

# REFOCUSING ICT DEVELOPMENT AS TOOLS IN THE LIBRARY FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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## Abstract

The emergence of Information and Communication Technology has greatly shrunk the world into a global village that anyone or any organization the library in particular, ignoring Information and Communication Technology is asking to be side tracked and placed in the periphery in the international arena, get unredeemable outdated and grossly limited in the acquisition as well as dissemination of information. This paper actually focuses on the information and communication technology development as a tool in the library for sustainable national development. The information and communication technology makes it mandatory for libraries to remain competitive or face obsolescence. Libraries are formidable tools for the information and communication technology development because they provide information for the populace. The paper also views the problems that normally occur for such development to be carried out and proffers solution on the way forward.

## Introduction

The emergence of ICT has greatly shrunk the world into a global village that anyone or any organization, the library in particular ignoring ICT is asking to be sidetracked. Before the advent of the computer, telephone services were commonly used all over the world for communication purposes. By the advent of the computer and its capacity for networking, came the Internet.

The fusion of information technology with that of communication has given rise to ICT. Faboyinde (2006).

Hawkins, (2002), notes that, knowledge and information have become the most important currency for productivity, competitiveness and increased wealth and prosperity. ICT in libraries as tools can be understood as the application of digital equipment to all aspects of library work. According to Akintunde, (2004), "ICT emphasizes the use of the computer and other technologies such as telephones to process, transport, and transfer voices and other data singularly or mixed with least interference or distortion of content". Technological advancement in communication has made it possible to know in an instant what is happening in a household, half a world away. This is an indication of the growing importance of services and information dissemination, which is made possible by transmission over fiber-optic cable transported through other means. The world is now so linked that consumers decision, in any countries of the nation could become information that has an almost immediate impact on the products that are being produced all over the world. Akindele (2002), stressed that "it is a procedure for a transformation in the relations of the nations by breaking down barriers in the area of culture, commerce and other fields of endeavour".

Globalization can be said to be the growing sense of interconnectedness. It is praised for the new opportunities it brings, such as access to worldwide economical information through Internet connectivity. Globalization in essence, is the way, by which moves are made to enhance and encourage the unification of national and international services Badmus, (2003).

Thus, globalization expresses the widening scope, deepening output and speeding up of interregional flows and networks of interaction within all realms of social activities worldwide. It can be characterized by these four types of changes:

- It involves a stretching of social, political and economic activities across political frontiers, regions and continents.
- It suggests the intensification of interconnectedness.
- The growth of global interconnectedness can be linked to a speeding up of global interactions and processes, and the evolution of worldwide systems of transport and communication increases the velocity of the diffusion of ideas, goods, information, capital and people.
- The deepening impact of global interaction has caused its growth extensively and intensively with great velocity. This is seen where effects of distant events can highly significant elsewhere and even the most local development may come to have enormous global consequences.

Computer has made such a tremendous impact on the organization, management, and dissemination of information that it readily commends itself to every library to accept it or become limited in satisfying its clientele. For the libraries, several systems have been developed for their various housekeeping chores and more still are being designed and refined for such library processes as acquisition, cataloguing, serials and circulation control. Communication tools such as e-mail, fax, computer and videoconferencing are being used to overcome barriers of space and time, and opens new possibilities for library services.

### **What is ICT Development?**

Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Akintunde (2004), stated that ICT as a terminology has overtaken information technology (IT) because of its appropriateness, its utilitarianism. Whereas IT was used to describe the new technology in the mid-80s up to mid-90s, focusing on the computer. ICT emphasizes the uses of the computer and other technologies such as telephone to process, transport, and transfer voice and other data singularly or mixed with least inference or distortion of content.

Information and communication technology development is therefore, an attempt to improve on the various modules of the technology towards higher level of convergence, in order to respond more effectively to the need to communicate data or information. The improvement is more efficient if it involves both users and the industry. Users like librarians and their clients provide feedback to the industry on their products. The awareness of ICT technology and resources also varies from culture to culture. However, ICT development goes beyond the improvement of technology and providing necessary infrastructure. It includes the adaptation of ICT by librarians and other users in effectively and efficiently delivering services to clients. It also involves the training of clients in the effective utilization of ICT resources thus; librarians and client require training from time to time on current ICT technology and resources. It involves research in every module of ICT with an expected outcome of improving the communication process. The research must be systematic and designed to be an integral part of ICT services. For example, in the library, where an Internet access is available, statistics of use of the facility would be taken for:

- Type of User-Student, lecturer, other staff, researcher from outside campus. Gender of user.  
Class/course level.
- Type of Use-Literature search, on-line lecture, assignment, e-mail.
- Time of Use-time spent by user in minutes and hours.
- Cost-amount paid for browsing.

The data obtained provides an empirical basis for the development of ICT capacity within the library. Information and Communication Technology Development therefore encompasses both human and material effects and counter effects of the deployment of ICT. It results in better adaptation and uses of technology.

### **Library as Tools**

Akintunde (2004), posited that however, much as ICT has impact on the library, the library has become a tool for the incremental growth of ICT. The library has always served as tools. The traditional library was a tool, for adult education. The library served as a social center where didactic stories were told and culture was concretized. National libraries serve as custodians of the intellectual properties of nations. In the Academia, libraries have been the center of their intellectual environments. It is convergence for both the staff and students especially in tertiary institutions of learning. Libraries of many institutions have either earned them accreditation or failed them because the libraries are regarded as tools for academic excellence. The library serves as a tool for the development of intellectual capacities as well as the promotion of cultural and social integration. As a tool, the effectiveness of any library is dependent on the investment made into it by its proprietors, private organizations, governments and communities etc. it also depends on the awareness that library has and the resources available.

Libraries as tools for ICT Development therefore raise a number of critical issues. One of

these is the role of the library in appropriating ICT. Another is the causative effect of the library's use of ICT. Libraries use ICT in several ways as Akintunde (2004), stated

- Library management and administration;
- Processing of library materials;
- Developing on-line resources;
- Accessing on-line resources;
- Accessing off-line resources;
- Provision of regular library services to users;
- Inter-library cooperation and lending;
- Video-conferencing etc.

, Library users can use ICTs to find more information at minimal costs and in less time. The fact is that ICT has become indispensable to libraries in the provision of timely information to users and, in fact, to the progress of Librarianship as a profession.

### **Challenges of ICT for Librarians in Nigeria**

Akintunde (2004) stated that for librarians to really shift from being documentalist, archivists and moved to technologist of global community there must be a paradigm shift, which brought some challenges to them. Such challenges must be followed

- Accepting that ICT can no longer be divorced from the profile of the librarians.
- They must be training in the use of computers and other ICT resources.
- Retraining in the use of computers and other ICT resources.
- Considering and implementation of leadership and organizational changes to meet up with present challenges.
- Librarians must be proactive in utilizing ICTs in their libraries.

### **Problems of ICT in Nigeria Libraries**

They are certain factors militating against full utilization in our libraries.

- **Operational Orientation:** The major problems of ICT in Nigerian libraries is lack of proactive nature of librarians to adopt the use of ICTs in their libraries and also those librarians to corns out of their shells and take steps for this ICT-Complaint.
- **Systematic Problems:** The erratic nature of the provision of electricity, poor telecommunication infrastructure, (both in quantity and quality) constitute major obstacles to the adoption of ICT in libraries in Nigeria. Stable electricity and reliable telecommunication systems, should be noted, indispensable to proper functioning of ICT.
- **Budgetary Preferences:** A lot of other projects in individual libraries may compete seriously with the installation of ICT, thereby relegating its adoption. ICT is highly capital intensive but the benefits by far outweigh the investment.
- **Problems of Financial Base:** Poor state of the Nigerian economy has made the cost of installation of ICT prohibitive to some libraries, few libraries can boast of the level of funding required to put ICT in place without external aid. Library finance is fragile and inadequate.
- **Lack of Political Will:** The government has not shown sufficient political will to implement ICT policies in the country.
- **Low Human Capacity Building:** The education of librarians on the one hand, and that of users on the other must be addressed as most librarians are not sufficiently computer literate to exploit the facilities offered by ICT as at now.

For sustainable national development of ICT as a tool in the libraries, libraries can be instrumental to the development of ICT because of the important educational development of the ICT. Hawkins (2004), identified ten lessons, which are useful for the purpose. They are;

- Computer labs in developing countries take time and money, but they work.
- Technical support cannot be overlooked.
- Non-competitive telecommunication infrastructure, policies and regulations impede connectivity and sustainability.
- Get the community involved

- Link ICT and education efforts to broader education reforms.
- Training, training and training of personnel.
- Technology motivation of students and energizes the classroom and the library.

### **Recommendations**

The use of ICT is inevitable as a tool in the development of our libraries in modern times. Even though problems of adopting ICT in Nigerian libraries are multifarious, they are not insurmountable for the determined libraries. The way forward could be that many international funding agencies like Carnegie Corporation of New York, Ford Foundation and Rockefeller Foundation, British Council, UNESCO, the Education Trust Fund; etc should be involved in the general development of ICT in Nigeria. Such assistance would complement the efforts of Nigerian government in order to leapfrog Nigeria libraries to the global information society brought about by ICT. With all the numerous challenges there is still enough opportunities for ICT to excel in library development like:

- Government needs to make strenuous efforts improving the use of ICT to gain knowledge in our various libraries and schools.
- There is urgent need to empower our graduates to continue in their studies and join the knowledge-centered world.
- The National library of Nigeria should as a matter of priority developed a databank of ICT experts in the library profession.
- Library software and their respective vendors should serve as an instrument for libraries looking for expert consultancy services in their attempt to automate various libraries.

### **Conclusion**

Information and Communication Technology is usually associated with the newer computer-based technologies, which have had such impact on the profession in recent years. The concept is however much broader, if we as library and information science educators are to fill our responsibilities to the larger society, we need to take a broad view. We need to utilize a combination of information technologies to ensure preservation and provide access to information. We will not only strive to receive information from abroad but will build up the local knowledge base, through the use of appropriate technology.

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