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THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIBRARIES AND LIBRARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

BY

OMOPUPA, KAMAL TUNDE & YUSUF, OLANREWaju IBRAHIM

Introduction

With the advent of Islam and Christianity in Nigeria there were increase in towns' meetings, preaching, sermons, and debates. Missionary activities in both mosques and churches provided vital information that includes not only preaching and teaching of norms but one that has to do with governance and occupations of disciples. In pre-literate period, oral information formed the medium of communication. With the introduction of Western and Quran education improved information services soon followed. With the people's ability to read and write, some elementary collections in form of library began to develop in palaces, privates, churches and mosque. The scholars by their efforts then influenced the growth of information materials in churches, mosques, shrines and palaces.

The dependence of people in Nigeria on oral communication changed in the Northern part of Nigeria with the introduction of Islam in the 8th century through Arabs traders. It was not, until 15th century when the south experienced similar change through European missionaries and colonialists³. The coming of Arabs and European missionaries/colonialists manifested growth of education in both the Northern protectorate and Southern protectorate through several reforms. The Northern and Southern protectorates of Nigerian amalgamated in the year 1914.

Nigerian Libraries before the Colonial Era

The history of libraries is delineated into three eras, these are the ancient, medieval and modern eras⁴. Though, libraries existed as far as 6000 years ago; beginning can be traced to Sumerian (West Pakistan) who developed the clay tablets in which cuneiform signs and characters were used to record the activities of the government, temple and business. Cuneiform writing was a form of wedge- hedge shaped pen that was inscribed on clay. It was used for interesting

symbols on clays. Cuneiform writing made impression on wet clay tablets, which were later dried and hardened. These clay tablets were later preserved and neatly arranged. This can be said to be the precursor of libraries. When the Babylonian Empire led by King Sargon I conquered Sumerian, the culture of cuneiform writing was integrated into the Babylonian civilisation. When libraries started to grow in Egypt, instead of tablets and clays as media of information, rolls made up of papyrus were used as medium of recorded information⁵.

Modern Nigeria is a creation of British colonial government and began with three separate administrations; The Lagos colony, the protectorates of Northern Nigeria, and the Southern Nigeria. These administrations became colony and protectorate of Nigeria after the amalgamation in 1914. Morka reported that Northerners are predominantly Muslims especially in Hausa land⁶. Cities like Borno, Kano, Katsina and Sokoto had contacts with the Arab traders through the Trans-Sahara trade routes and eventually converted the people to Islam. The jihad of Shehu Uthman dan Fodio broke out in 1804 and it further completed the Islamization of the North with the setting up of Theocratic Empire, the Sokoto caliphate. In Hausa land the jihad brought what Crowther referred to as veritable literary revolution⁷.

The jihad of Shehu Uthman dan Fodio brought into fore a revival of learning that produced Uthman dan Fodio himself (d. 1817), Sultan Bello (d. 1837) as well as Hajji Said who wrote a History of Sokoto and several other publications, radical intellectuals and other Muslim scholars, had their own private libraries⁸.

Development of Libraries during the Colonial Period in Nigeria

The introduction of western education was made by the Portuguese traders and the Missionaries in the 15th century during the reign of Oba Esigie of Benin Empire⁹. With the assistance of King Dom Manuel of Portugal, a Christian Missionary group was sent to Benin City along with traders. More systematic education was put in place with the advent of British Colonialist and traders immediately after the abolition of slave trade in the 19th century.

The missionaries competed with one another to win the Southern Nigeria for Christ by setting up primary and secondary schools like Methodist mission in Badagry in 1842 and Calabar in 1846, Christian Missionary Society (CMS) in

Lagos in 1859 and the Roman Catholic in Lagos in 1868. In the North, the missionaries had a late start, since they were barred from the North as a deliberate government policy. It was not until the latter half of the 20th century that the policy was reviewed. Many Christian missions were then able to establish missionary settlements and schools in Zaria, Jos, Lokoja, Malunfashi and Kaduna, the Sudan Interior Mission was very active in this area.

Other than mission schools, colonial government produced many public schools that were aimed at raising literacy among the populace to support governance. Communities, private individuals and tribal unions also set up schools. Government assisted some while a few others had to fund themselves. Most of these schools had library collections in dusty cupboards that were kept in the office of head of school. Though the government schools were well catered for as noted by Achebe when he said the government schools in Nigeria are well endowed and their most valuable asset was libraries¹⁰.

Majorly, in both the Northern and the Southern Nigeria, private Libraries formed the bedrock of public libraries like Henry Carr, Herbert Macaulay, Obafemi Awolowo, Nnamdi Azikiwe, and Drs J. A Shanu, Dyke etc

Kinds of Libraries

School Library

A library that is established as an integral part of a primary or secondary school with the objectives of providing the instructional materials to enrich the curriculum, to supplement text books and classroom instruction and to provide students with unlimited opportunities for learning. Examples are Government Secondary School, Ilorin library, St. Anthony Secondary School library, University of Ilorin Secondary School library are common example of such¹¹.

Special Library

The special library is owned by organization to serve the staff of that organization for the purpose of improving their skills. The special library is one set up by business, professional and religious organization with the primary purpose of serving the companies or group that establish it encyclopaedia Americana states that a library is called special when

- Its collection is of a specialized nature
- It serve a specialized body of users

- It has a staff with specialized training in a particular subject matter or methodology
- It offers specialized and usually personalized services

The examples of special libraries are: Central Bank of Nigeria Library, Ministry of Agriculture Library, Agricultural Rural Management Institute Library and others.

National Library

The national library is owned and established by the Federal Government. It is an important phenomenon of librarianship. It is maintained primarily at public expense with funds allocated from, and disturbed by, national treasuries. As such, most national libraries are treated as parts of national governments subject to the policy controls and decision of superior and officially constituted boards or commissions. Examples of National libraries are: national libraries of Nigeria, British museum in Britain, the library of congress in the United States of America the Bibliotheca Nationale in France and other examples¹². The national library regulates other available libraries in the country.

Public Library

The public library is established by the state government. Public libraries serve the general needs of cities, towns, villages and some larger areas thus it serves the general public. Examples of public libraries are; Kwara State Public Library Board, Oyo State Public Library, Niger State Public Library, Kano State Library Board and others.

Academic Library

This is the library attached to institutions of higher learning (post secondary schools) aligning with the educational objectives of the institution. It is the nerve center or the pivot around which academic activities revolved and constitutes an indispensable instrument of intellectual development e.g. University of Ilorin library, Ilorin, Ambrose Alli University Library, Ekpoma, University of Ibadan Library, Ibadan¹³.

Functions of a Library

Any given library is charged with the following functions:¹⁴

- Selection and acquisition of relevant information materials.

- Processing, preserving and organizing of the available materials.
- Provision of an atmosphere (accommodation) for reading, studying and research.
- Provision of specialized service (e.g. ready reference).
- Provision of specialized service (abstracting, indexing and bibliographical compilation).
- Provision of Selective Dissemination of Information Service (SDI)
- Provision of Current Awareness Service (CAS)

Regional Libraries in Nigeria

In the western region, the secondary schools did not fare better than the primary in terms of library provision. Laws were made empowering schools to collect annual library dues from the students but there was no organ that monitors the way the money was being spent. In the Northern Region book boxes to secondary schools from the central regional library at Kaduna began in 1952. Each box contained 50-200 titles and were on loan to the schools for period of four months before they were replaced. It was the first of its type, it encountered problems of both administrative and logistic in nature. As a result of these problems, Sharr was commissioned to undertake a special survey of the regional library service in 1962. Sharr found the service unsatisfactory and recommended that it be discontinued. The report was adopted in 1964 then various library boards operate school library services¹⁵.

Eastern Region operated school library services from 1955. The role of the board as prescribed by its provision included among other things to equip, manage and maintain libraries in the region. Advisory services were also to school principal through book selection and distribution.

Library Education

The start of library education and the training of personnel became evident and this education and training was traceable to the formation and activities of West African Library Association (WALA) in September, 1954 in Lagos. The formation of WALA itself was occasioned by the UNESCO seminar on the development of public libraries in Africa held at Ibadan University College in 1953. The gathering discussed the problems of library development, as well as, library education and parts of their resolutions were directed to the

government of West African countries. It reads thus;

That this conference believing that qualified librarians have a significant part to play in the new Africa, urges West African governments the need to award scholarships to librarians for overseas study.

Up to 1959, a number of formal group trainings were organized locally with the assistance of groups and individuals when in 1956 WALA applied to Carnegie Corporation of New York for assistance to set up a permanent headquarter for the association. Harold Lancour was sent to study the situation and how the Corporation can assist. The Lancour Report commented on the training need and recommended the establishment of the postgraduate school at Ibadan University College in 1960 with 6 students and a grant of \$88,000 by Carnegie corporation¹⁶.

The Roles of International Organizations in the Development of Libraries in Nigeria

The roles played by WALA and Carnegie Corporation formed the watershed for establishment of world standard libraries and training institutions in Nigeria. The organizations not only provided fund but made available personnel in many instances for training and curriculum development of earliest library institutions across Nigeria.

The West Africa Library Association (WALA)

The regional seminar on the development of public libraries in Africa organised by UNESCO was held at Ibadan between July and August, 1953. The group of West African librarians who participated in the seminar decided to form an international professional association that led to the formation of West African Library Association. Its inauguration was held in Lagos in September 1954, where 41 delegates were invited¹⁷. At the inaugural conference one of the two resolutions passed had to do with the training of librarians. It also established the library advisory committee with its official organ known as WALA Bulletin¹⁸.

Nigerian Library Association (NLA)

The formal inauguration of Nigerian Library Association (NLA) took place in December 1962, at a conference held in Ibadan, the original venue of

the inauguration of WALA where Kalu Chima Okorie was elected as the first president. The Association had similar aims as WALA. Membership was opened to librarians and all persons and organizations interested in library works. Today, Nigerian Library Association (NLA) has transformed into a mega professional association with headquarters in Abuja¹⁹.

National Library of Nigeria (NLN)

The National Library of Nigeria officially commenced operation in a temporary site in November 1964 at Westley Street, Lagos. It has since moved to its permanent location at Abuja. The National Library Board was formally set up in December 1965. It had eight members including a chairman who was a Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Information and a member of Nigerian Library Association. The National Library Act of 1964 was later amended by Decree No 29 of 1970 by the then Military Government.

Conclusion

The original purpose of the early libraries was the preservation of written records. By the development, the library is no longer seen as mere building where written records are only stored for preservation. Libraries in Nigeria generally do not have adequate funds to acquire information materials.

A fundamental impediment to speedy library computerisation is the country's infrastructural inadequacies in library profession and its education can only flourish in a society that appreciates the needs for preserving, transmitting and enlarging a body of knowledge, where there is emphasis on self-improvement and well informed citizenry. If the government recognizes that scientific and technological development based upon research is facilitated by the library, there will be better understanding for some people that can be confirmed to understand the library social's role and impacts.

Recommendations

The ability of man to record his knowledge thought experience (failures and achievement) and make them reachable, accessible to others is achievement of librarianship profession. The essential elements of a profession include possession of a specialized body of knowledge and skills acquired during a prolonged period of education and training. Prevalence of an effective professional association which defines admission into the librarianship

profession and training requirement, licensing and other formal requirements to take final decisions in their areas of performances and to regulate professional regulations with the library users and their colleagues. Services orientation and public recognition should be assured.

The quality of librarianship professional education should be assured by the system of accreditation of professional programmes by the Nigeria Library Association (NLA) and the Government. The NLA should strive to ensure that its members comply with the principles of professionalism. Library administrators should adopt modern management techniques in running their libraries.

Strictly it should be discouraged to safeguard and protect the professional interests of librarians and to promote the establishment and development of libraries and promoting librarianship education by the government and professional body (NLA)

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