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Creating relevance in the Nigerian system: the place of Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), National Bibliography and Curriculum Development.

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**CREATING RELEVANCE IN THE NIGERIAN SYSTEM: THE PLACE OF
SELECTIVE DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION (SDI), NATIONAL
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT.**

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Abstract

Today's librarianship is in the information era, when information is increasingly valued as an economic resource, a commercial commodity, and a source of societal prosperity, thus making the function of librarians very important and inevitable. An ideal Librarian will need to be a facilitator, advisor, consultant, educator, navigator, seeker, researcher, evaluator, organizer, preserver, promoter, communicator, technical expert, manager, leader, entrepreneur, and visionary, among other things. Obviously, the emergence of Information and Communication Technology has birth new frontiers as well as challenges with influences cutting across all areas of human activities and librarianship as a profession and discipline are not left out. Thus making the place of library as information provider threatened, therefore, the need for justification of its existence and relevance. This paper discussed the place of SDI, National Bibliography and the urgent need for institution curriculum review if librarian relevance will be achieved in the Nigerian context. SDI as a reference service is domiciled in the academics but its tentacles could be extended outside to the political circles and economic stakeholders as well as organisations. An online and regular updated version of National bibliography should be produced as it will enhance free and boundless access, moreso, it will create a sense of national recognition for authors and access to recently published materials for librarians. Curriculum should be upgraded to include emerging trends as the current one only contains the rudiments of information and Communication Technology. Relevance of libraries and librarianship as a whole in this present dispensation is not possible without embracing emerging technologies

Keywords: SDI, National Bibliography, Libraries, Librarians and Librarianship

Word Count: 242

Introduction

Relevance in this age is not possible without embracing emerging technologies. The emergence of Information and Communication Technology has birth new technologies with influences cutting across all areas of human activities of which librarianship as a profession and a discipline is not left out. The impact of Technology is so enormous to the extent that the age is called technology age. Professionals of all works are expected to be tech savvy else they loose relevance. As opined by Cooke et al. (2011), the ever-increasing ubiquity of electronic resources has extended the library beyond its four walls. Characteristically, the library has two functional dimensions, one for the physical entities (on-site users) and the other for the virtual or ubiquitous access to resources be it via library websites, social medias or other internet enabled technologies to serve users who are scattered abroad in virtual locations.

Librarianship as a profession and discipline that brings perspective to information management has been left with no other option than to blend with Information and Communication technologies and emerging trends so as to stay relevant as the fight for survival and relevance depends solely on the ability of organizations to flow along with the demands of emerging trends. In doing this, the library profession has to redefine and evolve in the way and manner of its services most especially in SDI , National Bibliography, and Curriculum Development in Schools. This paper will therefore, review literatures on these indices and system examine how they can contribute to the quest of creating relevance in Nigeria.

Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI)

The increase in information explosion has left information users with the option of adopting the best means to access and make ethical use of the right information. The role information plays in the society cannot be overemphasized.

Information is required for individual, institution and societal development. Hence, efforts must be expended to acquire the right information in a world where information is being produced exponentially with almost no control. Accessing the right information is vital for any form of development hence the academic libraries role in ensuring an effective delivery of the right information to their users. Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) service is one of the means through which libraries achieve this.

Young in (1983) defined SDI as *“a service provided by a library or other information agencies whereby its users are periodically notified of new publications, report literature, or other sources of information in subjects in which they have specified an interest”*. O’Neil (2001) says that SDI is a concept that originates in the roots of computer science, he described SDI system as an attempt to facilitate users’ information retrieval and information filtering needs. Nkiko and Iroaganachi (2015) affirmed that one avenue for meeting the information need of a library’s immediate community is the selective dissemination of information. The authors went on to say that SDI as a concept has gained traction among academic libraries, and that it entails compiling a database of users' profiles, including their teaching and research interests, and making unsolicited but relevant library resources available to them in order to help them achieve their objectives more quickly. With the above assertion, for effective SDI services to be rendered there is need for community analysis from where the information need of users would be deduced.

Creating Relevance in the Nigerian System: the place of Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI)

Uzohue and Yaya (2016) argued that the main purpose of SDI in the information age is to help users to cope with information overload. The authors mentioned that users don't have time for reading, probably because of the nature of their work and little time for research, and as such may prefer readymade information. The main purpose and objective of Selective Dissemination of Information is to satisfy the users' informational requirements and needs

Ezeala (2009) posits that an effective library customizes information to fit individual information needs, with effective library systems being timely in delivery, meeting specific needs, being simple to comprehend and use, and being delivered by friendly and knowledgeable library staff.

Kannappanavar and Swamy (2013) noted that with the strides in the area of science and technology, library as an information centre must be able to initiate and sustain a variety of library and information services to provide the right type of information to the users.

Among academic libraries due to the emergence of Information Technology SDI is now a concept which entails creating a database of users' profiles, including their teaching and research interests, and making available to them unsolicited but relevant library resources geared towards facilitation of swift accomplishment of designated goals. As against the manual system, SDI in the information age can be simply defined as an online information retrieval service that uses internet services to provide staff and potential users with access to global indexing, abstracting, and full-text databases for research, academic, and other purposes.

Specifically, libraries can achieve relevance via Selective dissemination of information in some of the following ways:

- i. Consulting high personalities of the society, profiling their information need which includes political, social, economic, and other areas of interests and making available to them unsolicited but relevant library resources geared towards facilitation of swift accomplishment of designated goals
- ii. Through Selective Dissemination, the Library can make an individual feel respected, and it has the ability to create a sense of belonging in them thus making them committed to the usage of library and its information resources.
- iii. In the political world, selective dissemination can create relevance by creating a profile of politicians and serving them with the information they are likely to be in need of. For example, information on geopolitical zones, political landscapes and political history of a particular group of people etc provided to a politician based on his/her area of political interest has the tendency of creating a sense of appreciation and importance
- iv. Socialization: Library as a social organization can through Selective Dissemination socialize, relate and rapport with the society by meeting the information need of the big names as well as the important personalities.
- v. Selective Dissemination goes beyond rendering information services to an individual, Organizations can also be selected based on their areas of interest and served with appropriate information.
- vi. Selective Dissemination of Information is an aspect of information packaging from which money can be generated for the library. Information services can be packaged and tailored towards meeting the information needs of very busy professionals.
- vii. Abstracting and Indexing of information materials provided to eminent personality will definitely place library in the heart of the individual thus making the library very relevant.

- viii. Via SDI the library automatically becomes the information backbone and a trusted ally of an individual and organization thereby contributing towards national development
- ix. Via SDI the time of the user is saved to do some other things
- x. SDI should not be restricted to the academic circles only, its tentacles should spread to organizations, high profile personalities, business mogul, musicians, bankers, etc.

National Bibliography

National bibliography is a compendium of all the publications published in, by and about the country, both within and outside the country produced on annual basis. A national bibliography is said to be a compilation of information resources produced in a country and those produced about the country from external resources within a particular period usually a year.

Progressively, with the advent of new sources of information becoming available through the web, there is potentially competition with other bibliographic services, such as books-in-print, national union catalogues, catalogues of university or research libraries etc.

The primary goals of national bibliographic services are to assist libraries and librarians with cost-effective cataloguing and to aid libraries in their selection and acquisition activities. The third goal is to improve information retrieval and document delivery. These goals are still relevant. However, the different today is the context in which such goals are pursued and achieved (Vitiello, 1999)

A complete and timely national bibliography is therefore an important information resources for: Selection and acquisition in libraries and similar institutions; cataloguing both directly for copy cataloguing and indirectly for cataloguing support and verification of authorship and publication history

Creating Relevance in the Nigerian System: the place of National Bibliography of Nigeria in Generating funds for the National Library

Library being a growing organism and as a social organization must endeavour to stay relevant by embracing new trends which is emerging technologies and internet of things. This can be achieved through the deployment of electronically and digitally accessible online version of the national bibliography, produced, reviewed and updated on a regular basis. This will create opportunities like: remote access by cataloguers, and the public on new publications on areas of interests from the comfort of their room.

It will make the national library the hub around which all other libraries revolved because every publication in every other library will certainly have copies in the national library. Therefore in case of disaster or loss, national library can serve as back up.

Like the Library of Congress of America, producing a catalogue of books published in Nigeria with its bibliographic details can springboard the production of a locally made classification scheme which will put into consideration the Nigerian concepts thus promoting and preservation the national heritage.

It can serve as the means of generation (IGR) for the national Library instead of looking up to the federal government for everything. Via its online presence and usage, clicks and visits on the websites, National Library can command traffic and access by all other library in the country for a token through which money will be generated.

Conclusively, any book included in the national bibliography will enjoy recognition and it will greatly influence authors compliance with national and international standards, it will also present a statistical account of a country's scholarly output on regular basis, it will ensure strict adherence

to the copyright laws thus curbing violations, it will help the national library to exercise authority and healthy control on the quality of Information resources being produced in Nigeria and about Nigeria.

Curriculum development

A curriculum is an important aspect of any education or training program since it includes information about the content, purpose, method, time / duration, trainers, and location or setting of the program or course, all of which are important in providing effective manpower training and education. (Ocholla, 2003)

Over the years, several reasons has been adjudged as a basis for curriculum development in the field of Librarianship. Some of which includes the integration of knowledge management, some even suggest a complete overhaul of the current curriculum for the implementation of a new one with Information and communication Technology embedded. Some suggest that the curriculum should be completely ICT inclined, however some suggests that the old should not be discarded but serve as a foundation upon which any new system should be built. However, with the emergence of Information and Telecommunication Technology, curriculum review is inevitable. ICT is a moving train and any sector that refuse to move with it will certainly loose relevance in not time. Relevance in this era is only made possible with the integration of current Information and Communication Technology trends in the Library and Information science curriculum.

According to Singh (2001) today's librarianship is in the information era, when information is increasingly valued as an economic resource, a commercial commodity, and a source of societal prosperity. Thus making the function of librarians very important and inevitable. An ideal librarian will need to be a facilitator, advisor, consultant, educator, navigator, seeker, researcher, evaluator,

organizer, preserver, promoter, communicator, technical expert, manager, leader, entrepreneur, and visionary, among other things.

The training of staff to conduct such job is also critical issue of concern for the success of libraries and information centers as effective communication systems. Therefore, improved library and information science education is one of the most essential areas of personnel development in this regard.

In the Nigeria context is the academic curriculum generally, is built in such a way that students are given the notion that as soon as they finish school there is job waiting for them, this has made our institution a training center of mediocre and a graveyard of innovation, graduates without anything tangible to contribute to the economy. Furthermore, it is clear that Library Information Science Education in Nigeria today cannot be relevant without effective preparation of new crop of librarians to effectively use the new information and communication technology in their professional practices (Wilson 2013).

As a career, a profession and a discipline, library and information science (LIS) is concerned with the knowledge and skills required to gather, organize, and use records of human communication. Therefore a librarian serves as an intermediary between man and the information created or produced by previous generations, with the goal of maximizing the social utility of these information for the greater good of humanity. Librarians play a critical role in the communication of information in today's world, and they must be well-educated, highly qualified, and professionally competent to do so. These can only be done in a high quality and up-to-date curriculum in our tertiary institution.

In the Nigeria case from the nomenclature to the content of Library and Information Science curriculum so many discrepancies and shortcomings have been observed. For instance, the course is given names like Library and archival studies, Library Science Technology, Library and information science, Library science among others. From the name the content of the course now differs. This means that there is no uniformity in the name therefore there couldn't be uniformity in the curriculum content.

As far back as 1980, Mangla asserts that Library and information science curriculums should be designed in such a way that it can provide and equip students with the knowledge and skills to effectively handle immediate job requirements; and to develop programs, procedures, and services on modern lines in the future, where the use of various modern technological innovation, computers, and other technology could be deployed to provide better, faster, and more efficient service.

Studies have revealed that institutions of higher learning in a bid to stay relevant have reviewed their curriculum to include courses like Introduction to computer, Computer application to library process, introduction to computer programming, Computer application to library processes, Introduction to database management system, Information science and modern technology, Information and development etc. All these are good improvements as far as the Nigeria context is concerned but in comparison with a Library and information science curriculum in some American Universities, the difference is clear but with the hope that someday Nigeria will get there. From the websites of the University of Pittsburgh, Catholic University of America, University of Washington, Wayne State University and University of Kentucky, Azino, and Unomah, (2015) found that these universities offered courses like Introduction to data base; Information and communication Technology in society; Systems Analysis; Technology Security; E-commerce

Regulation; Information Technology; Introduction to Records and Information Management; Software productivity tools for information; Website Design; Building Web-based information services; Integrated library systems (system configuration); Data Analytics; Introduction to Health informatics and E-Science; Digital imaging, meta data, digital preservation, graphics and video processing; Story telling in a Digital Age; Resources for Digital Age Children & Teen; Libraries as learning labs in a Digital Age; Computers methods in Humanities.; Library and Archival computing; Technology in the lives of children and youth; Digital libraries; Preserving Digital Culture; Database design and application: Information visualization; Geographic information systems for libraries etc. Comparing the developed and the developing countries, Nigeria is still at the rudimentary level of ICT integration into the curriculum whereas universities of developed countries are already integrating emerging technologies and new trends (Azino, and Unomah, 2015)

Bothma, & Britz, (2000) opined that constant evaluation and re-evaluation of the Library and Information Science courses, the students and their ambitions, and the market- place in which these students will eventually work will help the department of library and information science to expand and upgrade the curricula and forge new alliances, thereby offering courses that satisfy the requirements of both the academia, profession and the marketplace.

Creating Relevance in the Nigerian System: the place of Curriculum Development

Librarians deals with one of the most important commodity at individual and at organizational level, 'Information'. As a professional, in their field of studies, they should be imparted with up-to-date knowledge about what their profession is all about and how inevitable their profession is globally when it comes to handing information in this era of information explosion. The curriculum should be designed in a way that it will:

1. Cover areas beyond ICT to emerging trends like: Preserving Digital Culture, Database design and application, Information visualization, Geographic information systems for libraries etc should be embedded into the curriculum. This will position the library to be more relevant with the development in the information age.
2. Enhance Librarians involvement in the development of software application programs for library services and library management
3. Involve the use of library courses to be taught as a compulsory course in Universities by librarians that work in the library so as to equip students with knowledge on management of information and make the library have direct contact and relationship with the students.
4. Lead to the upgrade of the curriculum and will make librarianship an indispensable profession to all other professions and to the society at large.
5. Enable librarians to be highly skilled in the use of Information and Communication Technology, thus making them relevant in the digital age.

Conclusion

Librarianship is a prestigious profession because of what it deals with (information), however, its acceptance and wide recognition in Nigeria is less to be desired from holders and policy makers as well as the abilities of the different types of library to influence their immediate environment and the community they serve. Moreover, some things need to be done in the Nigerian system for libraries to become more relevant in the Nigeria system:

- a. Higher institution should be encouraged to develop a well-equipped, automated and digitized library before approvals are given to their programs.
- b. Library professional bodies (Librarian Registration Council of Nigeria and Nigeria Library Association) should play more central role during accreditation of the departments.

- c. A regular visitation should be carried out on schools to evaluate their level of compliance with the rules and regulations as stipulated by the professional body.
- d. A generic name should be given to the Profession in the academia
- e. Library should go out of their comfort zones and get involved in politics, by providing information to politicians as SDI so as to be engaged in politics influence and contribution
- f. An aggressive reading culture promotion campaign should be embarked upon in such a way that it will command the attention of the public and the political circles through literacy advocacy and literacy campaign.
- g. Library should embark on community services like giving awards of excellence to best library users, building pipe borne water, cinemas houses, giving scholarship to best students among others, thereby creating awareness.
- h. Course like entrepreneurship should be included in the curriculum to help graduates of the profession on entrepreneurship and creating relevance in the Nigeria system.
- i. Teaching and learning infrastructure should be ensured available for effective educational adventure.
- j. Curriculum development without teaching aids would not make the maximum effect, therefore tertiary institution should be equipped with teaching aids.

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