Revitalizing School Libraries for Enhanced Service Delivery

Aminu Saleh, Hussaini Suleiman and Suleiman Sambo

aminusalehpantami@gmail.com, hsuleimanabu@gmail.com, sulebasawa@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Revitalization of libraries with modern innovative services that are necessary to bring libraries to the users to encourage independent learning and lifelong education would help schools libraries to provide effective service delivery to its users. This paper is set to look into Revitalization of School libraries for enhanced service delivery. It highlighted the roles of school libraries in this present era. It captures revitalization of school libraries for the future management of information resources and the need to review the curricula of library school towards preparing the 21st Century Librarian, Libraries and students. It captures space management in the library and shows how access to information can be enhanced by changing the mindset of librarians. It concluded that school libraries need to revitalize their services by transforming the way information is provided to users for enhanced service delivery. It provided a way forward that school libraries should be equipped with high class technology to provide and compete with other libraries globally and they should provide resources and equipment that would be user friendly to all categories of students irrespective of their background.

Keywords: Enhancement, Revitalizing, School Libraries, Service Delivery.

Introduction

Library and information services have undergone various stages of transformation from the inception and this date back to the pre-writing era when human brains served as the only repository of ideas and knowledge. Information was transmitted from one person to another through word of mouth and the human brain was not able to store and retain all the knowledge available. This led to the emergence of writing in places like Egypt, Babylon, Sumerian, Persia, Assyria, Phoenicia etc. the art of writing made it possible for knowledge and information to be recorded on clay tablets, papyrus sheets, stones, parchments, vellum, papers, bark of Trees etc. The libraries in times past were seen as a collection of physical books which were accessed from shelves and used on a reading desk and a place for manual borrowing and lending. This for long has been the notion that people had about libraries. As such the libraries had little value in the eyes of the community. It was not perceived to be a place that can contribute to solving societal needs. This has been the notion particularly in Developing countries till recently with the coming of computers and advancement in technologies.

(Ramana, 2010) *Change is inevitable and is a natural phenomenon. In the library and information science, this change has been brought by Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) among other factors. ICT has tremendous impact on revitalization of '[library operations, resources, services, library and information professionals must, of necessity, develop expert technological competencies required to make the best use of opportunity ICT offers in order to meet up needs of services and change the complex information needs of the user community.*

Today's library users are now more digital native and digital immigrants who are ready to leverage their digital skills to enhance their access to information to meet their information needs. The libraries have continued to play a dominant role in the educational development of the citizenry through information provision, both in an

academic environment and in the public sector. In revitalizing our contemporary school libraries, services and library information science education we need to embrace the current trends in accessing information, changing libraries and changing libraries through enhanced access making the libraries relevant. This role tends to vary, depending on the user group and the level of developments in the society.

School libraries

School libraries are the type of libraries established in a primary or secondary school. It is an integral part of the school community. School libraries pursue the vision, principles of the school management. (Fakomogbon etal, 2012) Opine that school libraries help to support the school curriculum by providing up-to-date information to keep teachers and students abreast of new development. The school library compliments the work of the classroom teacher with the ultimate goal of ensuring that each student has equitable access to resources, irrespective of home opportunities or constraints. School library reflects and encourages collaborative learning and sharing of ideas. School library remains the power house of an educational institution; any educational institution without a library is as lifeless as a motor car without an engine and a body without a soul.

Role of school libraries

Today, 'Important goals of global education is to develop student's sense of belonging and instill the sense of right and wrong in children in order to be responsible citizens'. Schools are the educational institutions wherein children are guided and trained to be disciplined and enlightened individuals. Information professionals agree that "Libraries Change Lives" which is a universal truth, for seeing the kind of reference resources and the scholarly works they contain, apart from the services they offer to the school community, the conservatory library is crucial as it is the foundation on which other awareness is erected upon. (Fayose, 1995) Stated the best learning is a situation whereby trainees discover knowledge and apply for their personal benefit.

Revitalization of school libraries for future management

ICT has changed the school libraries in a profound way. Computers, networked, media and electronic resources had become an integral part of the school programs for the past decade. This has been emphasized as School Library Media Centre (SLMC), School Resources Centre (SRC), or Educational Media Centre (EMC).

All spheres of school libraries and learning facilities are being affected by ICT massively. (Singh, 2014) Quote "Robbins and Coulter change is any alterations in people, structure or technology. Change involves moving from the current state things, the status quo, to a new state thing. It is therefore a process of moving from what is known to the unknown". School library served as the Centre for fostering long-life learning, experiences and changes are identified with the emergence technology. ICT has a tremendous impact on the performance and services of every institution and organisation; libraries are not excluded from it. The impact of ICT has transformed the 'traditional library' into 'automated library'. 'Digital library' and' virtual library' are considered the birth of ICT. Majority of libraries nowadays are operating as hybrid libraries due to digital

libraries being a well organised collection of electronic resources which is a very complex and dynamic entity.

According to (Singh, 2014) ICT has brought phenomenal change in the information collection, preservation and dissemination scene of the world. It is a complex entity because it is completely based on ICT and the concept is of recent origin. Its main aim is to provide ready access to the required information at the right time to the right user with right information. The collections of digital libraries are not limited to the document surrogates; they extend to digital artefacts which cannot be represented or distributed in printed formats. Therefore, a digital library is not a single unit, but a complex and multiple units that provide instant access to all information, for all sectors of society, from anywhere in the world.

In view of these (Ballantyne, 2010) says Librarians will need to add skills from knowledge management, social media, participatory communication and information technology to their existing core focus on content.

So also, (Ochai, 2012) believed that future libraries will play a wider range of roles. They will be more active in opening access to information and knowledge in dissemination (not just for collecting and documenting) global goods in catalyzing knowledge sharing among people … and in providing a range of targeted services and products. He further, added that future libraries will be more and more e-libraries providing access to current and archival knowledge in a wide range of digital format

Therefore, in these context libraries, librarians, library information science education and services rendered in all part of the world must be revitalized in order to cope up with current trend of technology in information seeking behaviour of its users, etc. The day has come to adopt change in operation and services of libraries. Beside, that libraries manager can emulate management at par with information management in the library remotely.

(Reagon, 2005) says not only has the librarian's role change from "keeper of books" to "information manager", the traditional librarian is able to move out the "institutionalized" library setting to the "deinstitutionalized" information environment where he can perform a variety of roles as "information broker", website "developer", "information specialist", " knowledge Manager", "software librarian" and "information analyst"

Modern information management therefore requires a lot of flexibility in terms of library space and services (Freeman, 2005) conceptualizing the library of the 21st century, view it as the only centralized location where new and emerging information technologies can be combined with traditional knowledge resources in a user-focused, services-rich environment that supports today's social and pattern of learning, teaching and research as to the internet that isolate people. He proposes a library that will offer 24 hour access with critical services and technology provided and located when and where they are needed. (Saleh, 2016) Assert that application of computers and other ICT to perform traditional library house-keeping operations such as acquisition, cataloguing, circulation, references and serial control is viewed as the library automation while, the uses of platform where by librarians can generate, store, retrieve, preserve and transmit information within and outside libraries have increased the information processing capacity of the economy at the exponential rate and simultaneously enhance the salience of knowledge-based inputs in every aspect of production. It also enables libraries to dramatically reduce the cost of generating, storing, transmitting and processing information

throughout for effective and efficient management. (Chisenga, 1999) Affirmed, that information professionals make valuable contributions to the growth of the global information infrastructures. Therefore, in view of these Information managers in this age should be proactive, visionary and be aware of the happening in the new information environment.

The changing school library environment

The changing global information has brought with it changing concepts, function and services of the traditional libraries. The role of libraries has equally broadened beyond the traditional libraries model with its emphasis on physical resources. "The concept of libraries as a physical structure is rapidly changing to that of a digital environment. While the "brick and mortar" library has not disappeared completely, we are moving closer to physical and virtual information hubs. (Ochai, 2012). With the advent of technology going into the libraries no longer requires physical visit but virtually. Libraries management and resources are increasingly being expanded to include digital formats to support user's expectations. Other notable changes on the library scene are that librarians are becoming information and knowledge professionals. Librarians have hitherto pride themselves as they measure the effectiveness of their library collections in terms of volume of books and journal titles. This emphasis has shifted to accessibility to collections/databases in some distant locations. It is no longer ownership but accessibility to desired information that now counts. User information demands are increasing in terms of access to facilities at their desktop, I-pad and smartphones.

The emerging information revolution caused technological advances. This has changed the nature of libraries as well as societal expectations of needed library services which now require the new knowledge and skills which need to be applicable by nations in the wider world in order to go with current trends.

The need to review the curricula of library schools

One of the keys to focus is on the curricula of the library schools. The curricula of library schools need surgical overhauled and geared towards preparing students for the 21st century librarians and information professionals taking into account, the skills, the trends and the competencies. The current curricula need to be more geared towards information and system management to strengthen students' knowledge in ICT in addition to have a solid foundation in library science. The present curricula for the Bachelor degree in library science especially in developing countries need to be beefed up and strengthened further in the elective courses with more credit units to enable the graduate function effectively and efficiently in the discipline.

How do the library schools prepare their students for this universal market? The strong belief is that our library school has no other choice than to change now because it can no longer be business as usual. (Daniel, 2012) Posit that in the unfolding scenario, it is important to emphasize the need to prepare the 21st century library and information professionals, because not to prepare is to prepare to fail. It is mandatory on school libraries to revitalize the profession to take up the 21st century role.

Space management in libraries

Library as a space refers to the study of libraries as built environments including their cultural, geographical, and historical contexts, as well as their representative properties as social, political and informational space. (Buchaman, 2007) Describe library place as: Physical entities where a complex mix of activities, processes, actions, and performances occur on a daily basis. (Abdullahi, 2016) Added that we know that they acquire an ever-changing array of cultural resources for public use.... Accordingly, a wide variety of people (users of all kinds) visit libraries, bringing their individual values, beliefs, expectations, assumptions, daily practices, and cultural awareness. How does this complicated set of characteristics, including elements from the personal, the private, the public, the physical, the intellectual, and the cultural, coalesce into the space or place we call the library. The libraries proposed to manage its space in the light of 21ˢᵗ century dynamics. It highlighted strategies for meeting users' needs and expectations using the notion of library space. Libraries are applying the concept of learning space to re-adjusting its services in line with the 21ˢᵗ century dynamics in education. (Saleh, 2016) "pose that space saving and management technology has made it easier to store very large information in a very small and easy to bear on compact disk and microchips, technology has given another score on revitalization of libraries. Large volumes of text and reference materials such as encyclopedia are stored on those media to save library space." The concept of learning landscapes has become ubiquitous in any sector of education, encouraging networks of 'discovery, and discourse between students, faculty, staff, and a wider community', with a clear recognition that libraries need to use space more effectively as well as efficiently. The deployment of technological tools ascertain the progress in libraries space management, whereby information centers, information service providers and managers, which are librarians, have progressively transformed their information systems and services to provide additional apart from the traditional approaches, by digitized information and online services of all sorts in real time at 24/7 running to meet the information needs and expectations of their teaming customers remotely. Library space management inspired by the following philosophy in revitalizing libraries space is guided by:

- Library as a learning common
- Library as scholarly common

Enhance accessing to information

There is a rapidly expanding stock of scientific knowledge. Yet access to this pool of knowledge is often required by governments, institutions and organizations for enhancing and sustaining effective access to information. The benefit of ICT enhanced access to information resources and services. Libraries can expose its users to a much larger collection than it can be housed physically, because users can access information remotely. The Internet represents the application of varieties of software platforms, resources, and services which enable information access in dual modes (physical/direct and remote) regardless of the time of need. (Jimba, 2016) Added that these evolving Information Technology gadgets which enable access to information resources through new platforms such as iPads, e-readers, smartphones and personal computers. More importantly however, physical location is no longer a necessary prerequisite for access and use. Thus in the digital age, the library is now defined not by the number of books held in the collection, but by how electronic

resources can be accessed across platforms and from remote locations. Digital technologies allow users to access to information without being physically available in the library and this has revitalized libraries to the fact that information can be accessed 24/7 digitally regardless of physical wall boundaries.

Changing libraries through enhanced access, Grouping the entire matters hence, we can say that as the world is dynamic as changes occur time to time likewise, "Change has occurred in Libraries" that is to say Technology has revitalized libraries, librarianship and library information science education around the whole world. If libraries and librarians want to be relevant in the 21ˢᵗ century, repositioning libraries must begin with how they relate to and provide access to information resources for their changed users.

The explosive information revolution has placed information at people's finger tips. A click at a button on the computer and smart phones can unearth enormous amount of information. In such a scenario, the tendency is to rely on self rather than the librarian in the search of information. If information can be obtain so effortlessly, why should user want to come into a library instead of obtaining same at home or in the convenience of an office. In a nutshell, we should look forward to solving our prospect users' problems in the near future. Finally, (Buckland, 1989) maintains that the major role of library services is facilitating access to information resources. Every other service rendered by the library is considered as secondary. So the question poses here – what librarians need to do to remain relevant in revitalizing libraries.

First, we must acquaint ourselves with technology and accept digital libraries that house e-formats as what will redefine the future libraries. In trying to revitalize the traditional concept of a library as a physical building, any user that need to access information resources and services must make their self-available in the library. We must embrace the fact that the information resources cautiously guard can no longer be confined in printed materials accessible only in a single, physical location, but from a web-based platform which provides access to as many people as would require the service which can be accessed 24/7 digitally regardless of physical wall boundaries.

Secondly, – the next generation of libraries will be hosted on the evolving technology of the internet. Unfortunately, this technology is not defined wholly by people who share vision of access. To be part of this revitalization, librarians must take special interest in how this technology is developing and ensure that we make inputs to the process.

Thirdly, users are no longer patient enough to wait for information. They need urgent information. If we cannot provide them with up-to-date and accurate information, then we run the risk of irrelevance in our profession. This results in an unfortunate reality whereby pretenders are hanging just across the corner to take over the profession image.

Fourthly, the curriculum of library training requires a surgical overhaul. All Academics, professors, wanting to keep their jobs and prestige are woefully failing to reinvent themselves and the curriculum of instruction.

We need to focus and look forwards at how we can enhance access to the library. To do this involves a simple skill to monitor changing evolutions in technology and societal habits. The concept of a learning hub has been implemented with the library providing access to digital formats through the internet and making the reading

space much more relaxed and hospitable. Not only so, the library has become a hotspot where readers can connect to the web across different technological platforms.

To round it up therefore, we owe this profession a supreme duty to understand that things have changed, and that, very drastically too. This understanding is what will change the way we offer our services and how we reinvent ourselves to remain relevant in this crowded world of information provision and use. Our job profile must now be to provide access to information resources using the digital platform.

Jimba recommended that, 'Information is Power'. "Nobody gives up power easily". Librarians must not be the exception. If Libraries and librarianship are the holders of information, then we are the holders of power. In the game of power, if you lose, you're never going to gain it again. We don't need to look forward to a day when librarians will have lost power and their prime position taken over by those who do not understand the basics of cataloging and classification.

Revitalization of libraries with modern innovative services that are necessary to bring libraries to the users to encourage independent learning and lifelong education, and ways they could be incorporated into the services delivery of our libraries as a way of repositioning libraries in the whole world.

Conclusion

It concluded that revitalization of libraries with modern innovative services that are necessary to bring libraries to the users to encourage independent learning and lifelong education would help schools libraries to provide effective service delivery to its users. School libraries need to revitalize their services by transforming the way information is provided to users for enhanced service delivery.

Way forward

School libraries should be equipped with high class technology to provide and compete with other libraries globally and they should provide resources and equipment that would be user friendly to all categories of students irrespective of their background.

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