme. The scheme is to be implemented in 5 phases beginning with the University Libraries. Already, 18 of the 29 Federal Universities are connected through dial-up e-mail facilities (USN, 2000) This will be extended to their libraries in the very near future. There is a VSAT Scheme in which half a dozen zonal VSAT stations

will be created and connected to nearby institutions through either ground cable or wireless radio. There is also the virtual Library Project in which the Federal Government intends to enhance access to national and international library resources thereby sharing such resources globally using digital technology. These are laudable schemes which may take some time to materialize fully. As the implementation moves from phase to phase, librarians should get acquainted with the technicalities of an automated library system so as to give optimum service to their clients who are already becoming sophisticated in the use of ICT. It is important to note that many of the special libraries in Nigeria have become fully automated funded by their parent institutions which established them. This is unlike Academic and Public Libraries which are still hoping to become fully automated some day. Among the automated special libraries which have become automated included the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NPC), and Libraries owned by the different Banks, etc. As a matter of fact, only very few libraries in Nigeria have been fully automated with their e-mails and websites and provide Internet services to their clientele.

The goal of any information system is to ensure that relevant information is available when and where needed and is supplied under optimal conditions of time format and cost. The automated library system is a quick and reliable means of achieving such a goal (Daniel, 1999).

#### **Absence of Formal National Policy on Libraries:**

Librarians and Information Personnel in Nigeria have been advocating for a formal National Policy on Libraries backed by an edict since the 1960s but have failed to achieve this either with the Federal or the State Governments.

The essence of such a policy is to provide guiding principles towards the achievement of library goals and objectives; to provide a focus on which plans and projects could be based; to provide authoritative backing to articulations and implementations of planned objectives affecting the library. It is surprising as much as it is disheartening that the governments are not yet aware of the sensitivity of this policy in demand. It is even more surprising that an information policy whose demand started only a few years ago, has been implemented and enacted by the Federal Government. However, the passing of the 1995 edict on the Librarian's council of Nigeria by the Federal Government and the subsequent inauguration of the council members in the year 2002 is enough consolation showing that better things may be in the offing for librarians in the future. Moreover, it is a dynamic step towards the achievement of a commission for libraries which can go into formulation of policies for libraries and for the association. Friends and well wishers of librarians all over the country have been waiting for this for years because they believe that it will constitute a first step towards achieving greater heights in the future. If the council organizes and plans properly, it will be able to tackle such problems as low professional esteem both by the librarians themselves and by the society. Funding of libraries by the governments might improve through interactions with those in authority and the facilitation of the automation of all libraries in the country could become a reality.

#### **Poor Documentation of Information:**

There is a problem of poor documentation of records and statistics in Nigeria. These records, which are usually indispensable instruments of administration, constitute documented evidence of past accomplishments, of present transactions and of projected plans of the government. Such national records are known to be very vital items of planning for national development. When such records are not available, people plan in a vacuum and as a result, the meager available funds are wasted in irrelevances. But when records such as statistics, are available in a long range pattern, proper planning is based on facts and figures and funds are

adequately utilized within such range. Perhaps, this is the reason why some already passed policies cannot be implemented like the policies governing the school library system in Nigeria just because of lack of documentation and preservation of the documents where they exist. At 40 years old and above, Nigerian libraries and librarians are ripe enough for change of attitude towards documents, which should be adequately acquired, processed, stored and disseminated to those that need them.

#### **Library Education for Manpower Training:**

In 1962, there was only one University in Nigeria offering various courses in Library Science. By 1964, the number rose to four (Awaritefe, 1983) and by the beginning of the new millennium, the number has risen to over 20 both within University programmes, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics.

For many years, there was an ongoing debate as to whether university based librarians should be treated as academic or administrative staff within the university system. There was also the long raging dispute between University of Ibadan Library School and Ahmadu Bello University Library School on whether Librarianship should be only a postgraduate program or not. The University of Ibadan which had a post graduate school in Library Science, was convinced that the profession is most suited for postgraduate level while Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria which had a Diploma programme and a First Degree programme disagreed with the policy. Within the youthful years of the Nigerian Library Association and the two Universities, these problems were resolved amicably. Now at the old age of 44, librarians in Academic Libraries are regarded as Academic Librarians who must research and publish before they can be promoted just like their counterparts in the teaching sector. Moreover, Library Schools in Nigeria now run different programmes ranging from Diploma, to First Degree, to Masters and to Ph. D. A sizable number of librarians and Library Officers are turned out every year from the Library Schools into the labour market. The Postgraduate Diploma which used to be the only postgraduate programme in Library Science in Nigeria in the 1970s, has been dropped and replaced with Master and Ph. D programmes. The department, which used to be called Library Studies Department, was changed to Department of Library, Archives and Information Science. With the setting up of the Librarians' Registration Council, there is the move to standardize and streamline the syllabuses of the Library Schools and to harmonize the degrees offered therein to fall in line with international standards. There is also the move to maintain high professional standard by screening professional practice with the aim of punishing offenders and upholding standard practice hence the institution of awards to qualified members of the association. With the plan of the Federal Government to support the Universal Basic Education (UBE) with libraries, the high turnout of librarians from the Library schools will meet up with the manpower demand in the labour market.

#### **PROSPECTS**

From the discussions above, one would say that there has been great improvement in Nigerian Librarianship since the Nigerian Library Association started 44 years ago. The profession has waxed stronger and stronger in spite of its problems which are gradually being solved. In library practice, the profession has improved tremendously. The Library Schools have continued to turn out hundreds of librarians of different cadre both professionals and para-professionals and the number of librarians have continued to increase by leaps and bounds. In spite of the problems enumerated in this paper which are surmountable provided the government responds positively towards the needs of the libraries, Librarianship has a great future in Nigeria. This great future will be facilitated by the adoption, implementation and usage of ICT in all its

ramifications. Information as it is acquired, processed, stored, and disseminated in libraries is valuable, vital national resource and Nigeria needs it not only for survival but also for maintaining sustainable growth and development. The economic value of libraries in providing needed information which improves technical know-how and increase in productivity, provides the user with commercial opportunity in many aspects of the economy. The economic value of libraries as employer of labour not only in the public sector but also in the many areas of private employment that depends on libraries for their livelihood is clearly enriching. Jegede (1994) describes library as "energy source" for national development and Nigerian libraries will indeed fuel the different dimensions of national development and cause innovations and progress to be recorded.

With the establishment of the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) by the Federal Government in 2000, one would believe that the Nigerian government has now realized the value of information and would be ready to facilitate its generation, application and management. The NuNet scheme and other relevant strategic plans are to develop appropriate infrastructural facilities and networks which will promote information generation for effective decision making at all levels. Even though ICT has not taken root in Nigeria steps have already been taken to turn Nigeria into an information society through the entrenchment of information and communication's technology (ICT). The future is very bright for libraries and librarians in Nigeria.

It is only when adequate information is given in the right quality and the right time that, one can guarantee good planning and policy successes by the government. On this basis the government of Nigeria must improve the structural organization and function of libraries in Nigeria so that accurate, timely and relevant information could be obtained by those who need them for the purpose of socio-economic development and good governance.

## CONCLUSION

The history of libraries and librarians in Nigeria since 1962 is a long one with recorded problems and prospects. Some of the problems have been surmounted while others are being tackled with the view of solving them. With the outcome of the 44<sup>th</sup>. NLA conference and AGM which took place in Abuja in July 2006 it is obvious that libraries and librarians have survived in Nigeria and will continue to contribute towards national development in terms of information acquisition, processing, storage, dissemination, and delivery. As dynamic engines for the knowledge and information society, libraries in Nigeria will continue to strive to deliver ICT application and usage to Nigerians of all works of life so as to transform our people into a knowledgeable and information society. The yearly practice of holding a library week during which children are encouraged to read to form the habit of reading, will train Nigerians to inculcate a reading culture thereby preparing them for knowledge and information acquisition as a habit. With the resuscitation of the West African Library Association (WALA) two years ago, the coast of Librarianship in Nigeria will enlarge into regional associations and when these collaborate to form consortiums in library practice, the focus would be on continental issues and problems whose solutions may be peculiar to Africa but at the same time in line with the globalised world systems.

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