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Global Trends in the 21st Century Librarianship: The Experience in Nigeria

¹ Katamba A. Saka, ²Musa I. Shekarau, ³Vivien O. Emmanuel

¹Department of Library and Information Technology, Federal University of Technology, Minna, Nigeria

²Library Services Department, Federal University of Technology, Minna, Nigeria

³Department of Library and Information Science, River State University, Port Harcourt.

Corresponding Author: s.katamba@futminna.edu.ng

Abstract

This paper highlighted the emerging trends in Library and Information profession in this 21st century with particular emphasis on library practices and library education. The positive trends on both aspects of librarianship were those of online housekeeping operations such as automated online acquisition, circulation, reference services, digitization, curriculum review and modification to accommodate information and communication components and entrepreneurship in libraries and library schools respectively. Challenges to the 21st century librarianship include technological facilities, indifference of government and stakeholders, proliferation of library schools and programmes, divergent curriculum and the abuse of the modern technology in library practices and library education. The paper concluded that with both positive and negative trends, there is the need for LIS professionals to work harder so as to catch up with the counterparts in the rest part of the world. It was recommended among others the collaboration among the regulatory/professional bodies in term of resource assessment, accreditation of LIS programmes, promotion of reading culture.

Keywords: 21st century; Librarianship; Library practice; Library Education; Nigeria.

Introduction

Librarianship as a profession globally has witnessed series of developmental stages which are not far from the pre-industrial, industrial and post-industrial otherwise known as information era. Each of these era aimed at making information available not only to clientele but majority of mankind that needed these vital ingredients. Although in the past emphasis was laid on the four factors of production which are land, labour, capital and entrepreneurship, but today the fifth factor of production which is information is considered of high paramount. This is because

information has affected all spheres of human life. Thus, information is used to enhance decision-making processes, high productivity, reduce uncertainty and so on.

Librarianship as a Profession

Is a librarianship a profession?

Let us examine some of the characteristics of librarianship as a profession as postulated by Nwalo, (2000).

- a. Contains theories and principles
- b. Teaching through formal education in universities and basic qualification is bachelor degree in librarianship.
- c. Knowledge is communicated via information resources and managed by librarians
- d. Trainees undergoes practical attachment/SIWES
- e. Librarianship is funded by decree no. 12 of 1995 (LRCN)
- f. Librarianship has Professional Association at National and Local level (NLA)
- g. NLA has professional publication called Nigerian Libraries
- h. Usefulness of profession to society information as ingredient to overall development of the society

The Concept of Global Trends, 21st Century and Librarianship

Globally literally means world-wide while trends mean developments, discoveries, new things which could positive or negative. The 21st century is a century which begins from the year 2000 to-date and will last for 100 years. It is a century that marks the new developments and challenges in all spheres of human life, librarianship inclusive. One major characteristics of the 21st century is the ICT application to librarianship. Librarianship is a profession that is concern with not only making information resources available for uses on request but also concern with the education and training of librarians and information professionals, publishers, records managers, information managers, archivist and the like.). The unique trend in librarianship in this 21st century is the professionalization of library profession through the promulgation decree 12, of 1995 by Federal Government of Nigeria. With emphasis on who is a librarian, qualifications required to be a librarian, accreditation of library school's curriculum and programmes in library school respectively.

Trends in 21st Century Librarianship

As earlier pointed out, there are lots of global trends in the librarianship particularly in this 21st century. These remarkable developments can be seen out based on the Nigeria perspectives which are to be supported with researches conducted and evidences. These trends can be sub-divided into two main areas: -

1. Current library practices or services
2. Library education and training

Some traditional library practices or services have been taken over by the advent of ICT, some are run parallel with the traditional mode of information service delivery.

ICT Application in Library Services

The concept of ICT is the convergence of computing, broadcasting and telecommunication technologies to provide information, these technologies have been used in the library operation and provision of library services more especially in the universities and research libraries.

1. Selection, Ordering and Acquisition is done online through contact of vendors or publishers – e-mail, telephone and text messages. Integrated library software called Yordam (Turkish software) is used to acquire library collection (Saka&Aliyu, 2017).
2. Cataloguing: it is done online while Librarika software is used to enter bibliographic information of 1,000 volumes of books. KOHA integrated software is used to catalogue collection (Saka and Aliyu, 2017). OPAC is also used in universities of Jos, Ilorin and African University of Science and Technology, Abuja, all located in North Central Nigeria. It is the electronic version of the catalogue (Mohammed and Saka, 2016).
3. Circulation: Automated university/research libraries now offer circulation services online. Through Librarika software, user can click ID number; enter the title and user's particulars. Bar code readers are used to check in and check out books. Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) is now introduced in some libraries to serve the purpose of circulation and security service to library collection respectively.
4. Old wine in a new bottle (Digitization of printed library collection): This simply means retrospective conversion exercise whereby the previous collections are now transformed to electronic form thereby creating database. Library materials mostly affected by this trend include: catalogue cards, projects and theses. A reasonable number of universities in Nigeria have not only digitized their collection but also enter them into institutional digital repositories. In some university libraries, D space software is used to digitized their collection particularly research works mainly undergraduate projects and postgraduate thesis (Saka, 2013).

Reference Services

Online Reference services in Nigeria libraries are not left in the information provision and service delivery. Typical example is the use of social media network (WhatsApp, twitter) whereby user sends queries and responses are obtained instantly. Ideas are shared through these networks (Ugwu and Ezema, 2014). Research conducted by Saka and Adegboye (2016) revealed that reference services can be made possible hence two laptops were stationed 100 meters away from each other. User and reference librarian were communicating and can see each other through the screen. Reference queries and answers were made possible through web-cap software (Saka and Adegboye 2017). This is evidence as libraries are now transformed as that traditional face to face reference services are now declining and queries are now being answered through the use of short messages system (SMS), chats, video conferencing and social media (Salami and Kolo, 2015).

Security in Libraries

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is being used in some libraries in Nigeria to safeguard against lost and deterioration of Library collection and facilities, closed circuit television (CCTV) and Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) are technologies adopted to monitor users, protect collections against theft. Library collections are more secured through the use of RFID and this is aimed at complimenting the work of security men stationed at the entrance and exit of libraries (Saka and Aliyu, 2017).

Trends in LIS Education in Nigeria

In this 21st century librarianship, LIS education in Nigeria has witnessed remarkable development in the areas of curriculum development, establishment of library schools (Saka, 2015) and academic collaboration (research, project supervision and teaching). The LIS curriculum has been subjected to timely reviews, restructures and modifications which are geared towards meeting the employers' market demand and also that students on graduation, instead of being job seekers they should rather be job creators. In this regard, ICT and entrepreneurship courses were incorporated into the LIS curriculum and that no LIS course contents that does not have elements of entrepreneurship. The graduate of library schools can be information brokers, consultants, ICT business men, etc The LRCN has developed uniform curriculum for university – based library schools in Nigeria and shall soon be implemented (Salau, 2015; LRCN, 2017). More library schools and LIS programmes are now established. This is as a result of the creation of various establishments and establishment of new universities which create demand for more librarians. Using FUT Minna as an example, most of the traditional LIT courses contains elements of ICT courses like preservation of library materials, collection development (just to mention but few) others contain aspects like formatting and preservation of non- books materials as the case of the later (Aina, 2004) as well as automated subscription and acquisition of library collection as the case of the former (PG Brochure Minna, 2014- 2019).

Librarianship is a multidisciplinary field and so it has relationships with various fields hence the trend is now feared towards interdisciplinary research, teaching, project supervision. Professionals from different but related fields (LIS professionals inclusive) now engage in academic collaboration in the area of teaching, research and supervision of undergraduate and postgraduate research work. You would now find librarian collaborating with geographer to conduct or supervise research on geography. For example, influence of climate change on university library building and collection in North Central Nigeria. In the area of teaching, university lecturers in Nigeria now collaborate in teaching LIS courses with their colleagues in university libraries. This is to strike a balance between theory and practice.

Challenges of the 21st Century Librarianship in Nigeria

1. Inadequate technological facilities: The provision of information services in the 21st century is inhibited by inadequate technological facilities such as computer and internet facilities and erratic power supply. This misnomer also exists in our library schools where teaching LIS courses are carried out by lecture method as opposed to use of facilities in the instructional delivery (Maifata and Mohammed, 2016; Ochogwu, 2017; Saka, Garba and Abdullahi, 2017). The consequences that library schools would produce graduates without practical knowledge/skills
2. Indifference of government and the concern authority towards librarianship in Nigeria. Recognition in terms of committing more funds for library development and provision of ICT facilities for practical training in library schools have not been made possible by the concerned authority. Public and school libraries are not properly funded so as to equip them with modern ICT facilities.
3. Attitude of librarians towards the profession is not encouraging at all, e.g. libraries are not proactive, and entertain fear of job misplacement, ergophobia because of the new technology. A reasonable number of librarians do not pay their annual dues, let alone to register and be certified by the LRCN. Most librarians like to be pure administrators (Saka, 2016)
4. Unhealthy proliferation of LIS schools and programmes without due regards to standards (Saka, 2015; Ochogwu, 2017).
5. Divergent curriculum: The curriculum of various LIS schools in Nigeria particularly those in universities are not uniform (Saka, 2015).
6. Abuse of the new technology by children or students at primary, secondary and tertiary institutions take the advantage of the new technology and shy away from imbibing the culture of reading, the youth and present generation of students do not imbibe the reading culture as they solely depend on downloaded internet resources, frequently depend on sending text messages. All these have adverse effect on students' academic performance, students have found in their written examinations.

Conclusion

From the brief elaboration on the trends and challenges in 21st librarianship with particular emphasis to Nigerian universities, there is the need for librarians to work harder so as to catch up with their counterparts in the rest part of the world.

Way Forward

Based on the identified challenges, the concerned authority or body should ensure that:

1. The NUC/LRCN in collaboration with heads of libraries and library schools should adopt advocacy and lobby government so as to commit adequate funds to procure facilities. Standard facilities should be made available for libraries.

2. Ensure that resources assessment is carried out before given approval for the establishment of library schools.
3. The LRCN/NUC/NBTE should properly carry out accreditation exercise so that only library schools that pass the accreditation exercise be allowed to run LIS programme.
4. The LRCN should as a matter of urgency approve the uniform curriculum for LIS schools. Until this is done, library schools shall continue to run divergent curriculum.
5. There should be change in attitude on the part of librarians so that there should be positive focus on LIS professional matters.
6. Libraries in Nigeria should endeavor to organize reading promotion/campaign for primary, secondary and tertiary institutions students. This is to compliment that of National Library of Nigeria.

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