7-3-2018

MINDSET OF LIBRARIANS IN THE PROMOTION OF AFRICAN CULTURE VIS-À-VIS NIGERIA AS A NATION

Abiodun A. Osunrinde
Ekiti State University, Ado - Ekiti, osunrindea2008@gmail.com

Priscilla Agbetuyi
agbetuyipa@gmail.com

MINDSET OF LIBRARIANS IN THE PROMOTION OF AFRICAN CULTURE VIS-À-VIS NIGERIA AS A NATION

BY

OSUNRINDE, A.A. (PhD)

University Library,

Ekiti State University, Ado – Ekiti

Osunrindea2008@gmail.com

AND

AGBETUYI, P.A. (MRS.)

University Library,

Ekiti State University, Ado – Ekiti

agbetuyipa@gmail.com

Keywords: Librarian, Culture, Oral tradition, African Culture, Nigeria.

Abstract

This research work focused on the mindset of librarians in the promotion of African Culture Vis – A – Vis Nigeria as a Nation. The culture of a people had been identified as the identity of such people. Taking a cursory look at Nigeria, as a nation in the continent of Africa, the invasion of European world had greatly influenced our ways of life. Libraries established by our colonial masters could not meet our indigenous needs. After independence, efforts were being made to enhance and promote our cultural values. The study unleashed the perception of librarians about our culture with Nigeria as a case study.

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population for the study consisted of forty – five (45) librarians purposively selected from three (3) university libraries in Nigeria; namely: Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile – Ife; Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, and the University of Lagos Library, Akoka, Lagos. These university libraries were selected because they are old institutions in the history of Nigeria and they contain resources on cultural artifacts from which generalization was made. Questionnaire was used as instrument for data gathering. Out of forty – Eight (48) questionnaires administered, forty – five (45) were returned valid.

Data gathered were analyzed using simple frequency, percentages and four – point Lickert Scale of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). A bench mark of 2.5 was set for the weighted mean from which conclusions were drawn.

The result of the findings revealed the perception of Librarians about African culture. The roles they play in its promotion were also identified.

Introduction

The identity and influence of a particular set of people in a global community is chiefly determined by the cultural beliefs and practices of such people. Africa, as a continent, is culturally – rich, whose culture is reflected in her dressing, speech, music, greetings, arts and crafts, pottery, religion, clothing, music, languages, folklores, ceremonies and functions among other. The culture of Africa is varied and manifold, consisting of a mixture of countries with various tribes that have their own unique characteristics. According to Ekwelem & Okafor (2011), culture includes a society's arts, beliefs, customs, institutions, inventions, language, technology, and values. Culture produces similar behaviour and thought among most people in a particular society. Culture covers the way of life of a social group consisting of belief, values, standards, practice, language, and technology shared by members of a social group. Edward B. Taylor defined culture as, 'The complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society'. Cultural development enhances cultural continuity and social cohesion, a sense of self - belonging, and a means of understanding the past and to contemplate the future".

Scott (2000) stated the importance of culture, thus: […] culture and places of cultural significance play an important role in the development of contemporary cities. They represent not only sources of identity and meaning for individuals and communities but now constitute an important economic resource for post industrial cities. There is an increasing link between culture and the economy, as cultural resources become strategic tools for economic growth and development.

Since the beginning of time, there has been a need to preserve artifacts in some fashion for later appreciation by new generations. As a result, it seems there has always been some form of a library in existence. There is no doubt that libraries have had an impressively direct and significant impact on societies all over the world for thousands of years. UNESCO (2004) submitted that "many people are not truly knowledgeable about cultures and this problem of ignorance is further compounded by questions of orality, tradition and world vision". The

danger is that Nigeria and indeed Africa stands the imminent risk of losing so much of its valuable documented heritage in consequence of ever increasing deterioration of paper and other media on which they have been stored (Popoola, 2003).

According to Abdulsalami, et.al. (2013), libraries are established for the systematic collection, organization, preservation and dissemination of knowledge and information. Rajkoomar (2012) affirmed this by stating that library is a treasure-house of knowledge. Libraries are not just institutions /building /warehouses /stores etc. of information materials, but are agents of educational, social, economic, political and cultural changes in the society. Libraries could be described as a repository of all forms of cultural artifacts organized to meet all facets of human information needs. It is a social institution, which came into existence when the accumulated body of man's knowledge became so voluminous that it superseded the limits of human memory and the records of that experience could no longer be left to survival through the oral tradition. The primary objective of any library is to bring together the man and the documents that would solve his information needs.

According to Chibuzor & Osadebe (2009), preserving the cultural; historical and scientific heritage of various world nations; and their thorough presentation had been a long term commitment of library and information centers. Their major task had been collecting; documenting and disseminating information on the cultural heritage of its community. They identified roles of public libraries such as provision of cultural materials for all sections of the host community; provision of space for cultural works for all both rich and poor, sustaining local cultural activities e.g. organizing and hosting storytelling, presentation of lectures and seminars to disseminate information on political, economic and cultural events in the society, ensuring that library collections and services help people to understand their local environment, taking records of the cultural heritage of the community it serves. The recording should include valuable collections of the local history, tales; riddles, traditional technologies and traditional pharmacopoeia which can be used by the public in collective listening sessions.

Okerulu (2002) cited in Anazi et.al. (2013) affirmed that libraries are an important part of the social, cultural and educational history of any nation. They were said to have the mission of preserving and disseminating knowledge and cultural treasures; preserving cultural identities, bridging the past and the present and shaping the future. As a means of promoting the African culture at large, The African Heritage Library was established in March 1988 at Adeyipo village in Lagelu local government area of Oyo State in Nigeria. The library was founded by Dr Bayo Adebowale. The head of the library is an Afro-American woman, Yeye Akilimali Funua Olaide. It was designed to serve the public. The library has a collection of over 100,000 volumes of books and tapes on various subjects on Africa and African cultural heritage. It serves as a depository of all publications on Africa and Africans in Diaspora. In the opinion of the Nigerian Library Association (2009) the library meets the educational and socio-cultural needs of both researchers and the local community people.

Some university libraries have vital collections of oil paintings, artifacts, objects, and large collections of photographic materials and albums and valuable works of art (Olatokun, 2008; Barber, 2008). The University of Lagos Library is being used by the Federal Society for Arts and Humanities as a depository for their collections. Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife also has a collection of works of artists like Ben Enwonwu, Akinola Lasekan, Agbo Folarin and a host of others. Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan is a preservation centre for cultural heritage collections (Barber, 2008; Odogwu, 2010 cited in Anazi et.al. 2013).

Librarians in national, public, academic, private, school and special libraries have their roles to play in the promotion of African culture. According to the association of government librarians (2016), they are meeting places that cross cultural, ethnic, generational and social boundaries. As argued by Ekwelem & Okafor (2011), they are chiefly responsible for the preservation of cultural heritage, preservation of cultural resources, digitization of cultural materials, oral archiving and indigenous knowledge preservation. According to Greyling, (2010) Indigenous knowledge is part and parcel of the culture and history of any local community. It is the cornerstone for building ones identity and ensuring coherence of social structures within

communities. Because indigenous knowledge is mostly stored in people's minds and passed on through generations by word of mouth rather than in written form, it is vulnerable to rapid change (Sithole, 2006). However, indigenous knowledge faces extinction unless it is properly documented and disseminated (World Bank, 1998).

Statement of the problem

It is believed by some people that the colonization of Africa by European masters had a direct negative impact on the culture and tradition of Africa through assimilation. Colonial rule was an imposition that unleashed deadly blow on African culture with the immediate consequence of the introduction of such values as rugged individualism, corruption, capitalism and oppression. They viewed Africans as culturally inferior.). The so – called civilization has swept under the carpet most of our cultural beliefs which should have been an instrument of social cohesion and identity.

Libraries in Africa were thus designed to serve colonial interests, stocking books of primarily foreign content (Omole, 2002). However, with the coming of independence to many African states, transformation did not reach the libraries (Sithole, 2006) Since librarians are stakeholders responsible for the enhancement, development and preservation cultural materials, this study seeks to explore the perception of librarians about the African culture and how they can promote it.

Objectives of the study

The broad objective of this study is to explore the mindset of librarians in the promotion of African culture vis-à-vis Nigeria as a nation. Other specific objectives are to:

i. find out the perception of librarians about African culture viz a viz Nigeria as a nation;
ii. examine the roles of librarians in the promotion of African culture.

Research Questions

The following research questions are generated from the objectives of the study:

a. What is the perception of librarians about African culture?

b. What are the roles of librarians in the promotion of African culture?

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The sThe population consisted of three university libraries in South West, Nigeria, upon which generalization for the African culture was based on. These university libraries were purposively selected because they are old as far as Nigeria is concerned, and they contain appreciable works of culture and traditions. They are Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile – Ife and the University of Lagos Library, Akoka, Lagos. Fifteen (15) Librarians are randomly selected from each of the universities as they are in the best position to give accurate information about their library holdings and roles in preservation and promotion of cultural materials. The questionnaires were administered through direct contact between the researchers and the librarians. Out of the total of Forty – Five (45) questionnaires, forty (40) were returned valid. Data collected were analyzed using frequency tables and percentages and the four - point Lickert scale of strongly agreed, Agreed, Disagree and strongly disagreed. A weighted mean of 2.5 was set as the benchmark upon which decisions were based.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 1: Distribution and Return Rate

S/N	Names of Libraries	Distribution Rate	Return Rate
1	Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan	15(33.3%)	13
2	Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile – Ife	15(33.3%)	13
3	University of Lagos Library, Akoka, Lagos	15(33.3%)	14

	TOTAL	45(100%)	40(100%)

Table 2: Perception of Librarians about the African Culture

S/N	ITEMS	YES (%)	NO (%)
1	African culture is influenced by other continents	25(62.5%)	15(37.5%)
2	Africans adapt willingly to ever – changing modern world	29(72.5%)	11(27.5%)
3	There is cultural recovery in African countries	23(57.5%)	17(42.5%)
4	The cultural resources of Africa can be harnessed to enrich education	35(87.5%)	5(12.5%)
5	The abandonment of African traditional ways describes one as being civilized	18(45%)	22(55%)
6	Negative attitudes crawl into Africans through colonization	28(70%)	12(30%)
7	Our culture is an instrument of identity and social cohesion	31(77.5%)	9(22.5%)
8	African are hostile during to the influence of colonization	20(50%)	20(50%)
9	Through tourism, African culture can enhance economic development	33(82.5%)	7(11.5%)
10	Through oral tradition, culture is communicated and transmitted to the next generation	40(100%)	-

On the perception of librarians about African culture, All the librarians 40(100%) attested to the fact that through oral tradition, culture is communicated and transmitted to the next generation. In the light of the foregoing, it is necessary to embark on this through tape/CD recordings, written words which could be preserved and documented by Librarians. Also, librarians perceived that the cultural resources of Africa can be harnessed to enrich education as 35 (87.5%) attested to this. Moreso, they attested that our culture is an instrument of identity and social cohesion as 31(77.5%) agreed while 9(22.5%) disagreed with this opinion.

Furthermore, 29(72.5%) attested to the fact that Africans adapted to ever – changing modern world while 11(27.5%) of the respondents do not believe that they adapted to ever – changing modern world. 28(70%) of the respondents attested to the fact that negative attitudes crawled into Africans through colonization, while 12(30%) negates this opinion.

Further still, 25(62.5%) of the respondents attested that the African culture is influenced by other continents while 15(37.5%) disagreed with this perception. It could be deduced that African culture is influenced by other continents. Librarians also perceived that there is cultural recovery in African countries as 23(57.5%) of the respondents attested to it while 17(42.5%) disagreed with it. On hostile attitude brought about by the invasion of the Europeans into African culture, there was an equally shared idea about it. While half of the respondents believed it is so, the other half does not agree with it and as such a conclusion cannot be reached about it.

However, abandonment of African traditional ways does not describe one as being civilized as 22(55%) of the respondents agreed with this.

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that librarians perceived that African adapt quickly to ever – changing modern world; oral tradition was a means of transmitting a nation's cultural heritage; through tourism, our culture can enhance the nation's economy; the cultural resources of Africa can be harnessed to improve education. This is in tandem with IFLA/UNESCO (n.d.) that access to the cultural and scientific heritage of mankind is every person's right and helps promote learning and understanding of the richness and diversity of the world, not only for the present generation, but also for the generations to come. This also aligned with Cathro (2006) that Cultural and historical records and artefacts preserved in libraries, archives and museums are often consulted by humanities researchers to obtain much of their research data. Therefore, providing access to works of arts, artefacts, collectables, historical treasures and similar items is essential to the advancement of research, teaching and learning (Manaf, 2006).

Also, it was affirmed that there is gradual cultural recovery; our culture can be an effective tool for identity and social cohesion; abandonment o our culture for western culture does not make us civilized.

The onus, therefore, lies on the librarians to rise up in the development and promotion of our culture so that important aspects would be embraced.

Table 3: Roles of Librarians in the Promotion of African Culture

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1	Preservation policy for cultural materials should be put in place and implemented	27(108)	12(36)	1(2)	-	3.7	Positive
2	Cultural materials in libraries should be digitized	33(132)	7(21)	-	-	3.8	Positive
3	Documentation / archives section should be upgraded	30(120)	10(30)	-	-	3.8	Positive
4	Access should be provided to cultural materials in libraries	31(124)	7(21)	1(2)	1(1)	3.7	Positive
5	Librarians must develop a model for the acquisition and storage of cultural artifacts through oral history, eye witness account, audio/CD tape recordings	13(52)	23(69)	3(6)	1(1)	3.2	Positive
6	Collaboration and consortium building among cultural institution libraries for access and resource sharing	19(76)	21(63)	-	-	3.5	Positive
7	Organizing Advocacy programmes that will promote	24(96)	13(39)	3(6)	1(1)	3.6	Positive

	our cultural values in collaboration with other stakeholders						
8	Librarians must make themselves available as a relevant information stakeholder in formulating policies that are linked with our cultural values	20(80)	20(60)	-	-	3.5	Positive

From table 3 above, all the roles expected to be performed by librarians in the promotion of african culture were adjudged to be accepted. On Preservation policy for cultural materials and provision of access to cultural materials in libraries, weighted mean of 3.7 were obtained respectively and thus the decision were positive. Also, on digitization of Cultural materials in libraries and upgrading of documentation / archives section, a weighted mean of 3.8 were obtained respectively, thus the decision were positive. This is in tandem with Chigbu and Ezema (2011) as they argued that the digitization of Nigerian cultural materials will increase the lifespan of the documented information on Nigerian culture. They also stressed that digitisation will make cultural information resources available and easily accessible to everyone. In the same vein, IFLA/UNESCO (n.d.) supports digitization, access to and preservation of cultural and scientific heritage.

Moreso, the Librarians posited (with a weighted mean of 3.6) that advocacy programmes that will promote our cultural values should be organized in collaboration with other stakeholders. Further still, librarians strongly submitted that there must be collaboration and consortium building among cultural institution libraries for access and resource sharing. This strongly support the view of Anazi, Ibegwam & Oyediran – Tidings (2013) in a related research that the need to network and collaborate among information experts becomes an essential strategy in promoting women's cultural heritage information system.

Finally, it was demonstrated through this submission that Librarians must make themselves available as a relevant information stakeholder in formulating policies that are linked with our

cultural values and a model for the acquisition and storage of cultural artifacts through oral history, eye witness account, and audio/CD tape recordings be developed.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This research work had revealed and identified the perception and roles of Librarians in the promotion of African culture viz a viz Nigeria as a nation. It was discovered that Librarians perceived that Africa is still in the stage of cultural recovery. Also, culture could be used as instrument of identity; social cohesion; enhancement of education, economic enhancement. As such, librarians across the different types of libraries have their roles in the promotion of culture which are, but not limited to collaboration and consortium building with relevant stakeholders and cultural institutions, developing a workable model for collection of cultural materials, and digitization of cultural artifacts among others.

REFERENCES

Abdulsalami, L. T. (2013). The role of the library in the promotion of knowledge societies in Nigeria. Pelagia Research Library Advances in Applied Science Research; 4(1):58-70

L. T. Abdulsalami, Q. I. Okezie and A. D. Agbo*"African Culture and People". About.com Travel. Retrieved 2018-01-29.*

Association of Government Librarians (n.d). The Role of Public Libraries in Promoting African Culture in Kenya: *A paper presented at the conference of Association of Government Librarians in Mombasa*

Barber, O. (2008), "Cataloguing and analysis of the art collection of the University of Lagos", unpublished project submitted to the Department of Creative Arts in Partial Fulfilment of Requirement for the Award of Masters in Art in Painting, Faculty of Arts, University of Lagos, Lagos. [Google Scholar]

Cathro, W. (2006). "The role of a national library in supporting research information infrastructure", IFLA Journal, Vol. 32 No. 4, pp. 333-339. [Google Scholar] [Crossref] [Infotrieve]

Chibuzor, L. Dim & Ngozi, E.Osadebe (2009) The Role of Public Libraries in the Preservation of Cultural Heritage in Nigeria: Challenges and Strategies. Journal of Applied Information Science and Technology;(3): 45-50

Chigbu, E.D. and Ezema, J.U. (2011). "Digitization of information resources as a strategy for the promotion and preservation of Nigerian cultural heritage", The Information Technologist, Vol. 8 No. 1, pp. 119-128. [Google Scholar] [Infotrieve]

Ekwelem VO, Okafor VN, Ukwoma SC (2011). Preservation of cultural hetritage: the strategic role of the Library and Information Science Professionals in south East Nigeria. Library Philosophy and Practice. Retrieved from http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/562.

Greylin, B. (2010). A Model for Community Participation in African libraries to preserve Indigenous Knowledge: In- TRANS. Internet-Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften. No. 17/2008. WWW: http://www.inst.at/trans/17Nr/8-2/8-2_greyling.htm

Halim Barakat, *The Arab World: Society, Culture, and State*, (University of California Press: 1993), p.80

IFLA/UNESCO (n.d.), IFLA/UNESCO Manifesto for Digital Libraries, available at: www.ifla.org/publications/iflaunesco-manifesto-for-digital-libraries. [Google Scholar]

IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto 1994 <http://www.ifla.org/VII/s8/unesco/eng.htm> accessed on 3.2.2007

Manaf, Z.A. (2006). "The state of digitization initiatives by cultural institutions in Malaysia: an exploratory survey", *Library Review, Vol. 56 No. 1, pp. 45-60.* [Google Scholar] [Link] [Infotrieve]

Nigerian Library Association (2009), "Libraries create futures: building on cultural heritage", Nigerian Library Association Newsletter, Nigerian Library Association, Lagos, p. -, Lagos State Chapter. [Google Scholar]

Olatokun, W.M. (2008), "A survey of preservation and conservation practices and techniques in Nigerian university libraries", LIBRES, Vol. 18 No. 2, pp. 1-18. [Google Scholar] [Infotrieve]

Omulezor et.al. (2013). The relevance of a library in the 21st century: Students' perception. *International Journal of Library and Information Science:* 5(6); 160-166

Omekwu, C.O. (2006). African culture and libraries: the information technology challenge. *The Electronic Library* 24 (2).243-264.

Omole, D.W. 2002. Indigenous knowledge and African libraries: ICT issues and the way forward. *Proceedings of the 15th Standing Conference of Eastern, Central & Southern African Library & Information Associations, Johannesburg, 15-19 April 2004.*

Popoola, S.O. (2003), Preservation and Conservation of Information Resources, Distance Learning Centre, University of Ibadan, Ibadan. [Google Scholar]

Rajkoomar, M. Essay (2012). On the Importance of a Library. Retrieved August 27 from http://www.publishingourarticles.net/knowledge-hub/essay/an-essay-on-the-importance-of-a-library.html.

Scott, A. (2000), The Cultural Economy of Cities: Essays on Geography of Image-producing Industries, Sage, London

Stella Ngozi Anasi, Ahiaoma Ibegwam, Stella Olubukunmi Oyediran-Tidings, (2013) "Preservation and dissemination of women's cultural heritage in Nigerian university libraries", Library Review, Vol. 62 Issue: 8/9, pp.472-491, https://doi.org/10.1108/LR-11-2012-0126

UNESCO (2004), International Conference on Globalization and Intangible Cultural Heritage, available at: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001400/140090e.pdf. [Google Scholar]