

# POTENTIALS OF LIBRARIANSHIP AS A PROFESSIONAL AID IN HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

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## Abstract

It is incontrovertible that libraries are indispensable in any Human Resources Development programme anywhere in the world. The invaluable role of information services which the library renders in training and retraining of human resources for all-round development of the nation is so paramount that virtually all kinds of human advancement be it political, socio-economic or technological are the result of efficient management of relevant information in the training process. This asserts how best the library as a social resource-cum-information centre can assist in the onerous task of human resources development in Nigeria. Emphasis was laid on what library and its profession entails. Then the paper analyzed how the library facilitate human resources development in various fields of knowledge. Also, factors militating against librarianship as manpower development agency in Nigeria were identified and appropriate conclusion and recommendations were proffered.

## Introduction

In today's complex societies access to information has become central to making decisions about the daily conduct of both public and private lives. As a result, contemporary library services entail not only the traditional function of preserving and providing access to vast amounts of printed materials but also the creation of a more sophisticated information environment, one that makes use of the full range of information technologies to serve the informational, educational, cultural and recreational needs of users.

Although libraries have been in existence since ancient times, the profession of library and information science only began to take shape in the late 19 and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. According to Sineath (2000:371):

The profession of library and information science did not take shape until the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, a period when many fields were seeking clearer occupational identity, especially since World War II. Libraries have become grown in size and complexity, and librarianship has become significantly more sophisticated...Today -the profession is well established, highly organized, and although quite diverse, generally unified.

Librarianship therefore connotes the professional expertise essential for the acquisition, organization, analyzing, storing and retrieval of-information for the satisfaction of diverse users.

Manpower or human resources as it is variantly called has been defined as "the basic resources, it is indispensable means of converting other resources to mankind's use and benefit. How well we develop and employ human skills is fundamental in deciding how much we will accomplish as a nation", Kennedy (1986:vii).

In other words, human resource development refers to the various ways designed for imparting skills and training on the human capital that work in an organization for the overall advancement and achievement of its goals.

In his contribution to the study of human resources development, Harbison (1986:viii) observed that:

A nation's wealth is much dependent on the accumulation of human capital as upon material capital. Not only is the availability of skilled manpower a major determinant of the pace of a country's socio-economic development, the stock of such manpower is an important indicator of a country's development. Therefore the strategy for human resource development is an essential element of any modern developmental strategy.

From the above, the contribution of librarianship to human resources development is evidently enormous. Librarians with their professional expertise select, acquire, organize and disseminate the information materials through the various library outlets for the advancement of human resources.

A composite definition of a library as "a collection of books and other forms of records housed, organized and interpreted to meet the broad and varying needs of people for knowledge, information, recreation and aesthetic enjoyment" (Nwafor, 1977:2) is most apt and pertinent in that no healthy and natural development can take place without adequate and relevant information.

Undoubtedly, information disseminated effectively is capable of and indeed responsible for equipping

individuals with knowledge leading to social, political, economic and natural development of the society.

A history of library development revealed that there are three stages of library advancement. The stages are an elucidation of how libraries have grown to become more sophisticated to meet the challenges of the technological-driven information world. After reviewing the three stages, Wali (1993:49-50) said that:

The above stages of library development show how emphasis have shifted from preservation to organization, and pre-occupation with organization to education and instruction... It is a shift in emphasis from passive to an active role... Libraries are still keepers of history and culture but have ceased to be just store houses of the relics of the past, and over the years have become meeting places for people, ideas and vital partners in any sound educational system.

Further, Olanlokun and Salisu (1993:ix) revealed that:

Libraries are not institutions/buildings/warehouses/stores etc of materials but are agents of educational, social, economic and political changes or revolutions in the community and their doors are now open to all who need them. Hence, the library has become a place entrusted with the acquisition; organization, preservation, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information in whatever format it might appear.

Thus, aside being professionals, librarians must possess interactive skills in dealing with people since they serve as mediators between users and library records for the benefit of human advancement.

#### Library as Manpower Development Agency in Nigeria

Libraries serve as development agencies for the community in which they exist. That is why they normally involve in any social mobilization efforts by government as contained in such materials as books, newspapers and magazines, bulletins, pamphlets, gazettes, white papers etc. These are readily provided by many libraries in Nigeria.

There is need for effective information service in Nigerian libraries as it will help in individual's advancement and national development. The right information acquired at the right time and place, improves an individual, a business, a government agency, or some other kinds of organization to make informed decisions. Aguolu (1989:33) stated that:

The library may provide information to help to solve one's immediate practical problems in daily life and work; or to further one's continuing education and understanding of the arts, sciences or humanities in order to enrich one's personal life. In effect, information is sought to gain practical knowledge, professional knowledge or intellectual knowledge. Business organizations need it to forecast market, develop new products or adapt to a new technology, just as it is needed by schools to improve and extend the learning process; by the governmental authorities to formulate plans and refine decision making, and to anticipate and resolve national problems.

Nigerian government after independence established National Bibliography of Nigeria for the collection, preservation and dissemination of vital information to government functionaries as well as to the larger society.

Libraries whether public, schools or academic, are basically the same because of the broad functions they perform. These functions can be classified into: conservation of knowledge, information, education agency, recreation and aesthetic appreciation. It was stated in "Many Voices, One World" (1981:33) that:

Libraries and documentation centers are probably the oldest and most common sources of classified knowledge and information. These sources provide continuous supply of reliable information required by individual, and organized by media and agencies, by schools and institution of learning, by government and by firms in the course of their daily work.

Libraries organize and provide information, serving various levels of users in all walks of life. Mohammed (1988:88) observed that:

Access to knowledge in library transcends time and geographical barriers. The library therefore must be regarded as a key link in the total communication process in society. It may further be asserted that the establishment of libraries is evidence of social maturity. The need for libraries in society will be greater with increasing sophistication in its complex organization and social structure.

With both social and technological changes taking place in all the sectors, the traditional role of library has changed because of the fact that library has been transformed in both organization and services as a result of application of computers and other data processing devices.

Library as human resources agency should endeavor to provide a free flow of information to individual, institutions and groups who are involved in the information seeking activities in the interest of research and natural development.

A librarian should provide accurate and relevant information to the user without distortion and without resorting to bias or prejudice. Where information technology is available, the librarian should be fully

competent in its application in order to facilitate the speedy processing, retrieval and dissemination, of information. Mohammed (1988:88) suggested as follows:

A librarian must not through any action, bring the profession into disrepute. A librarian's personal interest must not be placed above that of the library or institution. A librarian should recognize and protect client's right to privacy with regard to information sought or received and materials consulted or borrowed.

### Factors **Militating** Against Librarianship as Manpower **Development Agency, in Nigeria 1.**

#### Governmental Factors

There is not enough fund to aid library services, new books are hardly purchased; journal prescriptions cannot be renewed; worn out resources are not replenished; staff vacancies cannot be filled and lack of technical know-how due to government's poor attitude towards providing essential facilities in training librarians. It was observed that "in Nigeria, while the country' continues to experience spiral inflationary trends, government subventions for library and information services have witnessed severe cuts" (Wali, 1992:53). Thus the effect of this economic crunch on the overall library services are not far to see, some librarians are not familiar with computer/internet, fax. E-mail services etc. Despite these problems, there is increase in demand for information, for studies, research, recreation and socio-economic activities.

#### 2. School **Administrative** Factors

These include: reckless expenditure on the part of school administrators, funds meant for educational facilities (including libraries) are diverted or out rightly misappropriated; contracts are highly inflated thereby increasing the cost of running educational programmes including libraries. Okolo (2000:14) revealed that:

Enough is not usually set apart by the administrators of higher Institutions for the development of their libraries. In the face of competing demands from the various segments of an institution, allocations for the purchase of

#### 3. **Social Factors**

They include lack of library awareness and enlightenment; culture of reading is not cultivated in children; some parents don't know the value of library. Aguolu (1989:35) attributed social factor **to:**

1. Lack of appreciation of the value of information due to poor education or illiteracy.
2. Ignorance of the potential possibilities of the existing information services.
3. Failure of the user to appreciate the nature of his problem.
4. Absence of suitable library and information services.

Thus dubious ways of passing examination have been perfected; students no longer read let alone of going to the library; teachers pay less attention to students" affairs because of poor payment and some do not leach thereby encouraging examination malpractices. Adomu (2004; 17-19) identified the causes of examination malpractices to include:

1. Lack of commitment on the part of teacher. Some teachers engage in activities other than teaching during official hours.
2. Receiving bribe from students or parents to commit examination fraud.
3. There is also this dimension of inadequate preparation for examination by the students. With this, fear sets in and thus breeding loss of confidence, anxiety and a feeling of insecurity. This category of students cannot do without cheating in the exam.
4. Most parents pre-occupy their wards or children with domestic activities so much so that they have little time for themselves to do extra readings.

#### Conclusion

The role of librarianship as a professional aid in human resource development in Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized. Libraries and librarians are indispensable to manpower development through our established libraries, be it academic, public, school and special libraries e.t.c. Provision of standard libraries and trained librarians in Nigeria will surely bring about human resources development in Nigeria. And if suggested solutions in this paper are implemented, there is every hope for successful human resources development in Nigeria through libraries.

#### **Recommendations**

1. The following recommendations were made:
2. Hie government should provide enough money for library facilities and development to supplement its efforts.
3. It should encourage philanthropic individuals and agencies (both local and international) to donate funds to acquire current graphic and non-graphic records for users.
4. Librarians should be given free hand to carry out their initiative that will help in development of librarianship.
5. They should be aggressive and wake up to face challenges with regard to their profession and

have good public relations with the funding bodies.

6. Parents should provide necessary school reading materials: wealthy parents should provide teaching equipment e.g. computer with internet for their children; they should train them to be morally upright and engage them in useful educational activities e.g. procurement of educational films which will help them to develop the culture of reading and gain the spirit of research and inquiry.

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