

## **TRENDS IN LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION SERVICES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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### **Abstract**

This paper discusses current drives in knowledge economy that supports families, communities, institutions, government etc., to improve livelihood and quality of life of its individual citizens. Libraries and other information service providers have partnered with communities and organizations to contribute to sustainable development through education, literacy, economic and cultural growth ensuring equality, social justice and good governance. The paper establishes that access to modern information technology and innovation facilities in libraries would guarantee services that are capable to contribute to the reduction of human challenges, humanitarian crises and all-round development of every individual. Therefore, libraries must justify their existence and service delivery should drive the knowledge economy in a way that will provide skills and knowledge to humans in a sustainable way for appropriate livelihood.

**Keywords:** Information services, Technological innovations, Multimedia information systems, Automated book delivery system, Digital repositories.

### **Introduction**

Libraries as information institutions are working to support the universal agenda to transform our world through services geared towards the attainment of sustainable development. Sustainable development is a global vision of progress towards ensuring a safe, just and sustainable space for all human beings to thrive on the planet (Igbinovia et al., 2018). In the work of Tyonum and Ezeoju (2015), sustainable development means the overall change

and improvement in the society as related to the individual in progress in the social, political, religious and economic structure of the nation. Sustainable Development effort of any nation is designed to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

According to Adio and Olasin (2005), a library is an instrument of self-education, a means of knowledge and factual information, a centre of intellectual recreations and a beacon of enlightenment that provides accumulated preserved knowledge of civilization which consequently enriches one's mental vision and dignifies his habit, behavior, character, taste, attitude, conduct and outlook on life. New library roles like advocacy programmes, community engagement, inclusion of access to information, safeguarding of cultural heritage, universal literacy, and access to information and communication technologies (ICT) will help libraries contribute more to Sustainable Development.

Information services create awareness, access to economic opportunity, quality education, improve health and develop communities (Igbinovia, 2018). Information literacy services, as information accessibility and utilization are essential in development agenda. Libraries and Librarians must strengthen conventional practices that will contribute to the global agenda, and adopt new services to make more impact on humanity. Information is a marketable commodity and a social wealth. Technological innovations and new ideas are

borne out of information sourcing, processing, and dissemination thereby empowering and creating wealth for the society.

Many information patrons are not well-informed about many new and non-traditional services available to them at a library. Libraries are responding to this information gap by making marketing a strategic priority, intensifying efforts to brand and market their services more effectively. The impact of technology has enabled proliferations of large-scale digital libraries, multimedia information systems and internet resources and services. Social networking affords important marketing and communications tool for libraries. The greatest potential for these services is for community outreach. Libraries are thus considered to engineer community development by constantly accommodating new roles and rendering new services. Libraries provide research and other information services as well as there are opportunities such as business services, consultancy, book repair, information brokerage, packaging information etc.

### **Information services as educational tool for sustainable development**

Sustainable development is essential and critical to the growth and sustenance of a country. To successfully enhance meaningful standard of living among the populace libraries hold the key to all information needed to develop. Libraries of all types (national libraries, public libraries, academic libraries, school libraries, special libraries and digital libraries) are education tool in developing individual and society at large through their services such as

acquisition and processing of materials, repackaging of information, serving as center for research, contribution to education via encouraging reading habit, expanding learning process and development of critical thinking, thereby enabling the citizenry live responsibly. (Okoro, Akidi&Arua, 2014). In this information age, one must be attuned with reliable and up-to-date information for rational decision-making, enlightening, and all round development.

With the advent of information and communication technology (ICT), Libraries not only provide information traditionally but also in electronic forms, hence the bibliographic database. Full-text documents and digital library collections are always available to users. Libraries play a great role in national development through the support they offer to the educational sector. Professionals such as lawyers, doctors, engineers, teachers etc are products of information dissemination process through different libraries (Iroka and Chigozie, 2015). No modern society can function without an intensive use of books and information. Libraries guarantee improved information services and national development.

### **Libraries in Sustainable Development**

In Romania, Librarians helped 100,000 farmers get US\$187 million in subsidies via new internet and computer services in 2011-2012. The programme helped farmers learn how to use the technology in libraries to access financial forms and submit them to the government, saving time and money. Librarians

thus contribute to the eradication of hunger and poverty by strategic initiatives that empower farmers especially in rural areas.

According to International Federation of Library Institutions and Associations (IFLA, 2017), libraries contribute to the delivery of sustainable development by providing opportunity for all and sundry, empower people, offer access to the world's knowledge, provide expert guidance and serve as stakeholders in development policy framework.

**Table1: Library and Information Services for SD**

S/No.	Services
1	Information literacy programmes
2	Computer/Digital literacy programmes
3.	Provision of information resources
4.	Awareness campaign
5.	Selective dissemination of information (SDI)
6.	Reference services
7.	Information provision
8.	Open access publishing and repository
9.	Provisions of technological infrastructure
10.	Current awareness services (CAS)
11.	Capacity building

Many LIS professionals do not know how to interact with necessary entities such as banks, suppliers, customers, venture capitalists, distributors and advertising agencies. It should be noted that the client's population are rapidly changing as the technologies for serving them is changing too. Many LIS professionals lack various forms of ICT skills relevant for service delivery. Inadequate and unpredictable funding has resulted in diminished library

services across the country. Some libraries have suspended the purchase of new materials.

### **Requirements in Libraries and Information Services (LIS) for Development**

Information technology skills such as networking, reprography, micrographs, facsimile, video text, teletext, database creation, library management software including CDS, ISIS, LIBYS, content development, desktop publishing, intranet, presentation, hardware/software skills and relational databases including the ability to create data structures which facilitates indexing and retrieval of information, efficient use of search engines, use of blogs to provide services, web cast and search skills. Apart from the infrastructure and equipment, a good and fast internet connection is absolutely necessary for providing access to electronic/digital libraries.

**Information literacy skills:** These have to do with the ability to locate information efficiently and effectively, evaluate information critically and competently, and use information accurately and creatively. Also included here is the economics and marketing of information product and services, information resource management, information processing and organizing, e-mail multi-media and video conferencing.

**Managerial Skills:** These entail marketing, financing, accounting, control, planning and goal getting, decision making, human relations and managing

growth. They are essential in launching and growing a new venture. Included here is also the knowledge of records management principles and electronic book keeping.

Information brokering: gathering competitive intelligence in various sectors such as pharmaceuticals, financial, telecommunication and energy, searching patents and trademarks, creating databases for organisations, preparing research reports in response to staff requests for specific information, verifying facts for external and internal reports and duplication; identifying research done at other organisations to avoid unnecessary duplication, evaluating and comparing information software and sources of data prior to purchase, training other staff to efficiently and cost effectively use databases; research analysis, information services, information management and consulting services. Communication skills should be concise and descriptive.

Information practitioner can be found among information-hungry professionals such as speech writers, competitive intelligence professionals, marketing directors and product managers. Others may include: organisations that do not have in house library but need professional research support. Some of the works information brokers are doing in Nigeria include: indexing, abstracting, retrospective conversion, cataloging and classification (contract cataloguing), literature reviews, online literature search, print searches for users. Owning a library or bookshop with the cooperation of nearby libraries in the

area of interlibrary loan, packaging and repackaging of information, editing and publishing, developing hypermedia products, text translating and translation, marketing management of library, organizing of seminars, conferences, and workshops, undertaking electronic presentation services (e.g. Microsoft Powerpoint; creating data bases and website design (Elonye and Uzuegbu, 2013)).

LIS professionals now venture into e-mail publishing (newsletter publishing), web publishing, desktop publishing and freelancing. There are a lot of other services apart from the ones mentioned above that library and information professionals can venture for sustainable development. Some still include printing of library and information posters and stickers, document delivery services, records and archives management, cyber café business, photocopying services and others so related or embodied in the information brokerage business (Onaade, 2012).

## **New Trends, Innovations and Strategies in Library Service**

### **New Literacies**

Libraries are at the forefront of a new educational trend to redefine “literacies” as capabilities in decoding visual, technology, financial, health information and other basic life and work skills. Libraries have well established roles in supporting, teaching and providing space and multi-media, low literacy, and instructional materials for tutoring and collaborating with literacy providers



and advocates on family, intergenerational and other literacy programs and community workforce development initiatives. Through partnerships and coalitions (floating collections, cooperative programming, provision of meeting, tutoring, and study space, etc.), libraries extend their influence into the educational and social services realm and build a case for support by positioning themselves as “players” in workforce development (San Antonio Public Library (SAPL), 2011).

- ii. Early childhood education: Public libraries traditionally have offered story times and materials for preschoolers, and are now expanding innovative baby programs, outreach services to daycares and enhanced children’s spaces are expanding across the library world as “the-earlier-the better” mantra is applied to library services. Family programming also offers an easy introduction to all the other services that libraries offer.
- iii. Community Building and Economic Development: Libraries make contributions to community economic development by supporting basic literacy, workforce development, and business development. Librarians are aligning library services with local, county and state goals and aspirations. Not only do libraries provide valuable services for residents of all ages, incomes and ethnic backgrounds, but they can also inject a healthy dose of vitality into downtowns, main streets, and neighborhood centers. Libraries in cities big and small are becoming dynamic places actively seeking to engage

the community instead of simply providing a place to read or take out a book  
“Libraries are expanding their mission”.

- iv. Downloadables: Downloadable media, especially for music, audiobooks, videos are the norm for youths and boomers who are comfortable with ipods, kindles and laptops. E-books have reached the tipping point: Library patrons now read both library and purchased e-books on their iphones, ipads, smartphones, tablets, notebooks, SONY, reader, Barnes & Noble Nook (B & N's Nook), Nook color and a growing variety of e-reading devices from self-service options that include self-check stations, self-serve hold shelves, material vending units, kiosks, lockers, and self-contained mini-branches that open with a swipe of online library card. All these options combined with library websites make it possible for customers to conduct their library business when it is most convenient for them. Growing use of Wikipedia, crowd sourcing, blogs, rating and review systems on commercial sites, and other communal information-sharing practices create expectations for online public access catalog (OPAC). Information collected in digital repositories are now preserved in multiple and translatable formats in portable storage devices such as USB flash drives, hard discs etc. Search engines, social networks, cloud computing, Wi-Fi, spyware, cookies, Face-book and other online tools are used to obtain information from the net. Some examples of online media providers are Redbox, Netflix, Amazon etc. Some library

licensed media content devices include DVD types (DVD, HDDVD, Blu-ray) and gaming platforms (Play Station, Wii, Xbox) to consider but a few.

- v. Automated Book Delivery System (ABDS): In Europe, Portugal's Biblioclube 24 located on street corners, parking lots, and shopping areas, is an automated 24-hour-a-day book kiosk that holds a selection of books. On scanning a library card, a user can select from a variety of titles; a robotic arm retrieves the book and delivers it to the user in a hard plastic case. The book may be returned to the kiosk in the same manner (SAPL, 2011). Books at James Hunt Jr. Library at North Carolina state, on demand, are robotically selected from metallic bins and delivered to the point of access at a front desk using online integrated catalog from a computer or mobile device.
- vi. Geocoding and Smart Objects: Geocoding is the matching of geographic coordinates such as latitude and longitude with other data such as street addresses and photos. Popular applications can be found in auto GPS (Geographic Positioning Systems), geographic websites such as Google Maps and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) used for maps and data. Smart objects are "simply any physical object that includes a unique identifier that can track information about the object, such as RFID (radio-frequency identification), smart cards, etc. Smart tags such as RFID are already in use in libraries for tagging books or games with reviews,

instructions, etc. It could also be possible to track the location of any library item within the library or even as a patron uses it. (SAPL, 2011).

**Table 2: New Roles for Libraries in Actualizing SD**

S/No.	New Roles
1	Training of library users
2	Provision of digital information services
3.	Information repackaging
4.	Engagement in development programmes
5.	Developing reading culture
6.	Disseminating information on job opportunities
7.	Organizing talk shows on SD
8.	Promoting health culture in Libraries
9.	Advocacy programmes for SD
10.	Community engagement
11.	Involvement in research
12.	Safeguarding cultural heritage/indigenous knowledge

### **Problem of Libraries in Information delivery and how to forge ahead**

The information profession experiences new challenges following unprecedented explosion of information in varying forms and formats and the application of information communication and mobile technologies in generating, disseminating and providing access to information.

According to Shafack (2020) the professional has not changed from just being custodians of information resources to information resources content managers taking advantage of the appropriate technological skills to meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century information user especially the younger generation”.

The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2000) sustainable goals include:

- 1) The wellbeing of all people
- 2) Protection of the earth's ecosystems
- 3) Continued economic and technological development
- 4) Security and peace
- 5) Improving international cooperation

To achieve the above listed sustainable development goals, Library schools need to incorporate into their programmes and direct new research areas to current trends in the profession, example, subject content in areas such as social informatics, data management, information architecture and digital libraries should be taught in LIS schools to graduate professionals with cognate skills that can cope with changing trends.

**Table 3: Challenges encountered by Libraries in actualizing SD**

S/No.	Challenges
1	Poor funding
2	Lack of adequately trained library personnel
3.	Lack of training on SD
4.	Insufficient SD related materials
5.	Lack of constant power supply
6.	Inadequacy of library facilities
7.	Poor attention from governments and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs)
8.	Inadequate access to best practices on SD

## Recommendations

1. Libraries should provide free computing labs with iphones, laptops, and e

-Readers for those who lack basic personal computing access and skills to enable low-income individuals to keep pace with current trends in information provision.

2. Libraries should engage in advocacy programmes like street-walk, distribution of flyers, radio jingles, and social media campaign on sustainable development goals and library services.

3. Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) should be provided in communities for easy information resource sourcing.

4. Any modern library and information professional must be knowledgeable in library automation, networking, internet surfing, database management, processing software, statistical software, etc. all these services, which must be made available in the libraries, can be regarded as necessary tools for developing country to have a meaningful development (Iroka and Chigozie, 2015). Libraries could promote the development of individuals or the concept of sustainable development through distance education, surfing the internet and professional literatures e.g. health related document that disseminates information on diseases and prevention measures, health care etc. Thus for

national and sustainable development in Nigeria, policy makers in the democratic dispensation must be provided with valuable, timely and current information to facilitate decision-making process.

## **Conclusion**

Every facet of library service- facilities, technology, staffing, marketing, customer service etc,-will be affected by the preferences of growing, vocal, and politically influential population. Libraries across the country are challenged to create programs, services, collections, and adaptive technologies tailored to the highly fragmented market. While libraries position themselves as providing access to a world of digital resources, teaming with academics and consortia can be productive efforts, and open source software has the potential to improve web features and discovery overlays.

Promotion of universal literacy inclusive of media literacy, information literacy and digital literacy and providing a network of delivery sites for government programmes and services will lead to sustainable development. Government and policy makers need to integrate strategic plans of public libraries in their agenda to foster sustainable development goals of communities through investing in ICT infrastructure, bandwidth, training and staffing. These will create employments, structures and infrastructures and act as catalysts for human progress, aid development and transform youths and communities.

The library must foster civil awareness in support of democracy and provide the resources for the development of economic productivity and innovation in society, thus a significant criteria for growing a healthy society. For libraries to be successful and effective, they cannot act alone. They need to build strong associations, partnerships and networks with strong, attractive and achievable plans of actions that they can use to advocate sustainable support.

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