Library and Information Services For Change: Nigerian Perspectives

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Abstract

Library and information services are major criteria for the social, cultural, economic and political development of any nation. This paper proposes appropriate deployment of IT in Nigerian libraries especially the Internet as a cornerstone of information infrastructure that will bring about changes in our information services delivery to attain competitive edge against our contemporaries in the developed countries. The changes we make in this competitive world are the threshold of our significance. There are often significant gaps in consistencies and duplication in knowledge resources within the libraries. This makes knowledge audit a critical necessity for any library that is serious about managing its knowledge in a systematic manner. In supporting the analysis of community information satisfaction, librarians must engage in talking to community and union leaders, teachers, contact groups and call an open meeting of all members of the community, to know their feelings about services offered by libraries in those communities. From this knowledge, library managers will be able to know where they have failed and where they need to improve, including in the enhancement of national security through production of jingles, creation and management of databases for security agencies and collaboration with local vigilantes. It is imperative to apply the internet and other new technologies that are foreign to us, in our library and information services, for the adoption of the required change, to address youth restiveness, promote indigenous knowledge, support communities in civic engagements and participation in political processes, provide traditional and online skill acquisition services, promote reading culture and instill a love of reading in the society.

Keywords: Nigerian libraries, IT deployment, knowledge audit, information

1.1 Introduction

The topic is both apt and timely because it has to do with what obtains in other countries and what is peculiar to Nigeria. Librarianship is in a period of great transition. Expanding uses of IT and the dramatically changing social, cultural, economic and political environments are forcing librarians to re-examine their

profession, our services, our products and ask tough questions about our future relevance and viability. Over the course of the last century, there had been a number of significant forces in our society that had impacted on the way in which libraries have shaped and provided services.

When librarians speak about public access to information, people should listen. When librarians provide services, people should use them. In Nigeria, few librarians however are aware just how far their voices carry. Even fewer recognize the societal power of their voices. As the public scramble for its voice in the information space, no one is better equipped to serve as the public voice than librarians. Indeed, the important role libraries must play in the 21st century is measured by the quality of services we render and which must be recognized by the people, especially by many high-level policy makers, for the services to create the changes we envisage. But we have not been pushing. After all, we are the information professionals with extensive experience in providing information, services and promoting the public's right to know. The topic is all encompassing as it relates to all aspects of human life and development vis-a-vis library and information services.

The topic is challenging librarians to seek new ways of rendering services. We will be discussing the revolutionary changes that have occurred in the global information delivery system since the advent of the commercial Internet in the mid 1990s and other issues. The networked world is widely different from the pre-networked one because networks have peculiar economic characteristics. Moreover, in the presence of pervasive networks, the amount of data and information that can be generated and transferred in real time is dramatically increasing. The successful library, and the successful librarian, must be able to design and implement strategies to take advantage of,

rather than suffer from these changes (Tapscott, 2001).

Whether you believe it that "the Internet changes everything" or you take a much more conservative stance, it is undeniable that the Internet and the many kinds of information technology (IT) that the global network has spawned should be important tools in the strategic arsenal of the modern library. Understanding how to appropriately deploy IT in the library now the Internet is a cornerstone of information infrastructure requires changes in our information services delivery because we are in a competitive information world. The changes we make in this competitive world are the threshold of our significance. We shall discuss library and information services for change in line with some of the sub-themes.

2.1 Literature Review

2.2 Knowledge Audit
Knowledge audit results from knowledge management. Hanzel (2000) argues that the 21st century economy has become predominantly knowledge-based and those organizations including libraries that do not have a clear and effective strategy to harness and utilize knowledge for its services will find it extremely difficult to complete on the local, national and global markets. This makes it important for library managers to be able to identify the knowledge needs as well as the knowledge assets of their libraries and how to manage them effectively and efficiently to give them a competitive edge over their rivals. Some libraries operate without utilizing the knowledge they need because they do not know where to find it. Consequently, there are often significant gaps in consistencies and duplication in knowledge resources within the libraries. This makes knowledge audit a critical necessity for any library that is serious about managing its knowledge in a systematic

manner. Hylton (2008) states that the fundamental cause of the failure of knowledge management is the serious oversight of excluding knowledge audit in the overall knowledge management plans and initiatives. Knowledge audit uncovers important insights about the state of knowledge in a library and how it flows. Paramasivan and Chong (2000)believe that this knowledge audit is a fact-finding mission. It is an analysis, interpretation, and a reporting activity which includes a study of the library's information and knowledge regulations and policies, and its knowledge structure and flow. Knowledge audit begins by identifying the knowledge needed in the library, then draw up the inventory of knowledge (knowledge assets at its disposal) in order to establish the gaps in knowledge. When properly done, it determines the library's knowledge health (status) and it helps in the library and information services for the change we need in Nigerian libraries.

2.3 Analysis of the Community Satisfaction Survey

Quality library service is the hope of all the people. This is one service that libraries in Nigeria has overlooked for a very long time, and that is why our efforts are not appreciated. In supporting the analysis of community information satisfaction, Ibenne (2010) outlines that librarians must engage in talking to the gatekeepers in our communities of influence (those whose opinions are sought eg. union leaders, teachers, youth leaders, women leader, community workers), contact groups and attend meeting, call an open meeting of all members of the community, to know their feelings about services offered by libraries in those communities. From this knowledge, library managers will be able to know where they have failed well and where they need to do more. It is also believed that from this analysis, libraries will provide better services that will finally give satisfaction to

the people, attract more patronage, improve the image of the library in the eyes of the people and, change their perception of what they expect from the library.

2.4 Library and Information Services for National Security

Security is an encompassing phenomenon that is paramount to individuals, entities, communities and even nations, security has to do with self-preservation which is the first law of existence (Dasuki, 2013). The security situation in Nigeria is well documented, known by every citizen and affects everyone. This implies that everyone and every organization should play a role in enhancing national security. The question then is, has the library in its services made any impact in enhancing security in Nigeria? Our services have been watery in this regard. For libraries and librarians to be involved in catalyzing national security, we must understand that in the reality of belonging to nation state, there are no neutrals. If there is insecurity in our areas of influence, nobody will visit the library, let alone sit down to use the services (Unagha, 2018). The following services which a library can offer to be part of the war on threats to our security include.

i. Production of Jingles: Libraries can act as a catalyst for national security by producing radio and television jingles. This requires librarians to be conversant with areas of threat to national security. The jingles should be able to project library as a partner in exposing potential threats to our collective security.

ii. Creation and management of database: Libraries should maintain current database in national security to be made available and accessible to the citizens and government. The database centre should be responsible for collection, classification, storage, publication and dissemination of data on security and insecurity available anywhere in the country

and outside the country. This can be made possible through newspaper cuttings, social media postings, liaison with security agencies (Amy, DSS, Police, EFCC, etc).

iii. **Collaboration**: Libraries should collaborate with neighbourhood watches, local vigilantes and fashion ways of making sure information on national security reaches the people in the remotest areas of the country. This collaborative effort can be achieved as part of the extension services of the library (which we have overtime forgotten), usually undertaken with the objective of reaching citizens who may be in danger of attack by real or perceived enemies to their security.

Adapting to Change

Powerful forces are competing for the next generation information management system in order to shape the future of their countries. The Internet, newspaper, radio and television houses and recently bloggers are all competing to take the place of the library in information management. Librarians should therefore, learn that technology has become a key component of their clientele daily lives. We should create spaces for IT services. In the immortal words of S.R. Ranganathan, "a library is a growing system". Libraries must adopt to changes in their services to remain alive. As information managers, we must do the following:

Ø Think of the library as an untapped resource for addressing changes in our polity. Have conversations regularly with government; explore interests, capabilities and opportunities.

Ø Think outside of the wall of the library and beyond collection and circulation. Understand the issues of national development and explore how the library can make positive contribution.

Ø Build relationships, do not wait for government and stakeholders to invite you to a conversation because they will never do. Initiate the conversation. Be visible (Thank God for the point of graduation induction by LRCN).

Ø Think of events to sponsor or partner with relevant organizations that relate to issues to our communities of influence, to demonstrate our relevance (Carols, Thanksgiving, festivals, etc).

Ø Strengthen neighbourhood and champion the cultural lives of communities where libraries are located.

Address Youth Restiveness

Young people all over the world, are vital and important segment of the society in which we operate. Their energies, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pace of changes in national development through their creative talents and labour power a nation makes giant studies in economic development and social attainment. Sokari (2006) agrees that information is necessary for people to be liberated from shackles of ignorance^ misconceptions, economic stagnation, social unrest and political unrest. Therefore, library and information services, targeted towards the youths should be provided to guide their activities. Libraries should mount services to monitor users of e-library to be sure they are not used for cyber-crime cyber-fraud and terrorist tendencies.

2.5 Library and Information Services in Education

i. Data Curation: The digital revolution is transforming the way in which scientific research is conducted. This is where data curation comes in. Data curation is concerned with the activities of management and preservation of data. Some researchers believe that data sets have to be destroyed after they have been processed, results

generated and conclusion drawn. What I am purposing here is that libraries create a service where data can be curated for future use. The source data is rarely made available with the publication of the article. Without access to source data, another researcher in the same field must use another data, inference and extrapolation to fill the gap between the information represented in the article and the full potential that could be derived from the raw (source) data. The service should share source data which may lead to new discovery and use within and outside the library discipline, thereby fostering interdisciplinary research and learning (Witt, 2008). Apart from the value in reproducing the original result, shared data can also be used to advance the original research or another line of inquiry. I know that researchers' inadequate storage capacity, confidentiality concerns, intellectual property rights and complexity are some of the stumbling blocks to open sharing or data. If librarians can use institutional repository of research outcomes to canvass for data curation, it will be a brand new service to Nigerian libraries.

ii. **Digital Literacy Services:** The main justification of asking libraries in Nigeria to offer digital literacy services comes from the fact that libraries had a major interest in the advancement of literacy as part of their mission. With the onset of the information and knowledge revolution, and the crucial role currently played by the Internet, it requires an expanded vision of literacy services-to ensure the building of an inclusive society free from the digital divide as we are already in the digital age. Public libraries which have the important role of providing access to information in various formats-ranging from print to multi-media, digital to non-digital formats, need to expand their services to digital literacy training services. Digital literacy as a variety of skills associated with using ICT to find, evaluate, create and communicate information. It is the technical and cognitive skills people employ to use computers to retrieve information, interpret what they find and judge the quality of the information Clark and Visser, (2011). Digital literacy closes the digital divide and sets citizens online to enjoy the benefits of modern ICTs. It reduces poverty, hunger, improves health and education and achieves many of UNs Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Dean, 2016).

Promotion of Indigenous Knowledge
This is another area in which libraries in Nigeria have not fared well in their services. Public libraries must be in the forefront of providing services that promote indigenous knowledge. (A man asked the child where the source of the maize he is eating is from, but the boy simply answered, 'I don't know"). Besides being venues for the reading and lending of books, public libraries are well placed to 'address issues of sustainability, empowerment and development of communities. The problem is that our public library services are urban-centered. In Gwanda, Zimbabwe, the community library established 29 study circle programmes which provide support to group activities in different parts of Gwanda. Some of the activities include, soap making, vegetable and nutritional gardening, poultry, goat rearing and craft making. These activities transformed the livelihoods of community members in the poorest communities in the country.

The library uses cellphones to facilitate communication with the group members, funders and marketers. (Herz & Sperling 2004). This is lacking of our libraries.

Library Entrepreneurship Services
The acquisition of entrepreneurship skills to determine not only the degree of which individuals are self-reliant but at which

her nation is rated in terms of economic development. Entrepreneurship development is an important factor in nation building which libraries must key into. Nation's with large economies across the globe including African countries are those that can boast of their economic potentials. Thus, the success and failure of any nation's economy largely depends on the level of skills demonstrated by her citizenry in which entrepreneurial skill is a key factor. This will help in shifting the focus of our citizen from non-existent white-collar jobs to self-reliance jobs. Libraries should provide skill acquisition services. This should include the traditional and online skill acquisition.

Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) Services

The aim of DEAR is to promote reading culture and instill a love of reading on a local and national scales. The Nigeria Library Association (NLA) through the National Assembly should seek to enact a law on a day to be tagged DEAR. It aligns with the literacy activities. In DEAR, libraries should assemble various information materials and distribute to people to read during an allocated time. Awards and prizes can be given. The day is to immortalize libraries and their activities. This will also curb illiteracy in our country.

3.6 Library and Information Services and the Political Process

One of the core mandates of the public libraries is to support communities in civic engagement and political participation. However, libraries in Nigeria are encouraged to adopt the London Public Policy on use of library resources and services during election. Luckily and surprisingly, the services to be provide in Nigeria libraries for citizen's political participated has been published by Nene Favour Obasi of Abia State Polytechnic, Aba. Unfortunately, she found out that the services which are critical to the public

libraries' performance in relation to quality and relevant services for political participation are either lacking or not sufficient in the fourteen libraries studied across the nation (Obasi, 2015). The libraries did not keep adequate records of previous elections to guide citizens in subsequent elections. Election Tribunal judgments are not acquired by libraries. She recommended that libraries, especially public libraries should go for a rescue mission of providing political participation services which will help in educating, re-orientating, informing and enlightening our citizens.

Conclusion

Perhaps the most powerful bottleneck to some of the changes discussed above is human inertia, new technologies and new ways of delivering library service, while offering advantages, entail costs in the form of learning to use the new technology or simply stopping the old routine. While easily dismissed, these considerations can spell the difference between success and failure in a fledging library service. It have been discussed that we must find it appropriate to apply the internet and IT to our library and information services and apply new library and information services that are foreign to us, but needed by our clientele for the required change in the society.

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