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## The Role of the Library in National Development

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## Introduction

The world has always been characterised by a system of natural or artificial change in human beings, material and physical resources, institutions, organizations and sectors of nations. In other words, nations across the globe have been marked by development of one form or the other. The word “development” is said to have been derived from the French verb “veloper” meaning “to wrap” (John & Akpakpan, 2018). Development is defined as the act or process of growth, progress and improvement within a physical setting (Adagbabiri & Okolie, 2019). Development is of different kinds. One type of development is national development. National development refers to an improvement in the general well-being of a people (Agbo & Onyekweodiri, 2014). In the context of this study, national development is defined as a remarkable growth in the condition and status of all the human, material and physical resources and of all the sectors of a nation. The indicators of national development have been identified to include improved quality of citizens’ lives; absence of inequality, injustice and poverty; and the existence of equal participation in political decision, good government policies that promote good health, education and skill acquisition (Akomolafe, 2012; Ofodu & Okwoli, 2023). Every nation in the world is desirous of these indicators.

National development has been the aspiration of all nations of the world. This aspiration is, probably, as a result of the realisation that development is essential to the growth and sustenance of any nation (Agbo & Onyekweodiri, 2014). Hence, every nation in the world makes strenuous efforts towards its development. In this quest for development, some nations have moved ahead of others. This often brings about two classes of nations in the world: the developed and developing nations. Developed nations are nations which have attained an advanced level of development and self-reliance. On the other hand, developing nations are those countries which are still struggling to reach a meaningful stage of growth and independence. As an African nation, Nigeria falls into the class of developing countries of the world. However, the nation has not lost sight of the need for more development.

In all nations of the world, national development has often been spearheaded by their respective governments by means of some plans, usually referred to as national development plans. It is observed that the Nigerian government has aspired to achieve development using diverse plans, namely short-term (annual budget), medium and long-term plans (Marcellus, 2009). Despite these efforts and the abundance of her human, natural and material resources, there has been persistent pervasive rural underdevelopment, poverty, starvation, unemployment, excessive urban population growth and increasing inequity in the country (Agbo & Onyekweodiri, 2014), reducing its status from that of a developing nation to that of underdeveloping nation and from a third-world to a forth-world or amongst the poorest countries of the world (Ezegbe & Okam, 2013). However, the nation has taken some measures to pull itself out of this state.

A great deal of effort which Nigeria has made towards her development has been aimed at her economic and political development. These two components of national development are usually inextricably linked. Msheliza et al. (2015) observe that there is a strong relationship between politics and economic activities in a developed country. Economic development generally refers to structural changes in an economy leading to better employee output, jobs, earnings and peoples’ standard of living, occasioned by the adoption of mechanized and modern technologies (Myint & Krueger, 2016). Todaro (2005) opines that economically-developed

nations are nations that which lead in the area of acquiring, improving and applying human knowledge, science, technology and humanities in providing the highest possible standard of living for its citizens. Msheliza et al. (2016) view it as the ability of a country to utilize the available resources to raise the living standard of its citizens. Its major aim is to enhance human wellbeing (Chigbu & Idoko, 2013). Nigeria has been pursuing this goal by attempting to achieve some components of her development, including economic and political development.

In terms of economic development, Nigeria is said to have tried several development strategies, models and plans since her independence in 1960 (Aremu, 2003). The nation formulated the first national development plan between 1962 and 1968, aimed at creating and increasing access to opportunities in education and health. However, this plan was marred by overdependence on external funding, failure of the first republic and the advent of the nation's civil war in 1970. The years between 1970 and 1976 witnessed the nation's second national development plan, which placed emphasis on agriculture, industrialisation, transportation, electricity, water supply, manpower development, communication, defence and provision of social services. The third plan, made between 1975 and 1980, focused on rural and agricultural development. This was succeeded by the fourth plan of 1981 to 1985, prioritizing social services, health services and so on. This plan was designed to improve the people's living conditions, particularly, to boost the average citizens' real income, encourage more equitable distribution of personal and socio-economic group earnings, enhance reliance on the country's material and human resources and reduce unemployment rates (Ogwumike, 1995). The development strategies which have been lately adopted by the country with little or no result, include the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), Vision 2010, National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), creation of development centres and more. The agricultural development initiatives such as the Green Revolution Programme, which succeeded Operation Feed the Nation, also failed to achieve food security (Lawal & Oluwatoyin, 2017). However, the economic development of Nigeria has always been influenced by her political development.

Political development can be described as a positive change in the political practices and structures of a nation. It has been seen as the process of improving institutions, attitudes and values that form the political system of a society or nation (John & Akpakpan, 2018). Huntington (1965) sees political development as the institutionalization of political organizations and procedures, or the process of strengthening political systems and procedures. Somjee (1992) opines that political development is the growth of people's ability to hold their rulers accountable for their political action. Pye (1966) states that political development involves mass participation and popular involvement in political activities. These perceptions of political development reflect some indicators of political development in Nigeria. Nigeria has made some significant strides in political development in recent years. These strides came in the wake of the civilian rule in Nigeria in 1999. Some of these include the introduction of a multi-party system, freedom of speech, establishment of checks and balances by creating the executive, legislative and judicial arms of government, constitutional development that promotes the rights of citizens and property, establishment of three tiers of government (the federal, state and local government), encouragement of citizens' participation in political activities, etc. Most importantly, the advent of the civilian rule brought about democracy in the political system of Nigeria. Democracy has been defined as a form of government in which all the eligible citizens participate equally, either directly or indirectly through elected representatives, in the proposal, development and creation of laws. It encompasses social, economic and cultural conditions that enable the free and equal practice of political self-determination (Neuwman, 2007). It is characterized by equal

opportunity of participation in governance, provision of fundamental human rights, equality before the law, free and fair elections, equal voting rights and rights of opposition to government. With these features, democracy has been embraced by a growing number of nations across the world (Ugwuanyi & Achebe, 2012). A strong link between national development and information has been established in contemporary times. This connection is even more pronounced when referring to economic and political development of any country in the world.

In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, the development of any nation in the world has often been connected with information availability and utilisation. It is maintained that national development is a correlate of information resulting from a nation's provision and possession of relevant, current and adequate information (Achitabnimo, 2007). Consequently, no society can grow beyond its level of information awareness, acquisition and use (Owoeye & Abolarinwa, 2016). This shows that no nation aspiring for development can do without information. The need for information lies in its ability to emancipate people from ignorance, misconceptions, economic stagnation, political and social instability (Sokari, 2006). Information which has this potential can only be adequately provided by a library. This, perhaps, explains why there is no valuable society without libraries (IFLA, 2018). Thus, libraries play vital roles in enhancing societal development (Abdulraham et al., 2019). Banton (1996) defines a role as an expected behaviour associated with a social position. In this paper, role is conceived as what an individual, institution, organization or agency is expected to do because of the position they hold in the society. It can also be seen as an obligation or a mandate. Generally, libraries play custodial, informational, educational, research and recreational roles in the society. However, libraries are no longer dormant warehouses of recorded knowledge but proactive organizations which currently assume higher roles to impact the development of any nation in which they are established.

### **Concept of Library**

The word "library" evolved from the Latin word "liber", which means book. It is described as an organized collection of published and unpublished books and audio-visual materials, with personnel rendering services designed to provide and interpret these resources to meet the informative, research, educational and recreational needs of its users (Abdulsalami et al., 2013). Eberhart (2010) comprehensively defines a library as a collection of different forms of resources organized by information professionals or other experts who provide convenient physical, digital, bibliographic, or intellectual access and offer targeted services and programs with the mission of educating, informing, or entertaining a variety of audiences, and with the goal of stimulating individual learning and advancing society as a whole. Islam (2004) sees a library as a learned institution equipped with treasures of knowledge maintained, organized, and managed by trained personnel to educate the children, men and women continuously and assist in their self-improvement through an effective and prompt dissemination of information embodied in the resources. Furthermore, he metaphorically views a library as an instrument of self-education, a means of knowledge and factual information, a centre of intellectual recreation, and a beacon of enlightenment that provides accumulated preserved knowledge of civilization which consequently enriches one's mental vision, and dignifies his habit, character, taste, attitude, conduct, and outlook on life. Libraries are also conceived as social institutions created to conserve knowledge, preserve the cultural heritage and provide information for education and research purposes (Fakomogbon et al., 2012). In the context of this study, a library is defined as an agency or an integral part of an organization or institution or nation which is charged with the

responsibility of identifying the unique information needs of its parent body or members of the parent body and engaging in the selection, acquisition, organisation and dissemination of information to meet such needs.

## **Concept of National Development**

National development is one of the most recent popular concepts scholars, researchers and individuals across the world have attempted to define. Braman (2012) sees national development as the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country or nation. Similarly, it is defined as a remarkable change in all the sectors of a nation as well a transformation in its human resources (Ofodu & Okwoli, 2023). It is the ability of a country to evolve a process of expansion that can bring about improvement in the life of the people (Akomolafe, 2012). National development is also seen as the process of enhancing the productive forces of a country for the actualization of more prosperous and meaningful life for all its citizens (Aremu, 2003). The authors use national development to mean an appreciable advancement in the level of growth in all the material, human, physical and financial resources and in all the factions of a nation.

## **Types of Libraries**

### **National Libraries**

A national library is the apex library of a country which is charged with the responsibility of collecting and preserving all the information resources emanating from the country and from other countries of the world. The library serves all categories of people in the society. By virtue of its position, it regulates all the activities of all other types of libraries in a country. It serves as a legal depository for all items produced by individuals, agencies, organizations and institutions in a country. It also serves as a custodian of the national union catalogue, which is a catalogue of collections of information resources held by all types of libraries in a country. It also issues international standard serial number (ISSN) and international standard book number (ISBN) to serials or periodicals and books published in the country. In the case of the National Library of Nigeria, it is headed by a librarian or information professional called national librarian. To make impact on all areas of the nation, this national library establishes branches in all states of the country.

### **Public Libraries**

A public library, as the names suggests, is a library established for the public. It is a library which provides the broadest collect of information materials in line with the diverse information needs of the public. This information needs could be academic, legal, political, health, agricultural, security, and so on. It is, therefore, a library which usually strives towards a balance and comprehensive collection of information resources for all the people and all sectors of a nation. It provides information to patrons regardless of their demographic and physical backgrounds. The public library also serves as a socialization ground for individuals, which usually involves having an informal conversation, holding a meeting, playing games, listening to

music, watching films and so on. Wheeler and Goldhor (1962) point out that the core goals of a public library are to:

1. Enable informal education opportunities for the citizens in the community;
2. Enrich the knowledge of individuals in various subject disciplines where they undertake formal education;
3. Provide avenues to meet the information needs of people;
4. Support the educational, civic and cultural activities of groups and organizations;
5. Provide recreational opportunities and encourage constructive use of leisure time.

### Academic Libraries

Academic libraries are libraries established in institutions of higher learning such as schools of nursing and health, colleges of education, polytechnics, universities, etc. The aim of establishing an academic library is to provide information resources to support a higher educational institution in engaging in teaching, learning and research. They are usually meant to provide information resources in print and electronic forms to meet the teaching, learning and research information needs of students, lecturers, research fellows and other members of their parent institutions. They provide information resources to support and complement the curricula of higher educational institutions. They also strive to encourage independent reading habits among students and equip them with the skill to needed to make effective use of library resources. This is usually referred to as library orientation, user education, bibliographic instruction or information literacy. An academic library provides a wide variety of information resources, including textbooks, periodicals or serials, electronic databases, research outputs (undergraduate students' projects and postgraduate students' theses and dissertations), special documents (government publications, international organization publications), etc. It provides a broad spectrum of information services, mainly technical services (cataloguing and classification or knowledge organization) and readers services (reference services, circulation services, reserve services, etc.).

### Special Libraries

A special library is a library that serves any non-educational agency or establishment. They are libraries which are set up to provide information resources to meet the unique or peculiar information needs of their parent organization or members of their parent bodies. These bodies are usually engaged in providing various kinds of services to the public or engaged in activities other than education. The services could be financial, legal, social and so on. On the other hand, the activities could be production, manufacturing, construction, etc. Special libraries usually provide information services on a specific subject area or on a specific area of human activity. They usually render selective dissemination of information and current awareness services to their patrons. Selective dissemination of information refers to the process of identifying a patron's peculiar information need and gathering and delivering such information to the patron. On the other hand, current awareness service seeks to provide information resources to update patrons on the latest trends and developments in their areas of specialization.

### School Libraries

School libraries are libraries which are established in primary and secondary schools. School libraries are set up to provide print and non-print or audio-visual information resources to support the teaching and learning activities of a primary or secondary school. They often provide

a great deal of illustrative and audio-visual information materials which are designed to arrest the attention of children and to help them develop look for books, reading, reading habit and skills. School libraries are meant to fill the gap in knowledge which is usually not provided by classroom instruction.

### Electronic/Digital Library

An electronic library can be defined as a collection of library information resources which are made available on the internet. The collection contains born-digital or naturally-electronic information resources and digitized information resources, which are online versions of print information items. The collection often includes electronic databases of journals and articles, theses and dissertations, search links, conference proceedings of various departments and faculties of an institution of higher learning and professional societies and associations, administrative documents, news and so on. Users are often required to register to obtain a password and username to access the contents of an electronic library.

### General Roles of Libraries

The library plays several roles in any given agency, organisation, institution or nation where it is set up. Their roles are often defined by the objectives of establishing their parent bodies. Generally, libraries play five fundamental roles which are vital to the development of any nation in which they are established. These roles are informational, educational, research, recreational and custodial role. They are explained below:

#### Informational Role

Information can be defined as data which has been put into a useable form. The general role of the library has been conceived as that of providing information about its community (Lozano, 2002). The core role of the library is to provide information resources in print and electronic forms to meet the present and future information needs of people in the society. This information need could be for learning, teaching, research or for community or national development. The information the library provides is meant to help users gain awareness and understanding of their environment, of themselves and of the events around them. Thus, the library is expected to provide information resources to help users rid themselves of the shackles of ignorance.

#### Educational Role

Education can be defined as the process of imparting knowledge to an individual or a group of individuals. The library exists to promote or facilitate this process. It is observed that the basic roles of libraries, be it academic, school, public, national, special or digital, is to promote education by providing supplementary information resources in the form of textbooks, reference materials and electronic information items to support education and enable individuals to acquire knowledge and experience and lifelong education in either a formal or informal setting (Iroka & Ndulaka, 2018). White (2012) opines that library resources and services guarantee a genuine record of knowledge of past generations, support learning, literacy and education.

## Research Role

Research is a systematic and procedural attempt to uncover the unknown with a view to solving a problem or addressing a weakness in society. The library is well acknowledged as place of discovery and innovation. Research serves as a potent means of identifying not only the causes of problems in the society but also of effectively dealing with them. The research process usually involves identifying a problem that requires a solution, conducting literature search which provides theoretical and conceptual background about the problem, designing an appropriate research methodology, collecting valid and objective data related to the problem, subjecting the data to appropriate statistical analysis and arriving at a result upon which conclusion is drawn to help address a problem or weakness in society. The library provides different kinds information resources, including print and electronic information resources, which facilitate the process of research. By engaging in a systematic collection development and knowledge organization, the library not only exposes the researcher to relevant, appropriate and current information resources that help him or her not only to meet his or her specific information needs but also to save the researcher's time. In a typical academic library such a university library, the library provides theses and dissertations and journal articles which contain the findings of academic research and latest trends and developments in various fields of study. This helps to identify gaps in knowledge and enables researchers to identify fresh and researchable problems and avoid duplication of research.

## Recreational Role

Recreation can be described as any activity an individual engages in for the purpose of gaining pleasure or enjoyment. It is an activity individuals partake in during their leisure periods or pastime. Users can read in the library at leisure for pleasure. This can take the form of reading light information materials such as fictional books. Human beings have a strong desire to engage in activities which give them a sense of fun to relieve themselves of the stress of life. The library provides an opportunity for individuals to engage in recreational activities such as playing games, listening to music, watching films, etc. Human beings are generally gregarious or social beings. The library serves as a social institution which provides users with an avenue for socialization, enabling them to make friends and have informal chats and meetings or social gatherings.

## Custodial Role

From ancient times, the library has been regarded as a place where information resources are kept for use. It has traditionally been a storehouse of books and other information materials where people visit from time to time for the purpose of reading, consultation, research, discovery, etc. Thus, the library serves as a custodian of the cultural heritage of a nation, providing a means of securing its indigenous intellectual and creative content. In playing the custodial role, the library is viewed as a store, while the librarian as a storekeeper. Anele (2015) states that the information that the society requires is acquired and housed in the libraries because they are custodians of intellectual knowledge recorded on papers. Boufarrs and Harviainen (2021) posit that librarians should be seen as "gate-openers" in open-access publishing. Librarians currently play an online custodial role by showcasing the research outputs of their parent organisations online through self-archiving options such as institutional repositories, research-gate, academia, mendeley, library websites, blogs, etc. They also play this role by creating online databases of journal articles, open educational resources, conference



proceedings, etc. White (2012) opines that as gateways to knowledge and culture, libraries play a fundamental role in society.

### **Role of the Library in Economic Development**

In recent times, information has become the fifth factor of production after land, labour, capital and entrepreneur. Opeke (2004) admits the widespread acceptance of information as a vital factor of production, consumption and exchange in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, noting that the world has entered an era where the source of wealth and power is increasingly derived from information and human mental creativity, as compared with physical resources. Similarly, Issa (2003) attests to the widespread belief that current economic and national power and status rely on wide dissemination and use of information and knowledge. Hence, the assertion that a nation whose citizens are ignorant cannot be empowered economically (Abdulsalami et al., 2013). The library is the major agency which is entrusted at the organisational, institutional and national levels with the mandate of providing information which enhances economic development. Nearly all libraries in all nations across the world play such a role.

This paper identifies three major roles which libraries play in the economic development of Nigeria: dissemination of economic development information; development of entrepreneurial spirit or culture among individuals and promotion of manpower development.

#### **Dissemination of Economic Development Information**

In the first place, Nigerian libraries provide an even and balanced collection of information items which provide individuals with economic development information. Textbooks constitute a vital part of library collections which provide insight into the concepts, principles, theories, practices, methodology etc. of an aspect or several aspects of a subject. They acquaint information seekers with a theoretical knowledge of a subject which support the practice of an occupation or vocation in real life. By keeping stock of a wide range of information resources related to material, process and production engineering; financial management, organisational behaviour, business management/administration, entrepreneurship, etc, the library help individuals, organizations and corporations to be informed about how, when and where to venture into economic activities and how to succeed in any economic activity which will contribute to economic development of Nigeria. It provides individuals with the opportunity to identify which economic ventures, plans and strategies are more realistic, feasible and profitable, while providing guidance as to how to avoid failure in such undertakings. Moreover, it helps individuals and government to have a grasp of the weaknesses of past economic development plans, policies and strategies and to avoid such weaknesses in the formulation and implementation of current and future plans which will lead to realistic economic development. The library, therefore, serves as a means of correcting past economic failures and reinventing the economic potentials of a nation for the betterment of its people. The set of information resources which help to provide economic development information include yearbooks, almanacs, directories, gazetteers, maps and atlases, government publications, reports, handbooks, manuals and so on. While information resources such as yearbooks, almanacs, directories, gazetteers, maps and atlases, government publications and reports provide information about economic developmental efforts and results, industrial and service organisations, corporations, institutions, geographical areas, others such as handbooks and manuals try to simplify technical or complex industrial and occupational task which enable both professional and non-professionals to engage meaningfully and successfully in economic developmental ventures. Moreover, government

publications provide information seekers with information about economic developmental programs, policies, plans, strategies and more.

#### Development of Entrepreneurial Spirit or Culture among Individuals

Entrepreneurship is the ability of individuals to produce new ideas, to be innovative and creative. It is capacity of individuals to turn ideas into productive and profitable ventures. Libraries are believed to be important in the provision of information and knowledge, which serves as the basis for innovation and progress in organizations, society and individuals (Nworie et al., 2018). In the same vein, White (2012) observes that the resources and services libraries provide help shape the new ideas and perspectives that are essential to a creative and innovative society. Onah et al. (2020) observe that Nigerian libraries provide entrepreneurship information or skills acquisition to individuals. The library provides opportunities for individuals to reinvent their entrepreneurial potentials. By providing a collection of information resources on business management/administration, entrepreneurship, vocational and technical education, business education, etc, the library helps to develop entrepreneurial skill or culture among individuals in Nigeria. This skill or culture becomes a foundation for starting small and medium scale enterprises and for pursuing a bigger entrepreneurial vision among Nigerian individuals, thus, contributing to the economic development of the country.

#### Promotion of Manpower Development

The success of economic activities in any nation usually depends on its manpower. Manpower can be viewed as people who have the potentials to help an organization, institution, nation or any other entity to help it achieve its set objectives. Manpower development could be defined as measures taken by an organization, institution, nation or an entity to bring out the best in its human resources. It involves the process of sharpening the skills of personnel or individuals for a higher task or for maximum productivity. It has been described as the act of systematically training and improving individuals with a view to helping them acquire and apply knowledge, skill, insights and attitude, and to be able to effectively manage work and workers (Dialoke et al., 2022). It involves indoctrination, training, conference participation, apprenticeship, coaching, sponsorship, selection, approval, placement, etc (Nedler, 2007; Semako, 2019). Indoctrination can be defined as the process of introducing employees to the ethics and practices of an organization, institution or a nation. Training is an organized and systematic means of investing individuals with the competence needed to perform a job or a task. Apprenticeship is a process by which an individual teaches another individual to acquire his or her skill or art for the purpose of engaging in a vocation. Coaching is a process whereby a skilled individual or an experienced professional attempts to help an unskilled individual or non-professional or an inexperienced professional to develop a skill or art. Sponsorship involves undertaking all the financial and material obligations for an individual to engage in an activity which will help them contribute more to the success and progress of organization, institution or a nation that such an individual works for. Conference participation is a situation in which an employee or a member of a professional group attends a formal and well-planned gathering of a professional group and presents an academic paper (s) or engages in any other professional activity to share their knowledge, ideas, skill or the result of their research findings.

The library is instrumental in supporting manpower development for economic development. The library achieves this mainly through the myriad of services which it provides to its patrons. Such services are said to improve knowledge and skills for positive productivity

(Sobalaje, 2015). An essential service, which the library provides to patrons and helps to shape their manpower development, is user education or information literacy. Information literacy, which is often rendered by the reference section of a library, refers to the process whereby a library teaches patrons to know how to define an information need, access information, locate it, evaluate it, retrieve it, organize it and put to good use, such as applying it for decision making, policy formulation, academic undertaking, solution of a problem, etc. The essence of inculcating information literacy in the clients is to help them maximize the use of library information resources and to help them become independent and lifelong learners and researchers. The library promotes manpower development by inculcating in library users the skill needed to manage information maximally for the effective performance of an organisation, institution or a nation. The library does not stop at providing access to information resources by preparing catalogues, pasting of directional signs and guides, etc, but goes a step further to play the role of empowering library users with the skill needed to manipulate information for the execution of a productive task in the current knowledge economy, which is founded on the availability and utilization of information. Information is required for running organizational or national functions such as planning, decision making, communication, dispute management, crisis management, etc. The library equips individuals with the skill required to easily harness information resources to effectively handle these functions, and to effectively manage the human, material and financial resources of an organization, institution or a nation. The library facilitates the process of building information literate citizens whose skill can be tapped by their government or organizations to harness the economic and material resources of a country for economic development.

### **Role of the Library in Political Development**

The role of the library in promoting political development of any nation, including Nigeria, is widely acknowledged. Onah et al. (2020) point out roles libraries play in the development of Nigeria, some of which are relevant to the political development and stability of the nation. They include:

1. Provision of adequate political information;
2. Organisation of information literacy skills campaign;
3. Re-orientation of Nigerian political culture;
4. Promotion of open access to information;
5. Political value re-orientation of Nigerian electorates;
6. Creation of political awareness.

This paper points out three cardinal roles of libraries in the political development of Nigeria: dissemination of political information, promotion of political participation and promotion of transparency in governance.

#### **Dissemination of Political Information**

One of the key roles the library plays in the political development of Nigeria is to disseminate political information. Political information can be described as information about the workings of politics and the political system of a country. The library helps to transmit information about the backgrounds, beliefs, ideals, principles, preferences and practices of political parties in Nigeria. Anyika (2005) notes that an important role of libraries is to spread

political ideology for national development and cohesion. A political ideology can be defined as a set or a system of beliefs and ideas which define the operations and practices of a political party or system of a country. All Nigerian political parties come up with their distinctive ideologies which are either favourable or unfavourable to the masses. The library keeps stock of the pamphlets and handbooks published by political parties which contain their ideologies. Hence, the library facilitates the dissemination of the political ideologies of political parties of Nigeria. It helps library users to form their own opinions on these ideologies and make a decision as to support the political party and their programmes or reject or resist them for their betterment and for that of the nation.

An essential part of the political information provided by libraries is information about political activities in Nigeria. On a weekly or monthly basis, Nigerian libraries acquire newspapers, magazines and bulletins containing current and up-to-date information on political activities in the nation. Prior to elections, Nigerian libraries provide a wide range of politically-related information resources containing information on prospective electoral candidates, their backgrounds, time of elections, times of mobilization, venues of elections and mobilisations, addresses of polling units, names of political parties, party manifestoes or programmes, etc. Hence, the library is conceived as a source of electioneering campaign information and as a house for people desirous of acquiring knowledge about politics, thereby helping the masses to make sound voting decisions (Alex-Nmecha et al., 2017). After elections, the libraries provide information resources which contain information on people who have been elected into different positions of authority or power and their portfolios, newly-established government ministries, departments, agencies and their functions. The reference section of the library is mainly responsible for providing these information resources and disseminating them by displaying them on racks, newspapers stands and on shelves. They also take steps to tailor the political information resources to the peculiar needs of users by means of selective dissemination of information, current awareness services or document delivery services. Due to their importance to national development, libraries make earnest effort to keep a collection of information resources usually tagged “government publications”. These publications provide individuals with information about government proposals or manifestoes, plans, policies, programmes, achievements and so on. They also provide insight into which arms or agencies of government are responsible for the execution or implementation of the proposed programmes of the government. Libraries provide annual reports, laws, edicts and decrees issued by various arms of government and their agencies or ministries to disseminate political information.

#### Promotion of Political Participation

Another cardinal role the library plays in the political development of Nigeria is to encourage political participation among the people. Political participation involves partaking in the political affairs of a nation such as voting in elections, contesting elections, helping other individuals to contest elections, engaging in political movements such as mass mobilisation, holding political meetings, expressing views about political practices and programmes, development and implementation of government proposals, policies and programmes, etc. Information facilitates political participation. Wright (2001) identifies the potentials of information to include enhancing and encouraging citizens’ participation in the democratic process; sustaining the Rule of Law and creating a useful platform for injection of public opinion. The library that mainly provides information to serve this purpose is the public library.

The public library offers a conducive space for people to hold political discussions, meetings, rallies, lectures, orientation programmes, etc. It provides individuals with the means to express public and political interest, to speak for and against political practices, programmes and policies. The library is said to serve as a physical and online forum for individuals to freely express their minds, share common interests and concerns and promote their interest and those of the masses (Agbo & Onyekweodiri, 2014). The library further strengthens political participation by equipping the populace with the skill required to manage information to fully engage in political activities. The library achieves this by teaching the populace or library users how to make effective use of its information resources. Alex-Nmecha et al. (2017) observe that libraries act as reliable providers of information literacy programmes to citizens, designed to inspire their political consciousness and participation.

#### Promotion of Accountability in Governance

Another important role which the library can be seen as playing in the political development of Nigeria is that of promoting accountability in governance of the nation. Governance can be conceived as the totality of the methods, practices and principles which underlie the process of running the affairs of a geographical entity, be it a nation, state, local government area, district, clan, community, etc. Dunu (2013) sees governance as how power is brought to bear on the management and appropriation of a nation's economic and social resources. Accountability, on the other hand, can be described as the consciousness on the part of people in positions of authority to explain the why and how of their operations, policies and programmes to the masses or the populace. Accountability has been defined as the process by which government, societal establishments and their personnel take responsibility for their decisions and actions; for the methods of managing public funds, for providing evidence of their performance and its output as against laid down roles and or plans (Jobarteh, 2012). Accountability is a chain connecting the government and the governed. At one end is the government which is expected to provide answers, while at the other end is the governed who will ask questions. At the centre lie the decisions, policies and programmes of the government. Bovens (2005) notes that the end of the chain comprises the citizens who evaluate government performance and are capable of condemning their poor performance by voting them out in the subsequent election. Hence, accountability is capable of reducing the likelihood of corruption to nearly zero level by minimizing abuse of power by government (Dunu, 2013).

The role of the library in promoting accountability in governance involves providing ready evidence to the people to petition the government. The library keeps record of government publications which provide details of their proposals or manifestoes. One of the well-established goals of keeping records in any organization is to be able to have access to it whenever necessary to use it as a weapon for litigation, which could take the form of petition or providing justification for organizational actions or transactions. The role of the library is to provide library users with easy and quick access to the record of government documents so that the populace would use them as an evidence to hold the government responsible for their actions. The library, therefore, facilitates the process of checking the atrocities of government against the masses.

## **Challenges of Nigerian Libraries in Contributing to National Development**

Nigerian libraries grapple with a number of problems in their attempt to contribute to the economic and political development of the nation. These challenges are itemized and discussed below:

### **Poor Funding**

Poor funding has been one of the biggest problems preventing Nigerian libraries from living up to their expectations. It is observed that Nigerian libraries have been lately hit by a drastic and major drop in budgetary allocations from the government (Ireola et al., 2019), resulting in the complication of their challenges. Financing of Nigerian libraries seems not to improve as even the heads of the nation's libraries see libraries as social and non-profit making organizations, thereby, seeing no reason to explore alternative sources of funds for the libraries (Uzoigwe, 2004). Such poor funding is dangerous to the operations of Nigerian libraries. This, perhaps, explains the finding that poor funding constrains Nigerian libraries from promoting reading and literacy in Nigeria (Irunegbo et al., 2013). Poor funding prevents Nigerian libraries from making adequate provision for competent library manpower, constant power supply, internet services, information and communication technologies such as computers, software, etc.

### **Lack of Library Automation**

In contemporary times, the ability of sectors of every nation to contribute effectively to its development is often associated with the utilization of information and communication technology (ICT) in its operations. This is also applicable to libraries in every nation. However, Asemoah-Hassan (2002) reported that only a small number of Nigerian libraries are fully computerized and automated. This has been identified as one of the problems affecting Nigerian libraries (Aderibigbe & Farouk, 2017). With this, Nigerian libraries cannot contribute effectively to national development because there is an exponential growth in information needs of library users, which requires ICT to manage effectively.

### **Lack of Adequate Information Resources**

The library can only make a significant contribution to national development, be it economic or political development, when it is able to provide a balanced and vast collection of information resources which can meet the growing information needs of the diverse user community. Hence, Dada (2016) admits the inseparability of the progress of any nation from the sufficiency and quality of its library and information services. Going by this assertion, Nigeria is not likely to achieve meaningful development as majority of her libraries, including academic libraries, are not adequately stocked with appropriate information resources and facilities.

### **Lack of Competent Personnel**

In modern times, librarianship has become increasingly sophisticated, complex and technical. This is as a result of the desire of libraries to tap the potentials of ICT to respond effectively to the dynamic information needs of information seekers. Thus, manual or traditional method of librarianship is giving way to the electronic means. It is, therefore, required of librarians in Nigerian libraries to acquire skill needed to render modern library services. Unfortunately, many librarians in the nation depend on their theoretical knowledge gained from library schools and do not care to develop themselves to acquire the required skills, even when

they have been practicing for several years. In other words, most of these librarians lack technical expertise. Moreso, most of the Nigerian library personnel are non-professionals. This does not augur well for the effective functioning of the libraries for national development. Irunebo et al. (2013) note that lack of professional library personnel hinders the performance of the basic operations of Nigerian libraries.

#### **Lack of Recognition by the Government**

The Nigerian government is yet to see libraries as an essential part of the nation's infrastructure. It tends to see only roads, electricity and so on as infrastructures. In other words, the Nigerian government is yet to attach importance to the libraries in the country. This prevents the nation's libraries from receiving the needed attention from the government. As a result, the libraries cannot fully play their role in national development.

#### **Conclusion**

This paper explored the role of the library in the development of Nigeria. The paper was limited to the role of the library in the economic and political development of the nation. Nigerian libraries contribute to the economic development of the nation by disseminating economic development information, inculcating entrepreneurial drive or culture among individuals and promoting manpower development in the country. On the other hand, the libraries support the political development of the country through the dissemination of political information, promotion of political participation and accountability in governance. In promoting these two causes, Nigerian libraries are constrained by poor funding, lack of skilled personnel, dearth of adequate information resources, absence of automation and lack of recognition by the government.

#### **Recommendations**

In the light of the obstacles hindering Nigerian libraries from contributing to the economic and political development of the nation, the following recommendations were made:

1. The Nigerian government should increase budgetary allocation to the parent organizations of Nigerian libraries.
2. The government should change its attitude to the development of the nation's libraries by recognizing the importance of the libraries.
3. Library management should lobby the government to develop a scheme to develop the material and human resources of the nation's libraries.

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