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# THE CULTURE OF READING: THE BENEFITS, THE ROLE OF LIBRARIES, AND THE CHALLENGES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

BY

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## ABSTRACT

In Nigerian society, the serious drawback of reading culture is becoming more and more common. This paper discusses the culture of reading: the benefits, the role of libraries, and the challenges in the twenty-first century. World Book Day is a day to celebrate reading around the world. One searches for solutions to problems. The role of the library when it comes to this cannot be overemphasized. Promote the culture of reading as it provides various services to information users. Libraries' roles in promoting a reading culture have included offering a favorable setting and resources that deliver information that is more thorough and diversified, encouraging literacy, providing detailed and diverse information resources, and allowing primary and high school students to participate in Library Week. The challenges include Poor Funding, Lack of professional staff, Irrelevant Materials, Economic factors and African Factors. People read for various reasons apart from education and this among other things includes self-improvement, fun and relaxation. People should read a book a day and share a story for at least five minutes. Reading culture, on the other hand must be incorporated into library collections, reader campaigns, reading groups, and World Book Day activities.

Keywords: reading culture, libraries, literacy, reading, challenges, twenty-first century, World Book Day, Nigeria

## INTRODUCTION

The importance of libraries in every society's educational system cannot be overstated. This is true because libraries give everyone free access to the information they need to develop their country's intellectual, economic, and social standing (Raphael, 2016). World Book Day commemorates the celebration of reading. Globalism Book Day is a day set aside to celebrate other illustrators, books, and reading around the world. The theme for World Book Day 2022 is "Read...So You Never Feel Alone." adults, parents, and senior siblings are encouraged to participate by reading and sharing the stories of what they have read with others to learn. It also means you can "share a story" for 5 minutes on World Book Day and beyond, using "ShareAStory". It is a campaign to encourage parents, caregivers, siblings, and friends to read to each other. It emphasizes the benefits of reading and sharing stories each day. This can happen anywhere and at any time, be it at home, school, library, workplace, etc.

World Book Day was created by UNESCO on 23rd April 1995 as a worldwide celebration of books and reading. It is marked in over 100 countries around the globe. The first World Book Day in the UK and Ireland took place in 1997 to encourage young people to discover the pleasure of reading. To show how important reading is, this year, 2022 is the 25th anniversary of World Book Day in the UK, which is about 27 years old today, corresponding to April 23, 2022.

The reading style of the twenty-first century is different from that of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries because learning and reading in the 21st century means students are mastering content while producing, synthesizing, and evaluating information from a variety of topics and sources with an understanding and respect for diverse cultures (Hall, 2012).

Reading in the twenty-first century has many blueprints to secure our future in fulfillment of educational standards. The more we read, the more we become exposed to problems and solutions to the common problems we face as a people. According to Jim Rohn (n.d.) reading is essential for those seeking to rise above the norm. She has always seen libraries and fought for the best reading culture in our society. They do this because they are knowledge managers, and they maintain and organize information and believe in the reader's power to develop a nation.

This is why Seuss (n.d.), as Agumubi (2017) stated, the leaders are the readers. He also explained that there is no doubt that people who read more are more likely to be seen as leaders by their peers because of their specialized knowledge. He went on to say that the world learns through reading, he added.

Reading a book is truly your magical portal to another universe. You are not very old, too weak, too savage, to pick up a book and read it. According to Ailakliu and Unegbu (2017), reading involves a process of thinking that focuses attention on understanding. Reading is not just for children or the very smart. Anyone who wants to read can read. Visit your local library or book store and find the right book for you! There are no excuses not to read a book. Once you can read, the power is in your hands to do what you want with knowledge. It is clear that reading is not done by magic, according to Ogugua, Emerole, Egwim, Anyawn, and Haco Obasi (2015), the strategies for developing a reading culture are to introduce children to reading very early in their lives, to read for competitions and to set up libraries in their classrooms, and to train teachers who will teach children how to read.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main objective of this study is to investigate the culture of reading: the benefits, the role of libraries, and the challenges in the 21st century. The Specific Objectives are to:

1. To highlight the importance of World Book Day annually by celebrating a community rooted in its theme year after year.
2. To encourage the community to have a culture of reading and its benefits.
3. To Determine the Role of Libraries in Twenty-First Century Reading
4. To identify the challenges faced by libraries in promoting culture of reading

## **READING CONCEPT**

Reading is the act of examining a collection of written symbols and determining their meaning. Reading is a mental process in which a person examines a written text and begins to comprehend the message written in that language. Reading necessitates the use of vision in order to comprehend several words in a sentence and make it meaningful. (<https://www.ukessays.com>).

Reading, according to Harmer (2007: 99), is beneficial for language acquisition. Assuming that students understand what they read, the further they read, the better they become at it. Reading, according to Cline et al. (2006:2), is the practice of extracting and fully understanding written texts. Interpretation entails trying to translate writing system symbols (such as Braille) into the verbal words that they comprise.

The journey of a lifetime, like reading, begins with turning the page, and reading is often the only means by which we voluntarily and helplessly slip into some other skin, some other sound, some other soul (Joyce Carol Oates, 2004). Reading workouts the brain and boosts the chances of systemic absorption.

Reading, according to Ariffin (1992), is a highly personal activity that is mainly done alone and quietly. This implies that reading is an exercise related to acquiring information. This may be done silently or aloud. Reading is the primary approach to learning. According to Maryam (1991), reading implies that we cannot gain knowledge or recall what we are reading if we do not understand it.

## **CONCEPT OF READING CULTURE**

A reading culture is the learned exercise of gathering information, wisdom, or entertainment from written words. This must, however, not be limited to reading textbooks for educational purposes! It should include news, short stories, or even online publications on important subjects.

A reading environment is defined as a context in which reading is supported, valued, respected, and encouraged.

According to Nyam (2015), reading culture entails the practice of reading as a regular activity and thus the development of an attitude and the possession of skills that make reading a delightful, regular, and continuous activity.

According to Ailakhu and Unegbu (2017), the reading culture is accustomed to reading in everyday life rather than just for educational purposes. They did, however, stress that reading eventually comes to an end. It becomes a difficult task to read in order to pass the exam, but it gains value as reading in order to read until a desire to read further develops. These are the great authors who came to the conclusion that the essence of reading culture is to encourage students to read as part of their daily routine and to develop reading habits as a habit that should be enjoyed throughout one's life.

### **THE BENEFITS OF A CULTURE OF READING:**

1. Increased vocabulary: The further you read, the more words you will encounter.
2. Brain exercise: Reading has been discovered to boost brain connectivity as a consequence of aging, but regular reading may help slow the progression of Alzheimer's disease and dementia.
3. Literacy: Reading helps you become more literate. Continuous learning is possible when you read regularly. The process of learning never ends. Indeed, reading is enjoyable.
4. Managing Stress: Distraction in the World of Reading Comprehension allows you to get away from the stresses of daily life, relieving your mind and body.
5. Enough sleep: When your mind is racing and busy, it can be difficult to fall asleep when concerned about a variety of issues. Even five minutes of reading can help clear your mind of whatever is keeping you awake.
6. Enhanced memory: The rate at which memory deteriorates is slowed down by reading. Reading increases brain activity and extends life. Reading can improve one's memory. It is improved in that it strengthens memory and new brain muscles. It was developed as a result of how the brain develops and sharpens memory. In the end, reading gets better Your brain, with increased memory, makes one smarter and smarter. However, the act of reading helps to improve brain function and memory.

7. Discipline: Reading instills discipline in readers who follow specific norms and standards. It aids in maintaining mental, emotional, and behavioral control. It helps a person achieve their life goals. One's discipline is improved by including reading in their daily routine.
8. Creativity: One can think creatively after reading. The reader will gain from the ability to think creatively, which boosts academic accomplishment and actually enhances concentration and focus. Additionally, the brain may expand as a result of the filtering of creative thought and its creative components by a person's brain.
9. Knowledge: Knowledge is power in and of itself! (Francis Bacon). You get more knowledgeable the more you read. Your strength increases as your knowledge increases. The knowledge learned can never be lost, so this is useful at all times.
10. Education: encourages the nation's educational development and advancement.
11. Leisure: Reading is far less expensive than going to the movies or other forms of entertainment. In fact, reading is free at the library.

## **THE ROLES OF LIBRARIES IN FOSTERING A READING CULTURE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

- I. Compared to classroom learning alone, libraries offer a favorable setting and resources that deliver information that is more thorough and diversified (Aina et al. 2011).
- II. For us to read, learn, communicate, and play, libraries offer a depth and variety of materials.
- III. Libraries are hubs of knowledge: The majority of people imagine books when they see a library. While this is simply true, there are numerous different types of books available today, including e-books and audiobooks.
- IV. The library encourages literacy: in the twenty-first century, it houses more than just books. The library promotes reading. They are dedicated to assisting young people and adults in acquiring the abilities necessary to flourish in a global information age.
- V. Library Week: At the primary and high school levels, libraries have also planned a number of reader promotion campaigns throughout the majority of yearly library weeks. Students and schoolchildren were asked to take part. The books were distributed to them for after-school

reading throughout their participation, and the book award winner came back. This is to entice them to keep reading. This entire week is devoted to educating people about the value of libraries, their significance, and the benefits of using them. (Ailakhu and Ongpo, 2017)

## **CHALLENGES FACED BY LIBRARIES IN PROMOTING CULTURE OF READING**

1. **Poor Funding:** A lack of direct budgetary funding prevents the development and provision of libraries in Nigeria. When the parent institution finances the libraries (as a subsidiary), the situation is totally disgusting. The 10% allotted by universities for libraries is not a realistic amount in academic libraries. A public library cannot be said to be efficiently administered in nearly all of Nigeria's states. Public libraries no longer exist at all or are just operating as a moniker in some states. Irunegbo, Opara, and Ohanyere, (2011) claim that a lack of funding is to blame for the failure to hire ICT professionals, the insufficient purchase of reading materials like books and periodicals and other ICT materials, the lack of efficient staff training and retraining, and the deterioration and poor maintenance of the infrastructure.
2. **Lack of professional staff:** To accommodate modern information services, the librarianship program needs to be redesigned. Half-baked librarians do not improve the efficiency of library management, which is a negative scenario. The core role of most libraries in Nigeria has been directly affected by the inadequate hiring of professional librarians, which generally stalls the necessary reading and literacy campaigns. It is necessary to reorganize the librarianship curriculum to accommodate modern information services. Half-baked librarians do not improve the efficiency of library management, which is a negative scenario. The core role of most libraries in Nigeria has been directly affected by the inadequate hiring of professional librarians, which generally stalls the necessary reading and literacy campaigns.
3. **Irrelevant Materials:** The majority of libraries are at the mercy of outdated resources. The books are out-of-date, not fixed when they are broken, and irrelevant to the intended audience. The acute lack of books and information sources has resulted in irrelevant library stocks due to inadequate local book



publishing, an overreliance on foreign books (donations), and librarians' low expertise in collection development.

4. Economic factors: Since the majority of people in the country are poor, reading cannot be an issue for them. "My upset stomach understands nothing," says a Nigerian citizen who is suffering from hunger. Until food is put on the tables of the average person, reading will continue to be on people's unfinished priorities. Once again, the Nigerian economy has been unable to control inflation. If the cost of vital goods and services, such as clothing, food, housing, and transportation, is high, the library may not have enough money to buy the high-quality books needed to promote reading.
5. African Factors: According to Irunebo, Opara, and Ohanyere (2011), the continent lacks a maintenance culture, an innovative spirit, an information technology environment, a droning reading and learning habit, careless ICT application, an excessive reliance on foreign inventions/materials (technology), indigenous commercial library services, staff lacking in information/knowledge management skills, persistent corruption among the leaders, and a lack of public relations.

## **TECHNIQUES OF READING**

According to PLANETSPARK, there are four different types of reading techniques; they include skimming, scanning, intensive reading, and extensive reading.

1. Skimming: Skimming, also known as gist reading, is the process of glancing through a text to grasp the main idea. In this case, the reader does not pronounce every word of the text but rather concentrates on the main theme. Skimming is demonstrated by reading newspapers or publications and continuing to look up a person's name in a contacts list.
2. Scanning: In order to swiftly locate a certain piece of information, the reader here skims across phrases. When scanning, unnecessary text is rejected or ignored in order to focus on finding a specific item of information.

3. **Intensive Reading:** Since it requires the reader to pay close attention to every detail, intensive reading takes much longer than skimming and scanning. It includes careful reading with the purpose of enhancing understanding. Every single word must be understood by the reader in this act.
4. **Extensive reading:** More focus is placed on fluency and less on correctness while reading extensively. It is more of an extracurricular activity that typically involves reading for enjoyment. Readers are extremely unlikely to read a text they don't like in detail.

### **COMMONLY OCCURRING READING ISSUES**

1. **Decoding Difficulties:** New or unfamiliar terminology might be difficult for beginning readers, but with practice and reading aloud, decoding usually gets less difficult. If a youngster still has trouble, there could be an underlying issue or a physical condition that prevents them from being able to hear the sounds or read the letters.
2. **Reading Comprehension Problems:** Some kids can read like pros but may be unable to explain what they have read. This suggests a comprehension issue. When their teachers or parents read aloud to them, these kids might experience the same problem.
3. **Quickness:** Children's vocabulary grows as they read more. They start to recognize more words by sight, which makes reading faster for them. If your youngster struggles with speed, the issue may be due to delayed information processing. Reading requires holding information in the mind while continuously digesting the text because it is a cognitively demanding activity. Children who assimilate information slowly may become exhausted. These kids might need more time to finish assignments that require a lot of reading.
4. **Mixed Reading Problems:** Children who struggle with reading may have both reading comprehension and word-decoding issues. Word reading, information retention, and text comprehension are difficulties for them. An underlying reading disorder may be the cause of these issues. Even if some children develop at a slower rate than others, you should have your child's situation reviewed by a specialist if you observe any problems that interfere with their everyday activities.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Different issues related to promoting a reading culture among people were discussed in this study, which revealed a pressing need to develop a reading culture in society as a whole to keep up reading habits, guarantee that society is well-literate in all subject areas, and to employ reading in daily life.

People of all ages can still succeed through reading, which implies that they should read frequently in order to accomplish realistic goals. This reading culture must be promoted via library acquisitions, reader marketing initiatives, reading establishments, and World Book Day events.

Additionally, instructors should provide activities that allow for the use of library resources and services within a specific period for student interaction with library resources. Furthermore, parents could promote library use. They should put time management first and take their kids to the library. Children's reading habits will be encouraged, and they will learn about the resources available at the library.

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