THE ROLE OF LIBRARIANSHIP IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This paper explores the important role of an aspect of social science (Library Science) education to the social and economic development of any nation. While it does not overlook types of libraries and different services provided by the library, the paper is of the opinion that, given its rightful place in the scheme of things the impact of library services will be felt at every sector of the economy, and so act as a tool for social and economic reconstruction.

Introduction

Libraries are store houses and disseminators of information to the community or society and so a potential socio-political force which has not yet been fully tapped in Nigeria. The need for development of information, knowledge and culture via the library has been stressed in so many articles in librarianship. It is not a hyperbolic assertion but merely stating the obvious that no nation can truly be developed if the library is not part and parcel of its development plan. For this ambition to become positive, the role of library services should invariably have its pride of place at urban, rural and entire society.

What is A Library

For an easy understanding of the subject matter, it is, important to first and foremost define the term library. A lay man's definition of the word library is "a place where books are kept". Another simple definition of the word library is a collection of books organized, for use. (Bomoh Ali, Joseph, 1997) defined librarianship as the application of knowledge in the collection, organization, preservation and the use of graphic and other materials in libraries and continuous improvement and extension of library services". Alhassan Philip (2003) observed that library is a collection of books and a building containing them. It can also be defined as a place where books and non book materials are collected, preserved for easy retrieval.

Before now, arrangement of library books followed no definite pattern. But as librarianship began to gain ground as a profession in the 19th century, practitioners began to device methods of standardizing their practices. The regular way of organizing library materials based on arbitrary principles are replaced with a more organized method. Nowadays, a collection of books without proper organization is technically not a library.

According to Encyclopedia Britannica the word library is from a Latin word Liber, (meaning "book") is a collection of written, printed or recorded materials. Including films, photographs, tapes, phonograph records, video discs, microform and computer programmes organized and maintained for reading, studying and consultation. An assembly of books is therefore not a library nor is a library only a place where books are kept. A library in the sense we are concerned with here is an organized system designed to preserve and facilitate the use of graphic records. It is a social instrument created to form a link in the communication system that is essential to any society or culture. Without communication, there can be no enduring culture. As a well known American historian, Barbara Tuchman puts it, "without the intellectual book history is silent, literature dumb, science crippled, taught and speculation at a stand still...the development of civilization would be impossible". A library is an organized collection of books and other informational materials covering the whole field of knowledge or any part of it. A library may be available to everyone or restricted to a particular community. Thus, a public library of a chemical engineering company for example is limited in both scope and clientele. The organization of its contents is the main characteristics distinguishing a library of books that is, orderly arrangement of materials by some form of classification and their record and description by means of card catalogue.

The American Library Association (ALA) Glossary of Library and Information Science defines it as a "collection of books and other literary materials kept for reading, study and consultation". Until now, other sources defines the library as a collection of written, printed or other graphic materials housed organized and interpreted to meet broad and varying needs of people for information, knowledge, recreation and aesthetics. Some define library as a pool of precious resources
that are jealously preserved and conserved under the control of a librarian. Other individuals see
library as a social institution charged with the responsibility of acquiring, organizing, storing,
disseminating, retrieval as well as preservation and conservation of the same material.

**Types of Libraries**

The following classification is a broad picture of the types of libraries as they have evolved
over the years.

**Academic Libraries:** These are libraries found in institutions of higher learning such as the
university, Polytechnic libraries, Colleges of Education. They are also identified more precisely by
their institutional settings as university libraries, Polytechnic libraries and Colleges of Education
libraries respectively. Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Bayero University Kano, University of Ibadan
are good examples of university libraries. While libraries found in institutions such as Delta State
Polytechnic Otefe Oghara, Rivers State polytechnic Bori and Abia State Polytechnic are examples of
polytechnic libraries found in institutions such as College of Education Kongo Zaria is College
library.

**Public Libraries:** Morrison (1981) defined public library as "A library provided wholly or partly
from public funds and the use of which is not restricted to any class of persons in the community but is
freely available to all". A major agency of enlightenment for adults providing also children the
recorded experiences of others which will help them grow into adulthood. They are tax supported
libraries serving the generality of the public free of charge and on equal basis. In Nigeria, public
library provision is the responsibility of state government. Public libraries objectives have been
summarized by Harrison and Gates (1978) as below:

**Education:** To foster and provide means for the development of individual/group at all levels of
educational ability.

**Information:** Information/events are brought into the library as soon as they are born and over time
form part of knowledge.

**Culture:** Public libraries bring in cultural materials and this form centres for cultural life and activity
that promote participation and appreciation of arts.

**Leisure and Recreation:** Public libraries house materials that could enable their clientele refresh
themselves after boredom. A good example of public libraries are; Kwara State Library Board,
Samaru Public Library, Abia State Library Board, Edo State Library Board etc.

**Special Libraries:**

Nwosu, (2000) observed that everything about special libraries is special. Its clientele are
distinguishable class of people with identifiable common interest such as people in the profession. Its
services are specialized. Its use is exclusive to the membership of the sponsoring organization. The
ALA Glossary of library and information science describes the special library as: A library
established, supported and administered by a firm, or private corporation association and government
agencies or any special interest group or agency to meet the information needs of its members or staff in
pursuit of the scope of collection and services is limited to the subject interests of the host or parent
organization. Examples of special libraries are law, industrial library and departmental libraries which
are attached to the institution.

**National Libraries:** These are libraries established by the national government to perform specific
functions- to collect and preserve all document written about the country. Nwosu (2002) observed that
the idea behind this function is to ensure a compulsory permanent repository for all books published in
the country. Such a solid national arrangement for preservation of indigenous publications is
certainly a wonderful legacy for posterity who, otherwise, would question our intellectual fertility.
The instrument that enables the performance of this function is the deposit law mandates every
publisher within the country to send a certain number of copies of each book published by him to the
national library within three months of publication at his own expense. National libraries acquire their
indigenous materials free of charge according to the provisions of the deposit law of their countries.
This type of library issues the national bibliography and the national union catalogue. Examples of
national libraries include Ghana National library, Zambia National library, National library of
Cameroon, British National Library.

**The Role of Library in Education**

The successful marriage between education and library can not be divorced. Right from time
immemorial, library and education have walked hand in hand and have yielded result. Nwosu, (2002) has this to say...it should be crystal clear that the ideals of education would be elusive without the library". This indispensable role has been reflected in many descriptions of the library in academia such as "the handmaid of the scholars", "the pivot on which the life of the institution revolves", "the educative aorta of the institution" the heart of the institution. A place where the dead is "alive", the life wire of any institution just to mention but a few. Louis Round Wilson (1985) maintained that library is "the pulsing heart which is to quicken every activity that goes on upon the campus; it is that easily accessible mentor to which every alumnus after his days of privilege within the college walls have ended should look for guidance; and it is the beacon light whose rays should illumine more and more the path of those leaders of men who are entrusted with the conservation of equality of opportunity and the solution of the problems of civilization that daily assume a greater and ever increasing degree of complexity."

Library acquires teaching and research materials and this helps in the reconstruction or development of individual minds when there is development at individual level. It in turn brings about national development. Hence national development is the sum total of individual development.

The Role/Importance of Library in Media Houses

As has discussed earlier, media library is one of the specialized libraries, the objective of which is to provide specialized services to its users. Andy Akeni, (2003) observed that the main objective of every specific library all over the world is to ensure that the aims and objectives of its parent organization are timely and adequately fulfilled by providing information materials that are related to the subject area of services rendered. They provide selective dissemination of information and also provide materials in journalism, circulation, production, news casting, marketing, advertising, computer, presentation of programmes, planning of pages and so on to the staff of the organization, in other to achieve success.

It therefore means that the service of a library in a media house helps the staff of such organization academically. They will be versatile about issues and reasonable in decision taking. At the end quality services are rendered to the public. This means that the media library informs staffs to inform the society better. As it is an axiomatic fact that a developed nation is one that consumes information as soon as they are born or created.

The Importance of Librarianship in Socio-Economic Development

The library as the saying goes is older than the book, older than both paper and print. Through all the centuries of its existence, the library has three main functions, which is to collect and preserve materials and make them available to users (national) when need be. Library contains human knowledge, totality of human nature and preserver of them. The use of library may not give you money but it may help you to get money because it carries research and consultancy. Through library you can understand the present, past and as such project what the future will look like. Library helps you to know more about great events and great people of the past. The knowledge of such events of men and women of velour can serve as engine for creation of new values, new warriors and genesis. For example, if I know about Napoleon, I will behave like him. Knowledge is divided into major aspects like business studies, engineering, space technology (Astronomy), biology, chemistry, physics and mathematics, material science now computer science, literature and other basic arts. Each of all these areas are housed in the library and so helps create and renovate the society. It is the duty of the library to see to it that art and science enhance the future of humanity and that is why many see the library as a store house of knowledge.

Libraries through a systematic means select what is good for inclusion into the library collection. Philip Alhassan (2003) has this to say "the process of collecting is said to end when the materials are physically delivered to the Librarian, However, the job of a librarian does not end here. The Acquisition Librarian with acquisition skill acquires both books and non book materials; these include, monograph, textbooks, reference materials like Encyclopedia, dictionaries, manuals, handbook, Bibliographies, indexes, abstracts, audio-tapes, audio-cassette, slides, video tapes in various field of learning, process, store, disseminate, retrieve and preserved for future consultation and so are intellectually equipped to serve humanity. Besides, Librarian disseminate the knowledge of library material. Alhassan Philip (2003) observed that "a librarian is also a disseminator of the contents of both book and non book materials. In
view of the above function performed by the librarian is not just a custodian of books as most people who are not knowledgeable of what a librarian does think. These apart, patrons are enemies of books in many ways. Some stain pages of books in many ways. Lipstick, perfumes and others and these result to fungi attack, insect. Others mutilate them by cutting pages of materials with sharp razor. Also atmospheric factors like pollutants (gases, vapour, dust, dirt, climate condition example humidity and temperature, biological factors that is attacks from fungi, rodents, bacteria and people destroys library materials. A librarian with full acquisition skill help rescue or resuscitate these materials to "Active Life". It is important, however, to note that the preservation of library materials bridges the gap between the past and the present. Preservation in the context we are concerned is that of library materials and it is seen as the act of preserving or keeping in safety from harm, injury or violation. With these in mind, one can define preservation of library materials in terms of restoration or treating them against attack of bookworms, termites, beetles, cockroaches and so on. The preservational role helps in keeping historical facts, archeological findings leading to better the future humanity.

Library is an instrument of salvaging the socio-economic well being of the country hence it preserves its culture. Culture is the totality of a people's way of life. Longman Dictionary of contemporary English defines culture as the ideas, beliefs or customs that are shared and accepted by people in a society. Put simply, people's way of life. These ideas, beliefs are recorded in graphic forms and are later acquired by the library and housed, disseminated and preserved over a long period of time. This therefore gives the masses the privilege of mastering their belief system and thus cause them to frown at any foreign or strange culture that is likely to rear up. When young people follow carefully the history of their own place as was handed over to them, it would not be possible for them to be bamboozled.

Furthermore, the push for rural-urban migration is deemed irresistible. Many people have left their villages to urban centres, a lot marry there and give birth to children and sad still, most of these children are hardly allowed to visit home. The aftermath of this is that young people are not exposed to the norms and values of their home towns. The parents of these children believe that they will be killed or suffer any other kind of mishap. Interestingly, the library (Public) located in these areas bridges the gap as they collect, process, store, disseminate, retrieve and preserve these materials. Young people need not go to their villages before their value system is inculcated into them by effective use of the library. This singular activity of storing materials of this nature saves the masses from sacrilegious /taboo.

Besides, the public library is in the habit of housing over time the victims of this act such that young people can read and learn the moral lessons therein. I wonder what the society will look like without a systematized library. If these are established roles of the library, it will be convenient, at this juncture to proclaim that librarianship have in no way down played in the socio-economic reconstruction/development of the nation.

On the other hand, if government activities are well documented and placed in the libraries then they will reach wider public through their extension services. Public Library will be able to educate the public in their civic duties and so involve the various communities in nation building. A survey of rural areas in Nigeria shows clearly those communities are not made fully aware of government and their activities in their surroundings. Most times, these activities are usually published in newspapers and announced over the news media which are ephemeral, only very few people are opportuned to hear or read about them. It is at this point that the library plays a very crucial role of collecting and keeping these materials-and making them available as soon as there is demand for them.

Suggestions/Recommendations

In view of the foregoing, as well as the need for the library not only to maintain its impressive record but also keep improving on it,

• Library should be accorded its pride of place in the scheme of things.
• There should be dedicated and trained staff.
• In line with the new trends in information technology, the library stands to benefit a lot from automated systems.
• There should be a change in nomenclature, instead of library, a community information centre could be more appropriate. The word library has western bias.
• Government should provide money and other library equipments as at when necessary.
• Those in authority should utilize the money provided by government for library expenses instead
diverting it into their own pockets.

- Library weeding should be done as soon as materials are no longer living "active life".
- Library staff should be sent on training from time to time so as to learn new innovations.

**Conclusion**

On the whole, the role of librarianship (Library Science) education to the socio-economic development/nation building is not fully covered in this meager write-up, but one thing is worthy of note. Librarianship cut across all fields of endeavour and so librarians and other cadres of library workers should rededicate and double their effort to achieve these all important goal of communicating, educating, preserving\ conserving of these precious resources so that corporate bodies, government agencies can use them for administrative, decision making, references at all times. This will foster socio-economic well being of the nation.

**Reference**


