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NOTE TO CONTRIBUTORS

POLITICAL SCIENCE REVIEW is the official Journal of the Department of Political Science, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.

The Journal addresses fundamental and contemporary issues in Government, Law, Public Administration, International Relations, Political Theory, Management, History, Economics etc. In this light, scholarly articles are invited for publication in the Journal. Books Reviews are also welcomed.

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The Role of Libraries and Information Centers in Nation Building

Usman A. Saliu

ABSTRACT

Today, libraries play important role in nation-building. This paper examines the concept of library and various services provided to meet the information needs of its citizens for over-all development of the state. It also examines different types of libraries and the roles of these libraries in nation-building. This paper discusses the problems faced by these libraries and suggestions are made to improve the existing library roles.

Keywords: nation building, library, information, information repository

Introduction

According to Chamber's Encyclopedia (1985) the world library signifies a place set apart for reading or reference, and by extension, a collection of books. The encyclopedia Americana (2000) describes a library as a collection of books and other forms recorded, housed, organised and interpreted to meet broad and varying needs of people for information, knowledge, and recreation aesthetic enjoyment. Olanlokun and Salisu (1993) state that library is an agency, which engage in the collection, organization, processing, reservation, and dissemination of recorded information in the various formats most convenient to its target users.

The library therefore in our society has an important role to play in uplifting the educational standard of individual. According to Alokun, (2003) library is seen as an agent of educational, social, cultural, economic and political changes in the society. It has therefore become a place entrusted with the acquisition, preservation, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information.

These materials are organised, that is they are catalogued, classified, indexed and then made available for the use of the general public or private groups of readers as the case may be. Library is established and organised for three basic demands and needs namely:

Information, knowledge and Recreation. Libraries are built to serve the interest of persons or institutions that establish them (Alokun, 2003).

Objectives of the Library

The objectives of the library as listed by Awolade (2003:12-13) are as follows:

- (a) The major role of the library as an information dissemination centre is of immense value in education. The library stocks latest materials, on various aspects of knowledge such as books, magazines, newspapers, journals, abstracts, etc.
- (b) No teacher can give all that a student will need academically through extensive consultation of library materials.
- (c) The library allows students to learn individually at their own paces, since most school lessons are group activities.
- (d) The library provides an avenue for poor students who cannot buy textbooks to have an opportunity to read textbooks and other materials; they could not have been able to read.

Types of libraries

According to Tope Alokun (2003), there are different types of libraries established to cater for the information needs of different category of users. These are discussed below:

Academic Libraries

Academic library is a library that is established inside an institution of higher learning for example, Universities, Polytechnics, and Colleges of Education. The main function of academic library is to provide facilities for study and research for the members of the academic community. The main objective of any academic library is to provide necessary information to lecturers, students, and researcher in aid of teaching, learning and research purposes. Tertiary institutions are basically established for teaching, research and community services for the purpose of Nation-Building.

School libraries

School libraries are libraries in primary and secondary schools. The main purpose of a school library is to encourage reading habit and to develop in students the ability to learn from books without a teacher. The importance of a school library cannot be over-emphasized. The National Policy on Education (1981) recognizes the importance of libraries in education when it enjoins every state's ministry of education to provide funds for the establishment of libraries in all educational institutions and to train librarians and library assistants for this service. In

Spite of this, school libraries have not been given the desired attention as contained in the policy. Most primary and secondary schools in Nigeria do not have libraries. Some that have are poorly funded and stocked with obsolete books. There is

need for post primary and primary schools to have libraries in their schools for the purpose of educational development and Nation-Building.

Public libraries:

Olalokun & Salisu (1993), wrote that public libraries are libraries established to provide, traditionally, "service to everyone". Public library therefore serves the community, hence it is usually referred to as a layman's university. Its doors are open to all. It provides the informational, educational and recreational needs of the community. Public libraries are generally supervised, financed and supported by state or local governments. Modern public libraries acquire printed and audiovisual materials to satisfy the information needs of various groups in the society for the purpose of Educational development and Nation-Building. Examples of public libraries are state library Boards, local Government libraries and the British Council library.

National libraries:

National libraries are libraries established by National Governments' National libraries are the principal and most comprehensive libraries that serve the entire citizens of a Country. They are generally Legal deposit libraries, that is by law they are entitled to receive a free copy of all books published in their respective countries.

In most countries "state libraries" owned by the Federal Government or a group of libraries maintained by National resources, usually bear the responsibilities of publishing National Bibliographical information centres. National libraries strive principally to collect and preserve the Nation's literature, they try to be as international in the range of their collections as possible. They have branches in all the states of the Federation. Each branch followed the pattern of National Headquarter by way of functions in order to support education, information and recreation for Nation-Building. National library to other libraries is what Central Bank is to all banks. National libraries are established and maintained from National resources.

Special libraries:

Special Libraries are libraries established by an individual, corporations, associations, government agencies, or any other groups within the society. It can also be used to refer to a specialized or departmental collection within a library, which is popularly known as Research and documentation centre.

Users of a special library are usually of parent institution or researchers who have particular and identifiable subjects interest. The collection in such a library emphasises current information and department, that is, Journals, seminar papers and research reports etc. The special libraries are attached to the official institutions,

such as government departments, hospitals, museums, and the likes.

The Role of the Library in Nation Building

Nation-building, according to Hinjari (1988) "depicts a qualitative way of knowing, structural changes proceeding gradually or cumulatively until the set goals are attained." Nation-Building simply means National development or a stage of progress in the country or gradual growth of development in a country.

The roles and functions of the library is to provide information education, research, political economic and other recreational materials that cater for the interest of all members of the community in which it operates. The function and role of library is also to acquire, organize, preserve, and make available all forms of information materials to its users.

The various roles by which library could play to ensure the realization of Nation-Building or national development include:

Information Role

Diso (1999) in his view argues that, information provides the basis of intellectual development and therefore of material development. National development is dependent upon well informed and intellectually sound citizenry. Citizens cannot be fully responsible without access to information; hence the right to information is a pre-requisite to the enjoyment of other rights. Information is seen as "a commodity that can be sold, given away, copied created, stored, misinterpreted, distorted and stolen among other things. Diso (1999) further states that the roles and functions of the library is to provide information materials, education materials, research materials, political materials, economic materials, and other recreational materials that cater for the interest of all members of the community. Whether information is regarded as intangible knowledge or a tangible commodity, the fact remain that it is a basic necessity in the development of all spheres of life-social-culture, economic, political, etc. A comparison between "information-rich and information poor" societies provides an empirical evidence that a society that neglects information does it at its own peril, especially in this rapid changing world. Library plays information role in any society. Information is basic to life of man just as air, water, food and shelter for Nation-building.

According to Adeyemi (1999), "the function of library lies in this capacity to provide information for the group and the individual needs of the society it serves". Thus library provides information in various physical formats to different information seekers. It develops and establishes good public relations with their users. It also provides services such as current awareness services and selective dissemination of information without subscription to computerized databases and data banks. There is no information without communication and library is an

information agency. Therefore, there is no human society that can survive without information and library is the encoder, means and the decoder.

Education role

There is no agreement about what is meant by Education, but for the purpose of this paper, education means a process of learning, acquisition of knowledge, civilization of character, and the ability to organize experience in the society. According to Fafunwa (1980) Education refers to "the transmission of attitudes, beliefs, values, and accumulated knowledge and skills involving in human society".

Library acquires books and other relevant materials in line with the demands of the school curriculum and the need of different categories of users. It also enriches the educational development programmes of modern society for overall national development Ochogwu (1988) stated that "without library there can be no good primary school, no effective secondary school no efficient university nor earn a life long integrated education of adult be encouraged". In relation to nation-building, libraries assist in educating its users about their civic responsibility to the state for the national development or Nation-building.

Research Role

Research role of library cannot be over emphasized. According to Michael West, the New Method English dictionary (1999) library performs the role of scientific study in order to discover new facts. Also, Cassel dictionary defines it as delight and careful inquiry or investigation, systematic study of phenomena. Library encourages the habit of personal and individual investigation and research, thereby developing skill resourcefulness in the use of books. The library facilitates the teaching and self learning process. It acts as a repository of knowledge thereby steering and disseminating materials of research values in the modern society for national development. Library also engages in intensive research work through the compilation of subject bibliographies through the provision of relevant information resources that have research value in order to improve goods for overall National development or Nation building.

Political Role

Longman dictionary (2001) defined politics as ideas and activities that are concerned with the gained and using of power in a country, city etc. or the activities of people in a group, organization etc. that are concerned with gaining personal advantage (p. 1,090).

Library disseminates information on the various political programmes in Nigeria. Therefore, there is no government without any form of information to the general public in various physical formats- funding of library may

come from federal, state and Local governments for political development. Library is a key source of information for citizens. It provides political culture or political socialization to people. Libraries are agents generally accepted as a public good in term of political information for Nation-building.

Economic role

It is within this context of the importance of education in economic development that we come up with the role of library in our overall development in Nation-Building. I venture to assume here that the establishment of a library is both an important aid to education, just as it is to information. It is the function or role that a library should play as a factor in nation-building that concerns us here. Cassel student English Dictionary (1994) defines economics as "the science of the production and distribution of wealth, the condition of a country, community or individual, with regard to material property. In economic classification, we regard the establishment of a library as a social service, this is an investment which does not provide a tangible good.

Happily, we have not made mistake in our National Reconstruction and development plan. Federal, state and local governments have recognized the important role that libraries can play in the economic wellbeing of the society by setting up mobile units which can contribute books and films within the state. Therefore, library is an integral part of the crusade and closely identifies itself with the aspiration of economic development for nation-building by providing information on economic policy of government.

Recreation role

Libraries have been designed to uphold the reading interest of the readers. This is done through special exhibition of materials that serve as reading, resources both for print and electronic media. Wali. According to Wali (1991) libraries are seen as an avenue for in-house story telling hours and other extension services such as the establishment of book clubs, book services, organised debates, symposia, drama, and poetry. Libraries are established to improve literacy and enhance effective utilization of leisure and adults in the society for 'overall National development. Therefore in relation to nation-building, when people of different sociological backgrounds meet they are bound to inter-relate and exchange ideas thereby promoting national unity.

Observations

Following from above observations in order to further enhance the role of libraries in nation-building, the underlisted suggestions should be adopted for action by our policy makers:

1. There is need for governments at all levels to increase library budgets so that library will be able to provide effective and efficient services for national

- development.
2. There is also the need to correct library users' perception on the importance of library so that they change their attitudes towards library in order to get information needs of the people for national development.

Recommendations

- A course in the "use of library" should be made compulsory for all freshers of library users. This is to enable them to have good perception on the importance of library and the role library can play in order to realize nation-building or National development.
- Libraries should find new ways of eliciting faculty cooperation, whose assistance and support work will increase student use of libraries and provide current information to users in order to contribute to National development or nation-building.
- Libraries should be allowed to computerize their operation/services to enhance the light of global information network for the purpose of National Development or Nation- Building.
- Government should encourage students to go to study Library Science in tertiary Institutions by way of introducing scholarship in librarianship in order to have more librarians in order to enhance the provision of information to the people of the society for Nation- Building.
- Library schools should be established in all tertiary institutions in the country in order to produce more professional librarians for the country to develop the information needs of the people for nation-building.

Conclusion

Libraries will likely fair better if we make it clear that they are part of the state propaganda machinery or social service and they are national infrastructural institutions which can facilitate the process of national development.

- It should be clear that libraries have vital roles to play in ensuring the success of national development in Nigeria.
- It must also be cleared that libraries are faced with some major problems which include: lack fund, lack of manpower, lack of recognition and lack of equipment and materials. These problems render the realization of Nation-building or national development useless, the library users should be given users' education. The important roles the library can perform through enlightenment, or library publicity is mostly needed in order to change their attitudes towards library so that misconception given to library can be positively changed.

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