THE ROLE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: ISSUES AND STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

Academic libraries are institutions that are trustworthy knowledge providers. With the proliferation of information, academic libraries can help the communities develop. This study is a social survey research aimed at proffering solutions to the gap experienced between the academic communities, and that of their immediate surroundings. The data for the study were collected through the use of questionnaire and interview methods. The questionnaire was administered to academic librarians with higher qualifications in five higher institutions around Lagos and Ogun States. However from this research finding, it can be observed that the libraries have not had much impact on the towns/communities where the academic libraries had been established. Only the staff and students and the university community have been impacted immensely. Recommendations are for Academic libraries to organize programmes that will sanitize the communities to get users aware of the importance of libraries.

Key Words: information communication technology (ICT), community development, knowledge community, knowledge management, social computing

INTRODUCTION

Community Development is about the active involvement of people in the issues which affect their lives. It is a process based on the sharing of power, skills, knowledge and experience. According to Working Together Project (2014), *Community Development means connecting, consulting and working collaboratively with community members to understand the needs of the community and to inform the direction of library work and policies*. The Project further stated that libraries need to be connected to their communities if they are to survive and grow. No community can truly develop beyond the knowledge or capacity of her citizenry. There is therefore need for communities and libraries to have a meeting point to build the lives of her citizenry.

Community Development is an energizing and vitalizing approach for libraries who want to build and strengthen their

community connections in order to build strong and relevant libraries for the future. As the United Nations reflects on the future of global development and the post-2015 agenda, access to information must be recognized as critical to supporting governments to achieve development goals, and enabling citizens to make informed decisions to improve their own lives. IFLA (2014) believes that high-quality library and information services help guarantee that access. In their own vein, Working Together Project, (2014) asserted that Community Development in a library context is not simply working with people to reach their goals, but working with them to understand how the library can help them reach their goals.

Libraries have been agents of change; they connect with people, strengthen communities and build assets of nation. The different types of libraries are committed to meeting the information needs of people for societal and the common good of the nation. The purpose of setting up the library spells out its function. Simmonds and Andaleeb (2001) reiterating this role stated that the academic library has been described as the "heart" of the learning community. Access to information is a prerequisite for development programmes across all sectors and at all levels. According to Clarke (1997) one of the functions of the university library is meeting the specialized information needs of the community in which the university is established. The need to use libraries in communities has long been recognized, can academic libraries help the

communities develop however, is the thrust of this paper.

BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM
The communities where academic libraries are established are meant to be impacted positively by the influence of the libraries. In recent times, academic libraries seem to cater meanly for the academic communities alone and their presence are not reflective in the towns and local communities where the universities are sited. Most of our communities are largely underdeveloped and even the urban environment is in dire need of some changes. Gould and Gomez (2010) stressed that public libraries are not perceived as important or useful places to get information, based on users' perceptions of access to current information and technology, and to associated technology training and support. Academic libraries can help bridge the gap here as they can provide the needed support, training and access to ICT to patrons who require them. Academic libraries can create access to required information for the dwellers of the host communities.

In a library context Community Development means building relationships with people by allowing the library to go beyond a simple consultation and support process and expand in to meaningful and inclusive collaborations. Strong relationships and partnerships ensure that libraries engage in the sometimes complex process of listening to community voices and facilitating the expression of a community's needs within the library.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Majority of the population of our society need different information to function effectively in their respective jobs, profession and lives. Relevant information sources must be utilized to achieve success in any endeavour. It is the amount of information and the level of application to life that makes some nations developed, while others are developing and some yet still underdeveloped. Information accessibility and usage is the cutting edge amongst these nations. The more informed the citizenry of any nation, the more developed the nation becomes.

In many African nations, the citizenry lack basic information. People go about life without basic facts on important issues like health, their environment, economic, social and physical welfare, science and technology. Shoki (2007) quoting Adesanoye (1995) identified many economic problems facing Africa as a continent such as political instabilities, international debt crises, overpopulation, mismanagement of resources and low prices for Africa exports as a result of lack of information. Rader (2001) opined that countless industries and enterprises are based on information and information technologies.

Librarians, by collecting, organizing, storing and providing access to data, serve as change agents, helping organizations and individuals access and use data in order to develop more successful societies. Libraries are agents of change in all facet of life worldwide. Countries that have established libraries and embraced information have in no time risen above their contemporaries. Alokun (2003) rightly postulated that,

"in Nigeria, information is provided for a few, to the total neglect of the majority that forms the bulk of the population. He further stated that citizens whether literate or illiterate, handicapped or not, need information on modern techniques of agriculture, commerce, health, politics, human rights etc, as basic necessity of life for their existence."

Shoki (2007) stated that "reading literacy is an urgent problem to be addressed in Africa. There are socio-economic problems; hunger, poverty, unemployment and underemployment are perennial difficulties to handle. Reading is seen as secondary, and this poses difficulties in comprehension.

Working together (2014) further reiterated so what does this mean for the library's vision and mandate and policies? And what does it mean in terms of the techniques librarians use to design and develop programs and services?

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are designed:
1. To determine if the use of library by the community have any effect on the development of the community.

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2. Recommend ways by which academic libraries can serve as a development channel to the community in terms of accessibility.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

COMMUNITY ORIENTED PROGRAMS

Academic libraries can help communities develop by anticipating their information needs, and through the use of ICT, connect people to their needs. ICT has played a vital role in national, regional and global development by connecting people and places and holds enormous promise for the future.

The information needs of various categories of people must be taken into consideration when providing information to them. If our communities do not have adequate information to access and utilize, it will not develop. Library community service is a social context that will help bridge the gap between the literate and illiterate, the rich and poor and make for communal development. An academic library is set up to meet the teaching, learning, research and information needs of the parent institution as well as impact the immediate community where the institution is resident through community impact initiative programmes.

Campbell (2006) avers that academic libraries have long stood unchallenged throughout the world as the primary providers of recorded knowledge and historical records. He noted that academic libraries like Harvard, Stanford, the University of Michigan, the University of Oxford and The New York Public Library of United States of America collaborated with Google Inc. by making digitally scanned books from their collections available so that users worldwide can search them in Google. There should be collaboration between academic libraries and other libraries to make positive impact on the society. Academic libraries should be the link between other types of libraries because of its context in higher education and integrity in knowledge matter, especially in Nigeria and other African nations where the leaders and citizenry are in dire need for a change.

Keshi (2006) appealed to the citizens to embrace volunteering by spending some hours yearly in acts of community service to build the nation. As a matter of compulsion, every citizenry of this nation must see it as a duty to help the community they live in by contributing to the ongoing reform, programmed towards the growth and development of the nation. Academic libraries can help develop the community by providing access to relevant information through different channels. Simpson, et al (2003) revealed in a case study of a remote town in Australia, the process and the result of a rural telecommunication. It was aimed at investigating communication, diversity, new technology and community development in rural and remote Queensland. The community saw the introduction of the internet to town as providing opportunities. Potentially these included business, access to global markets, retention of a skilled workforce and new job opportunities, greater educational opportunities, effective communication and networking and a wide range of information and services. There are online libraries one can use at anytime

of the day or night, with millions of books and periodicals with unlimited browsing, academic libraries can make access to such available to members of the community.

CHALLENGES OF PROVISION OF INFORMATION IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Onu (2004) quoting Wohorem (2000) highlighted problems such as system downtimes, lack of investment capital, inadequate knowledge on how to develop IT system internally, absence of IT Strategies, gimmicks of vendors, lack of basic infrastructure and facilities or information exchange, lack of maintenance culture in Nigerian public networks and unhelpful government action. Also quoting Ayo (2001), she cited the contributing factors affecting the use of IT in Nigeria as poor power (electricity) supply, low rate of literacy among the people, abject poverty and high cost of living, lack of adequate manpower, lack of adequate infrastructure, insecurity and virus attack. There is also the reluctance of libraries to collaborate as a body to develop a Local Area Network (LAN). This age has been referred to as the information age and it is therefore expedient for everyone to be conversant with various information tools/gadgets and be able to use them where and when appropriate but this is not applicable in most academic libraries. Information resources and terms like computer, internet, electronic mail [e-mail], World Wide Web [WWW] and WebTV, video conferencing, wireless communications, etc, should be well understood, easily accessible and effectively utilized by a majority of people.

The roles of academic libraries have changed due to emerging technologies and competitive services provided by different information providers. The academic librarian needs to make the community see emerging changes and make resultant effort to communicate the same to the larger society. Academic libraries like special libraries have to anticipate users' needs especially those of the staff and students, and get involved in selective dissemination of information [SDI] services to the actual and anticipated patrons of the library and its host community. It is of utmost importance then, that the library gives information that will be utilized by a vast majority of people in the community because this will help in the upward development of people's lives and the society at large.

METHODOLOGY

This is a social survey research. Social research involves a systematic and comprehensive collection of information about the opinions, attitudes, feelings, beliefs and behaviour of a people while in action research according to Punch (2005) action researchers engage in careful and diligent inquiry, not for purposes of discovering new facts but to acquire information having practical application to the solution of specific problems relating to their work.

The data for the study were collected through the use of questionnaire and interview methods. The questionnaire consisted of three parts; the first section was based on the background information, while in the second section, respondents were expected to indicate the use of ICT in

libraries in relation to the communities where they are established and finally in the third section, community development effort were noted as impacted through the library and the use of ICT. Interview is a very good way of accessing people's perceptions, meanings, and definitions of situations and constructions of reality. It is also one of the most powerful ways of understanding others. The method of interview is face-to-face verbal interchange and self-administered questionnaire. SPSS was used to analyze the data and the two statistical tools used were correlation and regression.

SAMPLE
The questionnaire was administered to only librarians who had worked for more than three years and who had higher qualifications in academic libraries in five higher institutions of learning around Lagos and Ogun States namely; University of Lagos Library, Akoka, Yaba College of Technology Library, Lagos State University Library, Ojo, Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education Library, Bells University of Technology Library, Ota, and Centre for Learning Resources, Covenant University, Ota. So many academic libraries were used as samples so that the sample-to-population will produce a study-finding that is valid and reliable. Due to the sample size of this research face-to face administration of the questionnaire was also carried out.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Table 1: Distribution of Respondent by Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	7	43.8
Female	9	56.3
Total	16	100.0

Table 1 indicates the distribution of respondents that is professional librarians by sex. female professional librarians constitutes the majority, accounting for 9 out of the 16 professional librarians 56.3% of the total population, while the male professional librarians make up the remaining 7 or 43.8% of the total sampled population. This representation is good considering the fact that women are usually more in librarianship and the teaching profession than their male counterparts.

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Institutions

Institution	Frequency	Percent
Unilag	2	12.5
Yabatech	2	12.5
LASU	3	18.8
Adeniran	1	6.3
Bells	3	18.8
Covenant	5	31.3
Total	16	100.0

Table two above shows the distribution of respondents from 5 different academic libraries in higher institutions around Lagos State and Ogun State in Nigeria. These libraries include both federal, state government and privately established

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institution academic libraries. 12.5% of the respondents were from University of Lagos, 12.5% of the respondents are from Yaba College of Technology, 18.8% of the respondents were from Lagos State University, 6.3% or 1 of the respondent is from Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, 18.8% are from Bells University of Technology while 31.3% of the respondents are from Covenant University.

Table 3: Qualification of Respondents

Qualification	Frequency	Percent
BLs/ Bsc/ B.Ed	1	6.3
MLs/ MSc/ MA/ M.Ed	11	68.8
MPhil	2	12.5
PhD	2	12.5
Total	16	100.0

Table 3 above shows the qualification of respondents from all higher institution. 75% that is majority of the respondents were Master degree holders, 12.5% had Masters in Philosophy, while of 12.5% of the respondent, represented a doctoral student and the other had his doctorate degree, only 6.3% or respondent of the respondents had Bachelor in Library Science.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Status

Librarian Status	Frequency	Percent
Librarian 11	3	18.8
Librarian 1	8	50.0
Senior Librarian	1	6.3
Deputy University Librarian	1	6.3
University Librarian	2	12.5
College Librarian	1	6.3
Total	16	100.0

The status of librarians was taken and as shown in table 4 above, the senior librarian, deputy university librarian and college librarian represents 6.3 % each of the respondents. Most of the respondents of the study are librarian 1 representing 50.0% of the study. Librarian 11 is 18.8% of the study while 12.5% are university librarian. The status of respondents can influence the way services are given to the community.

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Table 5: Years on the Job/Working Experience

No of Years on Job	Frequency	Percent
1-5 years	3	18.8
6-10 years	5	31.3
11-15 years	3	18.8
16-20 years	2	12.5
21-25 years	2	12.5
26-30 years	1	6.3
Total	16	100.0

The researcher made sure most respondents had been on their job for a couple of years. 31.3% that is majority of the respondent had worked from 6-10years, 18.8% had worked from 1-5 years, and 18.8% had worked 11-15 years while 12.5% had worked for 16-20years, 12.5% had worked for 21-25 years, and only 6.3% also had worked for 26-30years.

Table 6: Library Automation

Automated Libraries	Frequency	Percent
Yes	14	87.5
No	1	6.3
No response	1	6.3
Total	16	100.0

In Table 6 above, 87.5% of the respondents indicated that their libraries are automated, 6.25% that is only one respondent indicated that their library is not automated while 6.25% that is one respondent reported that his library is partially automated, but on interviewing them, I discovered its either the libraries were in the process of being automated or they were not automated but had future plans for it.

Table 7: Library Community Service Initiative

Library Community Service	Frequency	Percent

Not organized	3	18.8
Organized	2	12.5
Readily organized	2	12.5
Very Readily Organized	3	18.8
No response	6	37.5
Total	16	100.0

Table 7 shows the population of respondents who indicated that community development programmes are organized by the libraries. 18.8% indicated that no activity is organized, 12.5% of respondents that indicated that these services were organized, 12.5% indicated these services were readily organized, 18.8% indicated these services were verily readily organized while 37.5% did not tick any option. 37.5% constitute majority of the population, on further query I realized that most academic libraries did not organize library services for their communities.

Table 8: Community Types Benefiting From Library Services

Types of Community	Frequency	Percent
Town	1	6.3
Higher Institution Community	12	75.0
Staff and Students of Higher Institution	3	18.8
Total	16	100.0

The above table 8 shows the communities which the respondents indicated as the communities where their services are given. Only 6.3% indicated providing services to the town community around where the university is situated. 75.0% that is majority of the respondent provided services to only the higher institution community while 18.8% provided services to the staff and students of the university alone.

Table 9: Library Usage Skill Among Communities

Library Usage Skill	Frequency	Percent
Below Average	1	6.3
Average	5	31.3

Above average	9	56.3
No response	1	6.3
Total	16	100.0

From Table 9 above, 56.3% that is majority of the respondents indicated that the community they give their services to had developed library usage skill, while .

31.3% indicated that library usage skill is average, 6.3% respondent agreed that library usage skill is below average, while 6.3% respondent did not tick any option

Table 10: Level of ICT Awareness Programmes Carried Amongst Community

ICT Awareness	Frequency	Percent
Average	5	31.3
Above Average	9	56.3
No response	2	12.5
Total	16	100.0

From the table above, 56.3% of the respondents indicated that their libraries ICT awareness programmes among the communities could be rated above average,

while 31.3% considered their ICT level awareness programmes as average while 12.5% did not tick any option.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Table 12: Correlations

Variables		ICT Awareness Programme	The Community has developed library usage skill
ICT Awareness Programme	Pearson Correlation	1	.058
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.830
	N	16	16
The	Pearson	.058	1

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Community has developed library usage skill	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.830	
	N	16	16

From the above correlation test, the t-calculated value is 0.058 at the associated significance level of 0.830. This is greater than the conventional significant level of 0.05. It is thus accepted that there is no significant relationship between ICT awareness programme and library usage skills by the community. Therefore library usage skill is very pertinent to ICT awareness programmes.

Table 14: Correlations

Variables		Workshop/ Seminar	There is Library Awareness
Workshop/ Seminar	Pearson Correlation	1	-.574(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.020
	N	16	16
There is Library Awareness	Pearson Correlation	-.574(*)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.020	
	N	16	16

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As shown in the table above, the t-calculated value is -0.574 at the associated level of significance of 0.020. This is less than the conventional significant level of 0.05. Thus it is established that there is significant relationship between holding workshop/seminars and library awareness programmes.

Table 15: Regression
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.792(a)	.627	-.398	1.50920

a Predictors: (Constant), Book Talk/ Book Review, ICT Awareness Programme, Workshop/ Seminar, Exhibition, Public Lecture, Extension Services (Mobile

Library), Conferences (ICT Oriented), Training, Quiz/ Reading Competition, Book Fair, Library Community Service (Mass Media)

The table above reveals that community development services will account for 62.7% of community usage skill. This means that if academic libraries provide specialized outreach services to the community there will be development.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From this research finding it can be observed that librarianship has not had much impact on the towns/communities where the academic libraries had been established. Only the staff and students and the university community have been impacted immensely.

All respondents agreed that ICT awareness programme through community services would enhance community development.

The need for skill training and developments, ICT awareness, reading competition, advocacy, the use of audio visual, provision of relevant materials, workshops are some of the ways the academic library can improve the communities where they are established.

Other ways the academic library could help improve the communities as highlighted are bringing of library services to community dwellers, dissemination of information related to social reform agenda, remote and multiple access to information etc.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Academic libraries therefore being very versatile and having a broad and trustworthy knowledge base, should not only render services to the university clientele i.e. staff and students and university community, but they should also organize programmes by collaborating with public libraries that will be aimed towards community building. Academic librarians must create information programmed to help users of the community get required information for this present age and dispensation.

Academic librarians should be proactive, innovative and creative, they should think of new ways to make their jobs far reaching, like organizing conferences, book fairs, workshops/seminars and training for the community users.

Academic libraries could also collaborate with Public libraries to organize programmes that will sanitize the communities, these programmes could be organized along side with journalists, telecommunications and the mass media/ media houses and such programmes should be aimed at featuring in public places like hospitals, prisons, national stadium and theaters to get users aware of the importance of libraries.

Also the management that is the parent bodies of academic libraries in universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, colleges of science and technology should as a conscientious see to the smooth running and organization of the libraries. Funds should always be made available to the academic libraries and these programmes could be jointly organized and sponsored by the parent bodies and industries, and ministry of information.

The Federal Ministry of Education is not left out in this wake up call, libraries (school libraries, academic libraries, public libraries, special libraries and even the national libraries) found all over the nation and Africa needs to invigorate. The importance of information cannot be over emphasized in relations to our education, health, economic, social, public and political sector. Information rules the world.

The Nigerian Library Association (NLA) should collaborate with ICT professionals to find solutions to information illiteracy that is largely affecting every sector of our nation. Leaders cannot rule well if they are not thoroughly informed and followers also follow blindly without appropriate knowledge, making the society exist like a rat race.

The library should be an expression of its community's vision and creativity; this can only happen if we involve them actively in decision-making and planning.

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