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# Indispensability of Library Services to All Professions

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## Introduction

The Library, unarguably and indubitably has always been and will continue to be one of the intellectual wonders of life and one of the greatest and remarkable innovations and inventions that have proved, indisputably, man's creative audacity. It is also a splendid educational masterpiece, a redemptive global phenomenon with robust capacity and ecumenical power and capability to bring the desired and the unimaginable transformation and positive changes to the society; the results which are immeasurably eternal.

The Library, irrespective of its form, status, typology or classification has profound potency in bringing cultural, political and socio-economic empowerment to the society. This is in tandem with the submission of Turner (2004) that the library occupies an important and significant part of a city. It is a repository of avalanche amounts of information. Therefore, it enables us to gain knowledge about diverse subjects and disciplines. According to him "when you read stories about people who have achieved greatness despite humble beginnings, you often find that they were readers who unearthed the treasures in their local libraries". Libraries can lift a man from the hollowness and shallowness of life to the depth of the wisdom of nature. Libraries can savage a man from the dungeon and abyss of bondage and failure and place him at the zenith of success. This is no sarcasm. Libraries can exhume and revive a man from the grave of poverty, despondency and deprivation and put him perpetually to sit in the palace among the princes and kings. The library, because of its propensity to assuage the intellectual thirst of its users has the capacity to purge and detoxify its users from all forms of social and cultural carcinogens and malignant racial cells, which manifest in form of biases, prejudices and stigmatisation that ignorance has brought into the people's lives. Olanlokun (1990) captured this vividly when he posited that any country, which wants its people to be "informed, articulate, efficient, productive and current", must give

priority attention to the development of its libraries. This is because according to Martin (1971), library stimulates the intellectual and cognitive growth and development of children and is in turn influenced by changes in educational practice. Aguolu (1989) in a brisk and vivacious way proclaims unequivocally that libraries are social agencies with a mission to conserve knowledge, preserve cultural heritage, provide information, support education and research and then provide recreation. This view enjoys the support of Manohar (2008) that libraries are a good source of fun, entertainment and education for children and adults. Not only does a library help to inculcate the habit of reading but it also helps to create a thirst for knowledge, which ultimately makes a person humble and open to other people's ideas.

Libraries, therefore "are places for citizens to go to get information, to study, to gather". With good professional staff and good services, they provide the city an enriching and invaluable component (Turner, 2004). Manohar (2008) puts it succinctly and colourfully, apparently citing one Seuss who asserted that "the more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go". This is a truism for all individuals, organisations, professions, communities and nations of the world. Libraries are the engines that grill and bake the professionals in the world today. The services rendered by libraries are not only invaluable, they cannot easily be over-emphasized. Library services are the backbones and the cornerstones for all professions.

## Libraries and the Professions

The Federal Government of Nigeria is not oblivious of the importance of library services in bringing the teaching profession to its *Eldorado*. This is well entrenched in the National Policy on Education Revised Edition. State and local governments across the nation are implementing the national policy on the provision of library services to the educational sector. At least, the principle is acceptable to all that no meaningful teaching and learning can take place without the provision of adequate library services. Since education is student and learning-centred, obviously, no teacher can provide all the information that, the learner will ever need without the support of the library for both the teacher and the learner. The Library, as a treasure of valuable reading materials will be very helpful in the inculcation of reading habits into the children especially at the elementary and secondary levels of education. This will help in reviving the reading culture of Nigerian students, teachers inclusive, that has whittled down considerably. The varieties of books and non-book materials that a library keeps and the various services it renders make it indispensable for the teaching profession in the schools and colleges.

At the tertiary level, especially at the College, Polytechnic and University levels, the establishment of the tertiary institutions depends heavily on the existence and the quality of their library services. For instance, the University library has come to be accepted as the academic heart, the hub and the nerve-centre of the University. Since the University is established for teaching, research and community service, no meaningful teaching and research can take place in the tertiary institutions without the provision of adequate library services. Justifying this position, Aguolu (1983) says, "the university library is the most important organ in the University because "academic worth, intellectual vitality and effectiveness of any University depend largely upon the state of the health and excellence of its library, which is its lifeblood." Ajibero (1995) draws a correlation between the reputation of the University and the quality of its library facilities. Ajibero (2003) further amplifies this view clearly. He is of the opinion that the objectives of establishing any University, which are to encourage research and scholarship can only be realised through the provision of library services. That is why the National Universities Commission (NUC), the Council for Legal Education in Nigeria and some professional bodies

always insist that one of the criteria for evaluating the accreditation of courses in our tertiary institutions is the provision of adequate library facilities with suitable and current books and journals, internet facilities, reprographic services, bindery services, good ventilation and adequate staff and student capacity. The teaching profession, therefore, needs the library services either in the traditional format or in the e-format to produce quality products that the society needs.

The import of the legal information services to the justice system in Nigeria especially cannot be over-stressed. Judges and lawyers are among the largest and voracious users of library services. This is understandable because legal workers depend a lot on legal information for them to thrive in their legal profession. That is why a lawyer who wants to succeed in the profession must have a personal law library however small it may be. This he can complement with e-library and virtual library facilities. Lawyers and judges depend and consult, on regular basis law reports, law dictionaries, digests, indexes, statues, constitutions, law textbooks and journals, edits, acts, and so on to corroborate or invalidate seeming facts and figures, to disambiguate ambiguities, clarify or verify statements and opinions and to demystify legal mysteries and bewildering and puzzling legal theories and submissions. This is to prevent a miscarriage of justice and thus give credibility to our justice so that the judiciary can be the last hope of the masses. Quite a lot of people are languishing in jail and detention camps without trial because of lack of necessary legal information required to complete the criminal procedure. Justice delayed is usually justice denied. Even those who are facing trials suffer unnecessary humiliation and dehumanisation for want Sof information by either the prosecution counsel or the defence counsel. No legal professional, law firm or legal institution can achieve much success without having access to library facilities. The Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, The Nigerian Law School and the Faculties of Law in all the Nigerian Universities have their separate law libraries aside from the law court libraries equipped with relevant and current law books and journals.

In the medical profession, the provision and the utilization of library services are *sine qua non* for the sustainability of the profession. Medical experts and paraprofessionals rely on and utilize extensively health information to discharge their professional callings adequately. This profession deals directly with human life. Sufficient and adequate health information generated by the library is therefore needed to safeguard the health of individuals in the society. Writing on the health information needs of the semi-urban people in Oyo State, Mabawonku (1998) highlights the information needs of the people to include information on food, health, prevention of diseases, drug use, hygiene, child and maternal care, family planning and nutrition. The list is extended by Bii and Otike (2003) to include information on agrochemicals, accidents and first aid, dental care, immunization, mental health, physical exercise and trends in blood transfusion. Mabawonku (1998) believes that public libraries have a dominant and significant role to play in health information dissemination. And this could be achieved if libraries could cooperate with the health and social personnel and the mass media by reprocessing and repackaging the information received in the libraries before sending it to the health and related centres.

In a research conducted on the information seeking and utilization behaviour of doctors in South Eastern Nigeria, Okoro and Okoro (2006) reported that medical doctors in the South Eastern Nigeria rely heavily on journals, textbooks, and conference materials as their information sources to make any mark in the profession. The role of the library in this regard is very essential. This role of the library and information in the delivery and proper dissemination of health care services has been emphasized continuously by Siegel (1978), Abounaja and Nayak (1993), Kumar (1993) and Tadesse and Neelameghan (1995). Studies have also confirmed that apart from the formal sources that health professionals explore to meet their information needs, health

professionals utilize informal oral, print, audio, visual and audiovisual sources of information. Such studies were conducted by Herner (1954), Friedlander (1973), Stinson and Mueller (1980), Wood (1985), Bekker and Lategan (1988), Mchombu (1992), Uta (1993), Urquhart and Craine (1994) and Ngimwa (1996). In addition, pharmacists, trado-medical doctors and herbalists need a lot of information on the typology, taxonomy and the efficacy and potency of drugs and herbs before they are recommended for use.

The scientists too on the other hand require detailed and factual information to perform their jobs adequately. Reliance on speculative information and mere conjecture will lead to technological somersault. On the information needs of natural scientists, Olaniyan (1988) posited that the natural scientists need a combination of manual and electronic information in order to perform their functions and duties adequately. Adedigba (1993) who studied the information needs and pattern of library usage by forestry researchers in Nigeria found out that they relied heavily on scientific literature, while Ochogwu (1993) submitted that scientists and technologists among others consulted heavily books, newspapers and magazines to meet their information needs. Similarly, Adimorah (1977) observed in his study that Nigerian soil scientists spent more time in the library sourcing for information while their preferred sources of information were journals, indexes, abstracts, citation index and bibliographies. Also, fisheries scientists in Nigeria, according to Ibeun (1995) recorded a high preference for the use of journals to meet their information needs, while Obasuyi (2007) also identified journals as the major information sources utilized by oil palm scientists.

Apart from the scientists, agricultural information users, which Aina (1993) identified and classified as policy makers and planners, researches and service staff and farmers also depend extensively on the library and information services to meet their professional needs. Such needs, according to Kaniki (1992), Chifwepa (1993), Ojiambo (1993) and Otolo (2006) include the need to conduct quality research to enhance development and new discoveries in farm technologies, the need to identify farmer's problems and farmers' information communication patterns, information on land acquisition, purchase and application of fertilizers, pesticides and credit facilities. The sources used to satisfy these diverse needs, according to Akinwumi (1982), Ogunronbi and Oladokun (1993) include library journal articles, books, abstract, indexes, manuals, agricultural extension literature, bibliographies and reports. It is obvious, therefore, that there cannot be meaningful development in the agricultural sector of any nation's economy without the provision of adequate library services.

It can also be conveniently said that the engineers in their various areas of specialisation are the backbones of any nation's technological growth and development. Because of the nature of their job, the information they require is usually very technical. The study conducted by Tackie and Adams (2007) on the information needs and seeking behaviour of engineers in Ghana showed that the engineers needed information on the following: technical information, specification, management/planning, financial information, contract documents, pricelist and legal information either to improve on their knowledge or to make certain decisions about a particular problem. The engineers rated the provision of library facilities at their places of work as one of the best ways by which their jobs would be enhanced. The library services are therefore essential for the engineers in the performance of their professional duties.

Moreover, the roles of the social scientists in the society are as equally important as that of any professional. Basically, through research, they address social issues confronting the society. They are engaged in the identification, diagnosis, analysis and prognosis of such societal issues that have become endemic and worrisome. They even make certain projections that can help the development of the nation's economy and political system. For them to perform

creditably well, the provision of library services becomes inevitable. To support this, the Acts that legalised the establishment of the Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria, the Chartered Insurance Institute of Nigeria and the Chartered Institute of Stockbrokers as contained in *The Laws of the Federation of Nigeria* recognised the fact that no member of those professional Institutes can practise successfully without the provision of library services. The Acts, specifically state that each of the Institutes shall provide and maintain a library containing books and other related research materials in any form for the advancement of knowledge of the professions. In essence, the accountants, the bankers, the insurance professionals and the stockbrokers are compelled by law to provide and maintain library services for the enhancement and advancement of their professions.

Apart from the social scientists, policy makers, policy initiators and executors, administrators, politicians and technocrats need a lot of information from libraries to be able to perform optimally and contribute profusely and effectively to the socio-economic and socio-political development of the nation. It was as a result of this consciousness that the Federal Government of Nigeria established the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies to function as a centre of reflection, dialogue, research where academics of intellectual sagacity, policy initiators and executors and other experienced citizens from different sectors of the economy can discuss and exchange ideas on serious matters relating to Nigeria and Africa. The Act that gave legal backing to the establishment of the Institute as entrenched in *The Laws of the Federation of Nigeria* also empowered and mandated the Institute to establish and maintain a library to meet the Institute's information needs and to serve as a medium for the dissemination of the activities of the Institute by way of publication of books, records and reports. Similarly, the Chartered Institute of Administrators is also compelled by the Act that established it to establish and maintain a library for the promotion and advancement of knowledge in the area of administration. Besides, the enactment of the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria Act and the establishment of the College for the development of senior executives for the public and private sectors of the Nigerian economy with a standard library to meet the intellectual and information needs of Nigerian administrators are giant efforts to support the indispensability of library services to administrators, politicians, policy makers and policy initiators in the society.

Furthermore, research findings have shown that most Nigerian adolescents question the "why" and the "how" of their existence. They have no sense of value. They hence engage in drugs, cultism, robbery and other forms of anti-social and deviant behaviours that predispose them to psychotic and neurotic disorders, whose consequences are often catastrophic. Educational psychologists, counselling psychologists, clinical psychologists, and psychotherapists are in concordant that adolescents' endemic restfulness, existential absurdities and psychological frustrations which often result in anxiety disorder (generalised anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and posttraumatic stress disorder), personality disorders (paranoid, schizoid, schizotypal, histrionic and Narcissistic disorders), psychotic and cognitive disorders can be cured with logotherapy. Logotherapy, according to Uba (1989) is "primarily a method of psychotherapy for dealing with persons whose lives lack meaning". One of the techniques of logotherapy is that the client should be exposed to books on logotherapy, which has been termed 'bibliotherapy'. In essence, exposing the clients to a library of books on logotherapy is an indispensable therapy in solving the problems of the adolescents.

We now want to take a look at the mass media. The reputation of the mass media rests on their ability to manage and interpret information for the information, education, and enlightenment of the society. Journalists and other media experts need information about their careers, about individuals in the society and about the society at large to function effectively so that they will not be mis-informing the society they ought to be educating or else it will amount to

junk journalism. Accurate information is, therefore, necessary for the growth of our nascent democracy. Facts and figures that are concealed about certain public figures with questionable characters, and about certain public figures with questionable characters, and about organisations or institutions involved in shady deals are exhumed by journalists with flair for investigative journalism from the libraries. Through the information revealed from the libraries and archives, evils are uncovered, the oppressed are liberated, the hidden past is revealed and we thus have a better understanding of the present to enable us prepare for a glorious future. Even the information generated by the mass media is stored in the libraries for future generations to come.

Even the military and other security outfits in any nation in spite of their prowess, bravery, fierceness, wizardry and indefatigability cannot scorn at the place of library services in the performance of their sensitive but very important duties to the nation. The National War College Act established the National War College as a high level centre of excellence for senior military personnel but the Act also made it imperative and obligatory for the College to establish and maintain a library with adequate books, records, reports and other publications for the advancement of knowledge in the areas of work undertaken by the military. This further underscores the importance of library services for all categories of security operatives in the country.

In a similar vein, research has revealed the potency and the efficacy of libraries in conflict resolution and reconciliation. One of the greatest problems ravaging the African continent and in fact the entire world is war. Obviously, no meaningful development or advancement can take place in an atmosphere of war, chaos and acrimonies. A lot of unnecessary wars and conflicts had been generated due to lack of inadequate information. Ifidon and Ahianzu (2001) attributed the lingering carnage and pogrom in the Niger-Delta Region of Nigeria significantly and partly to inadequate information about the terms of agreement between the Federal Government and the oil companies, about the agreements between the oil companies and the representatives of the local communities. It was also shown in the study that the communities were not aware of their rights, obligations, issues, and events that ultimately affect their existence. *The World Bank Report* (2005) reveals that “countries like Ethiopia, Namibia, Uganda, Somalia and Liberia have mobilized library community resources in innovative ways to preserve and resolve conflicts”. More currently, Echezona (2007) posited that the role of the library in resolution of conflicts is incontrovertible. This, the library can do through the creation of a website on conflict resolution where the target users can access and discuss matters relating to conflict resolution. The library can also organise seminars, create access to free information, create links with non-governmental organisations and provide extension services and the indigenous knowledge systems. With all these in place, the library would have contributed significantly to the enhancement of conflict resolution and reconciliation in the entire continent after all information is power.

In case any wonders if the library has any value for the ecclesiasts, one should read Aina (2004) who took us back the memory lane. We recalled that in the medieval period, libraries were housed in monasteries and cathedrals. The monks and the priests were in charge of the collection of manuscripts. The monks and bishops contributed tremendously to the growth of libraries at the period. Even in the modern times, churches, theological colleges and seminaries have functional libraries to enhance both the spiritual and the intellectual development of their Church members and College students. Even theologians, pastors, teachers, evangelists and the missionaries need a lot of information on the creation saga, the dispensations, the patriarchs, Christ divinity, demonology, and the concept of trinity, apocalypse, Church administration, and Church finance and so on. The role of libraries in meeting these needs becomes inevitable. One can then understand King Ahaseurus in *Esther* 6:1 where he consulted the book of remembrance, which in modern

times would mean reference books. It was that consultation and interaction with the king's reference books that earned Mordecai, who had been pencilled for death, his royalty. This is one of the wonders of information. Many people, especially, the Christians believe in the existence of Heaven. To show, therefore, that libraries exist in Heaven, Jesus Christ in the Bible declares in *Hebrews* 10:7 that "Lo, I come (in the volume of books". If volumes of book exist in heaven, it follows therefore to conclude that a library must surely exist there. According to the Christian theology, one of these books, popularly referred to as the Book of Life contains the names of the saints.

Besides, the Nigerian Pilgrims Commission Act empowered the Nigerian Pilgrims Commission to establish or set up and maintain a library of books and other relevant publications and facilities to the intending Muslims willing to undertake pilgrimages and for the public. The Islamic preachers and scholars too need library services to fulfil their Islamic responsibilities and obligations.

Moreover, the rural dwellers in Nigeria comprising the farmers, bricklayers, carpenters, fishermen, market women, artisans and so o n who are mostly illiterates are agents of grassroot development if they are well empowered through the provision of adequate information and library facilities. According to Onwubiko (1989), the information needs of these rural dwellers include information on the sale of fertilizers and other farm inputs, information on credit facilities, health and education-related issues, new methods of cultivating crops and information on sanitary conditions. Since these rural dwellers are mostly illiterates, they do not benefit from the present library services that are literacy and urban based. The type of library programme that will be of great benefit to them, according to Ochai (1995) will have sufficient local colour that will evolve individuals called "oral librarians", "barefoot librarians", information consultants or floating librarians. This is library without walls that will meet the needs of the rural dwellers. This is what Aboyade (1987) earlier referred to as information repackaging which involves "collecting, redesigning, remodelling, restructuring, reorganisation and dissemination of information to a unique people taking into consideration their diverse socio-political, socio-cultural and the economic background of the people. It is only in this form that the rural populace can affect their environment since information is a dynamic and a veritable tool for the upliftment of man in his environment.

## Conclusion

An annual lecture of this nature cannot address all the professions in the world one after the other. An inaugural lecture will, perhaps, be more suitable for that. However, this delimitation does not invalidate or reduce the veracity of the indispensability of library services to all professions.

In conclusion, everyone irrespective of race, colour, language, ethnicity, creed, beliefs, philosophies, abilities or disabilities and all professions across the globe irrespective of their popularity or notoriety and whether their practitioners are mediocres or celebrities, literates or illiterates, rich or poor, aristocrats or bourgeois, recognized or discountenanced, treated with disdain or with pomp and pageantry, embraced with warmth or rejected and snubbed with societal rage, the contributions of library services, as evidenced in this paper to all professions are indispensable. Individuals, organisations, institutions, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOS), professional bodies and of course governments at all levels must give the library the pride of place in the scheme of things in the country and accord it top priority in its annual budgetary allocations. Only that can sustain the nation's continuing existence and guarantee its future development and advancement.

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