
Innovations in Nigerian Libraries in the 21st Century

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Abstract

Libraries in Nigeria have undergone major changes in the 21st century. This includes developing from print or traditional environment to the automated, virtual and digital libraries. These innovations are the result of the global technological revolution as it affects libraries through the application of Information Communication Technologies (ICT).

Libraries in Nigeria have undergone major changes in structure, practices and organisation in the last few decades. Like all other organisations, it require constant monitoring to identify areas for potential improvement. An innovation in this context may be described as the adoption of change (Carlopio, 1998), where the ultimate goal is to improve outcomes through an alteration of practices. However, the process of change is complex, with many different types of change possible. Further, there are a number of differing strategies for implementing these changes, with the success of implementation being highly variable. The library as a conduit for information serves a wide spectrum of information seekers and plays a critical role in the facilitation of knowledge. Libraries are continuously changing and engaging in evolving technology to make information more readily available in the medium associated with the era. That is why Tise, Raju and Masango (2008) noted that libraries serve as vehicles for the acquisition of knowledge. The reasons for the existence of libraries today have evolved significantly from the era of the ancient Greeks where the library was viewed

as the place to achieve literacy and intellectual life. Kraner-Khait (2001), in tracing the evolution of libraries, pointed out that in the monasticism transformative stage of libraries there were three major libraries: the university library, the library for the royal family and a theological collection which emerged in Constantinople. These libraries displayed handwritten manuscripts on closed shelves as there was no reprographic technology that could reproduce the handwritten manuscripts enmass. Gutenberg invention of the printing press revolutionized the book making and printing which led to demand for more information by scholars. Hence the library's responsibility was to collect, preserve and disseminate the printed heritage of the era.

The sudden emergence of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the 1940s launched the world's information packaging and services into a global electronic platform. Thus, libraries no longer disseminate information only in a packaged a print media but in a multimedia format with a speed of light. Ukoha (2010) observed that the way information is made available and the way users access it have have changed. However, the current decade is one in which digital technology is making a huge impact on libraries. Not only are library systems becoming increasingly more commonly computerised, the availability of library management software is dictating that library automation be the norm, rather than the exception (Freeman, 1999). Tanner (1997) noted the effect not only of automation of library management, but Local Area Networks, Wide Area Networks, Internet access and an increasing diversity in format of resources.

Whereas classical libraries offered services mostly in the form of printed material, the provisioning of digital services, like subscriptions to online journals or topic-centered databases, is becoming a necessary ingredient for innovation particularly the scientific community. Scholars, students and faculties actively seek current information from the various media available in libraries, e.g. books, encyclopedias, journals and more currently, electronic media. Some common methods of addressing innovations in libraries have emerged. Academic libraries have revised their values about information and information services, shifting focus from artifact to content and from passive to active services (Saunders, 2009). Academic librarians continue to develop their organizations to be more responsive to change, often creating strategic plans to guide development and learning organizations to identify and undertake responsive change . Finally, transformational leadership is being used to guide the development of proactive initiatives and to support organizational development. Successful technological libraries will use all three methods in order to meet the needs of their users and their universities.

Technologically, libraries exist in an environment of sustained and turbulent change. User needs evolve rapidly as scholars develop new knowledge and interact more with the global economy (Friedman, 2005). Developments in information technology enable librarians and other scholars to re-think how to use knowledge in their researches (Townley, 2003). Dynamic changes in relationships lead us to rethink the role of the library and librarians (Reyes, 2006). The general direction of change

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and the overarching issues have been consistent for almost two decades (Riggs, 1997; Lewis, 1997). Libraries in Nigeria must continue to aggressively address these issues in order to prosper. Rogers (1995) theory states that diffusion is a process that occurs over time and can be seen as having five distinct stages. The stages in the process are: knowledge; persuasion; decision; implementation, and confirmation. In order to gain knowledge of innovation, one needs to learn the innovation and then test whether one likes or dislikes the innovation so that he or she will make a decision to accept or reject the innovation. After the decision, the implementation stage is when he or she considers whether to continue or stop using the innovation. It is observed however that libraries in Nigeria metamorphosed from the traditional environment.

The Traditional Library Environment

The traditional library environment provided a soft landing platform for librarians. Practices in the this library environment range from print administrative mode, collection development, technical services and public services. Segun (2010) noted that the skills needed for operation were manual . Anunobi and Nwabueze(2010) also noted that till late 20th century, information source in the traditional libraries were still being packaged and disseminated on print-based platform. Emphasis in these libraries were on print collection and on-sight services.

The most important retrieval tool in the traditional library is the library traditional catalogue. This is more or less an index to a library's collection. This is required according to Aina (2004), when a library's collection grows so big that it is not possible for one individual to have a mental record of all the materials present in a collection. The catalogue in these libraries may appear in a card or book format. The entries in these catalogues are either handwritten or appear in print format. But the advantage of a card catalogue over the book catalogue is its flexibility.

The readers services is crucial to these libraries. Many routine tasks are performed in this unit. These include registration of users, charging and discharging of library materials, book reservation, inter-library loan services, shelving, overdue notification and issuing of statistics. These services are offered on face to face contact with the users in this library. However, While traditional library services delivered by librarians are still fundamental to the principles of information access, a more integrated approach to information literacy is required in order to engender meaningful, relevant service delivery.

The Advent of Computerization in Nigerian Libraries

Libraries all over the world are beginning to be more interactive than passive. The coming of computers into the library has completely changed the face of the library to more of a social networking centre. The earliest use of any technology in Nigerian libraries was the introduction of microform technology at the University of Ibadan with the purchase of three microform readers in 1948. The first instances of the usage of computers in Nigeria were when IBM set up the African Education Centre at the University of Ibadan (UI Computing Center) in 1963 and when computing services were brought to Nigeria in connection with the analysis of the 1962/63 national census.

Spiers (2010) noted that by 1977 the total computer installations in Nigeria had grown to 70 and interest in this technology had increased, and by the late 1970s computer science courses had been established at the Universities of Nigeria, Lagos, Ibadan, Ife and others. However, the adaptation of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and its implementation as an enabling tool was more slowly introduced into Nigeria's libraries as they are still seen primarily as storehouses for books, despite all of the talk about virtual libraries. Technology was initially embraced by libraries because it allowed bibliographic, financial and other records to be kept, managed and retrieved by both library staff and patrons. The addition of communication technology using the Internet and intranets adds the obvious advantages to that of the technology available using computers and CD-ROMs as it allows for the seamless sharing and dissemination of information both locally and world-wide. Various types of libraries have only been able to adopt ICT dependent on the constraints of funding and infrastructure available to them. This led to the automation of libraries in Nigeria.

Automation of Libraries

The concept of an automated library started in Nigeria in 1980s with computerised catalogues, particularly of serials collections in academic libraries. Library automation refers to the computerisation or mechanisation of all library activities. Science (1983) defines automation as the performance of an operation, a series of operation or a process by self activating, self controlling or automatic means. The goal of library automation is to free library/information professionals from the routine library services and aid librarians to provide information resources to the library users. Many automated libraries in Nigeria are the academic and special libraries. Through automation process library's holdings are offered on Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC). All other services of the library are operated in their different modules and OPAC are now accessible over the internet.

Emergence of Digital Libraries

Digital libraries started gaining ground in Nigeria in the present century. We are heading toward an environment in which digital information may substitute for most print-based information. However, it should be noted that a library's existence does not depend on the physical form of documents. Trivedi (2010) defines a digital library as a library in which collections are stored in digital formats (as opposed to print, microform or other media) and made accessible by computers. The content may be stored locally, or accessed remotely. Its mission is to link the past and the present, and help shape the future by preserving the records of human culture, as well as integrating emerging information technologies. This mission is unlikely to change in the near future. Digital libraries come in many forms. They attempt to provide instant access to digitized information and consist of a variety of information, including multimedia.

Functions of Digital Libraries

- Access to large amounts of information to users wherever they are and whenever they need it.
- Access to primary information sources.
- Support multimedia content along with text
- Network accessibility on Intranet and Internet
- User-friendly interface
- Hypertext links for navigation
- Client-server architecture
- Advanced search and retrieval.
- Integration with other digital libraries.

Lynch (1994) says that, digital libraries provide users with coherent success to a very large, organized repository of information and knowledge. The contrast between traditional and digital libraries according to Trivedi (2010) is presented below:

Traditional libraries	Digital or electronic libraries
Print collection	All resources in digital form.
Individual objects not directly linked with each other.	Multi-media and fractal objects
Flat structure with minimal contextual metadata	Scaffolding of data structures and richer contextual metadata.
Scholarly content with validation process	More than scholarly content with various validation processes
Limited access points and centralized management	Unlimited access points, distributed collections and access control
The physical and logical organization correlated.	The physical and logical organization may be virtual.
One way interactions	Dynamic realtime dialogue
Free and universal access.	Free as well as fee based.

Utilization of the Internet

When different networks are connected together to facilitate communication and sharing of resources at global level, this is generally referred to as Internet. It is therefore defined as network of networks. The Internet facility is a powerful and efficient tool for searching, retrieving and disseminating information. As an electronic resource, Internet is currently having the most significant impact on almost all professions. Internet simultaneously fulfills three important roles in libraries. First, it is a resource that can be consulted and used like any other reference resource. Second, it is more dynamic and far reacting than any other resource in the library setting. Lastly, it provides a medium of communication that has extended the potential of librarians to interact beyond the physical library with users, colleagues and other professional activities and relationships.

In specific terms, Internet facilities support such services as e-mail, listerv, newsgroups, remote login, file transfer protocol and World Wide Web, otherwise known as W3, which has become the most popular way of locating and retrieving information. It does provide the facilities and capabilities to browse through a list of subject headings to get an idea of what is available. Internet facilities enable reference librarians to answer questions for which they had virtually no background and the information is usually more up-to-date than printed resources.

The areas of application of internet in libraries according to Internet World status (2011) are:

- * support a library wide information system;
- * deliver improved information service;
- * deliver more in-formation electronically and remotely;
- * aid distance education;
- * offer librarians a new role in teaching;
- * permit interactive user education;
- * promote electronic publishing;
- * aid greater collaboration
- * improve work processes electronically;
- * improve library research;
- * change staffing needs;
- * change use of physical space;
- * aid services for the disabled.

Conclusion

Rapid advances in information technologies have revolutionised the role of libraries. As a result, libraries face new challenges, competitors, demands and expectations. Libraries are redesigning services and information products to add value to their services and to satisfy the changing information needs of the user community. Traditional libraries are still handling largely printed materials that are expensive and bulky. Information seekers are no longer satisfied with only printed materials; they want to supplement the printed information with more dynamic electronic resources. Demands for digital information are increasing and libraries must meet up with this demand in order to remain relevant.

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