

TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING THE PERSPECTIVES OF SPACE IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CENTRE SETTINGS.

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Abstract

The paper revisited the concept of space and place as perceived by philosophers, physicists and psychologist. It summed up that space has three perspectives: physical, virtual and time to form its tripod. Thus, space can be conceived as {a} absolute, physical, material, real, and tangible environmental place or location; {b} nonphysical, intangible, imagined, virtual and relational continuum which may only exist in the minds, imaginations and thoughts of the beings which include not only human beings, but animals, flying and other types of self moving creatures and mortals; and {c} time frame which bounds the existence, availability, relevance, rejuvenation and life circle of whatever. The general features of typical space, place and time categorisation and also as it relates to library and information centres were highlighted. Similarly, the elements to be considered in the evaluation of both physical and virtual spaces, places and time were considered.

Introduction

Since time immemorial, the concept 'space' has been perceived and interpreted by different philosophers, physicist and psychologists in different perspectives to reflect their thoughts and doctrines. Such eminent and great personalities include Aristotle, Galilei, Rene' Descartes, Gottfried Leibniz, Isaac Newton, Immanuel Kant, Albert Einstein, Henri Lefebvre, Samuel Clarke, Gottfried Wilhelm, Bertrand Russell, Tim Maudlin, Graham Nerlich, etc. By and large, their thoughts and postulations can be summed up to perceive 'space' as: absolute, physical, material, real, and tangible environment or location on one hand; nonphysical, intangible, imagined, virtual and relational continuum which may only exist in the minds, imaginations and thoughts of the beings which include not only human beings, but animals, flying and other types of self moving creatures and mortals; and time frame within which whatever exists and it is available and relevant. Essentially, physical space can be associated with land mass which includes water. It is prone to measurement to determine the actual dimensions and locations of whatever it is. Whereas, virtual space can be associated with air space which includes the sky and horizon. It is prone to imaginative speculations and projections. Time space is the time frame serves as duration of whatever from conception, creation, growth, development, advancement, decline, non relevance and extinction. The common denominator of physical, virtual and time spaces is that they are either real or imagined environments and locations in which beings manipulate whatever it is, whenever and wherever in one way or the other, especially through variety of motions, movements, actions, operations, modifications, improvements, advances and other related activities within a span of time to achieve their respective and collective desired visions, missions, goals and objectives. Generally, it can be argued that the changing nature of space of any nature and type is a byproduct of the typical salient properties of space which are: reality, virtuality and measurability of structure, size, shape and locational dimensions and time frame.

More often than not, virtual spaces, places and time frames are fundamentally conceived, initialised, defined, anchored, developed, advanced, supported, enhanced and sustained by adoption/adaption and utilisation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

The ICT can be viewed as the computer-based and other allied automated information and communication systems and devices employed to acquire, generate process, store and transmit data. The ICTs are generically considered as technologies used for collecting, storing, editing and passing on or communicating information in different forms within an environment, between and among given environments. In another perspective, ICTs can be conceived to include telecommunication technologies such as satellite systems, radio and television, telephony and digital technologies such as information networks, computer hardware and software, digital network, and the Internet. By and large, ICTs can generally be conceived as automated and virtual products (including software applications) and services that facilitate information generation, identification, location, storage, retrieval dissemination, access and utilisation (Mohammed,Z.2017).

There is no doubt in the fact that the emerging potentials of ICT technologies, particularly the computers and online networks, the Internet and the mobile communication systems such as the smart phones and tablets will continue to necessitate the need for their application on varieties of activities and operations in organisations and for effective and efficient management of public and private institutions, establishments and organisations so as to effectively virtualise the available spaces and places earmarked for whatever it is. In effect, the extent of technology adoption, acceptability and application to information systems management, functions, operations and services in defined spaces and places can significantly be affected positively or otherwise by variety of factors such as:

- the peculiar predispositions of the management of the spaces and places;
- the attitudes, characteristics and information/ICT level of literacy and fluency of the administrator and operators of the spaces and places;
- the prevailing circumstances surrounding the spaces and places that makes up the systems environments;
- the stakeholders' perceived ease of use, usefulness, relevance, availability, adequacy and appropriateness of the technology being adopted and adapted in the defined spaces and places;
- the type and functionality of the technologies in use to effectively virtualise the spaces and places; and
- timing and time frame of actions, reactions and the associated responses.

By and large, the application and/or non-application of technologies to the management of information systems, operations and services (in whichever space, place and time especially to virtualise them for efficiency and effectiveness) can equally be influenced by :

- the operator's and user's characteristics, skills and experiences in using the technology;
- the type of technologies available, adaptable and useable;
- the type and feature of the systems environments;
- the users' perceived ease of use, usefulness and relevance of the technology in actualising the mission, goals and aspiration of the project in one hand, and achieving their individual and collective objectives and aspirations on the other hand;
- the context of the vision, mission and objectives of the project; the level of access and ease of use of the technology by the stakeholders;
- the perceived attitudes, experiences and opinions of others on the usefulness, relevance and ease of use of the technologies to achieve the desired goals and target;
- the stakeholders' technology fluency, literacy and competence;
- the perceived levels and extent of the stakeholders' skills, potentials, motivation, capacity, ability, willingness and readiness to effectively utilise the technologies;
- the perceived implications of the cognitive outcome of applying the technology;

- the timing and time frame of the project conception, initiation, implementation and monitoring and evaluation; and
- the methodology adopted to effectively queue in the stakeholders to accept, adopt and utilise the technologies to achieve the desired vision, mission, goals and objectives ahead (Mohammed, Z:2017).

Thus, it can be argued that, as natural phenomenon, the direct and indirect relationship between the beings and space of any nature, dimension and continuum is to have some forms of control over it to satisfy given needs and aspirations so as to meet up to immediate and anticipated expectations. It is also to cope with the challenges of the time in accordance with acceptable set standards, policies, best practices and ethics.

Features of Spaces

Space of any type (physical, virtual and time), location, and continuum is where whatever it is; be it humans, animals and other types of living and nonliving creatures are found to belong, reside and exist. In effect, the concept of place as an attribute of space can be conceived as the location, position, territory, premises and time where whatever it is can be found in such space. Viewed within the context of Set Theory, it can be argued that 'Space' is the Universal Set while 'Place and time' are its Subsets. Thus, there is positive co relational relationship among space, place and time. In fact, they are products of whatever sense the beings make out of them, especially when conceived within the context of their formal existence, jurisdictions and utility functions. To this end, variety of defined spaces and places are continually created, designed and structured by beings in forms of: nations and administrative territories, towns and cities, villages and settlements, communities and neighbourhoods, markets and shops, social joints and sports pitches and arena, educational institutions and learning centres, libraries and information centres, archives and museums, makerspaces and crèches, information and learning commons, hotels and hospitality/recreational arenas, houses and homes, hospitals, dispensaries and clinics, religious and cultural centres, roads and streets networks, virtual network suits, grazing and farming lands, fishing and aquatic territories, classrooms and halls, etc bounded by time frames. They each have their associated structural designs, aesthetics, contents and functions for ease of identification, verification, authentication, location and utilisation to satisfy the respective and collective needs expected of them to reflect the expected time needs. From practical perspective, there can be as many places of interests as possible in both physical and virtual spaces created, structured and managed to satisfy given needs and aspirations at all times.

The critical fact that has significant impact and influence on the availability, design, structure, relevance and effective management and utilisation of physical and virtual spaces is time. Time forms the tripod segment of space conceptions. The dialectics and dynamics of time greatly impact and influence every aspects of human and other beings' endeavours to exist, survive, flourish and be relevant in the physical and virtual spaces. In fact, time dictates the life circle of whatever ranging from historical antecedents of whatever, to developments and advances in various sectors of science and technology, ecology, habitation, etc. For instance, time and time frame can be perceived within the context of:

- ❖ historical antecedents such as era, regimes, past, present and future of what it is;
- ❖ development plans, strategic plans and project life circle;
- ❖ time series such as seconds, minutes, hours;
- ❖ calendar schedules such as days, nights, weeks, months, years, decades, centuries, millenniums;
- ❖ education and trainings such as academic terms, semesters and years;
- ❖ sports, recreation and entertainment seasons and schedules;

- ❖ design and implementation processes of whatever;
- ❖ weather and climate metamorphoses in form of seasons;
- ❖ human and material movements such as transportation schedules;
- ❖ businesses and services provision such as hours of activities and operations;
- ❖ fiscal plans such as budgeting and finance schedules;
- ❖ products manufacturing, marketing and distribution processes;
- ❖ library and information systems operations and services scheduled periods and hours;
- and
- ❖ systems and operations life cycle; etc.

To a large extent, it can be argued that whatever it is about physical and virtual spaces right from conception, initiation, design, implementation, management and utilisation are time bound and are dictated by the duration of time to make them relevant, appropriate, necessary, meaningful, useful and beneficial. In effect, time has concomitant effect on efforts related to identification, location, referral, customisation and utilisation of whatever in the physical and virtual spaces to meet the needs and expectations of the beings.

By designation and structure, both physical and virtual spaces and places can be categorised into:

- a) **Public**- when owned, funded by public monies and managed by government and its agencies, society, community and locality mostly to be accessed and utilised by everyone without undue restrictions to whoever.
- b) **Private**- when owned, funded and managed by individuals, groups, associations, and other non governmental bodies of interests; mostly to be accessed and utilised by only the prescribed stakeholders and other privileged ones from wherever.
- c) **Institutional**- when owned, funded and managed by, especially, formal institutions organisations, agencies and firms of different divide; mostly to be accessed and utilised by prescribed stakeholders and other privileged members of society and community from wherever.
- d) **Secret**- when it is owned, funded and managed by masked individuals, institutions organisations, agencies; mostly to be accessed and utilised strictly by designated members of prescribed institutions, bodies and whoever.

From practical perspective, spaces and places of any type can be better created, managed and utilised to the advantage of the stakeholders within a time frame, particularly, when they are conceived within the context of 'Four Dimensions (4D)'. That is, length, breadth, height and time frame. Essentially, the 4D attributes of any space and place allow for appropriate handling of issues related to identification, determination and verification of the exact location, size and mass measurements, velocity and extent of motions/movements, access and patronage, ownership and control, management and security, creations and recreation design and redesign, structure and restructure, model and remodel, shape and reshape budget and finance, plan and plan implementations, policy, guidelines and implantation growth, development and sustenance, and timings of utility functions. In effect, it can be argued that, if not for the unending desire to satisfy the individual and collective motives and interests of beings at any given time which most often result into some forms of interventions and transformations; spaces, places and time are by nature and characteristic generally hollow, infinite and idle without defined functions and relevance to an extent. Thus the extent to which space and place 4D attributes as well as time schedules are strategically put in place wherever and whenever, anchored and supported with periodic systematic transformation, will largely influence the nature and essence of the availability, existence and sustenance of such space and place in the scheduled time frame. It will also have concomitant

effect on what might become of their subsequent transformational features, functionalities and relevance to cope with the existing and anticipated needs and challenges of the time.

Library and Information Centre Spaces and places

Within the framework of library and information centre setting, it can be argued that there exist physical and virtual spaces and places for varieties of functions and operations at scheduled time frame. From physical space perspective, library site and environment can be associated with space, while work stations and services corners and desks within library structure and model can be associated with place. In like manner, library virtual space can be associated with the online superhighway network environments adopted, particularly the Internet; virtual network suits and other types of Cloud Computing Technology systems and outfits; Social Media network platforms. Whereas, library virtual place can be associated with the internal host stations/locations of online networks, such as Local and Wide Area Networks, Wi-Fi and Hotspot, Server Centre/Warehouse, within and around library and information centre building. Thus, the overall 4D space and place attributes and time frame earmarked and allocated for library and information operations will largely be the product of:

- the set goals and objectives of establishing the library and information ;
- the vision and expectations of the existing and anticipated stakeholders;
- the type of systems and services to be put in place;
- the type and quantum of human and material resources needed;
- the anticipated needs and expectations of the information systems and services; and
- defined time frames and schedules for whatever.

Within and around library and information centre building, places are needed for functional activities such as: reference and information services, customers services, information resources management, human resources management, virtual systems services, etc. For library and information systems, operations, resources and services to be necessary, appropriate and relevant, time is of essence. Thus, whichever decision is taken on space and place allocations as byproducts of time exigencies for library and information systems, resources and services and also for whatever other type of project in focus, there should be provision for expansion, remodeling, rescheduling, evaluation and revalidations to accommodate existing and anticipated growth, development, needs, expectations, creativity, innovations, initiatives and challenges.

Generally, spaces and places in a typical library and information setting can be delineated as:

a) **Public space and place**- where customers are attended to without restrictions. These include areas such as, the circulation desk, information/inquiry desk, reference and information service unit, open shelves and reading areas, library web site/ portal/links and pages, exhibition hall and art gallery, Open Access Databases (OAD), Open Access Catalogue(OPAC), Neighbourhood Knowledge and Information Commons (NKIC), Social Media Network Platforms, canteen, business centre/unit, seminar and committee rooms/halls, amenities services unit, crèche and such other areas within and around library and information centre where customers are generally attended to and can also help themselves without any qualms.

b) **Moderated spaces and places**- where customers may have to satisfy some conditions before they are attended to or are tacitly allowed to help themselves. These areas include: reserve and carrels reading areas, document and special collections unit, museum and archival units, e-library, virtual information system and services unit, Fee Based Databases (FBD), Institutional Digital Repository (IDR), Makerspaces, Smart Neighbourhood Information Commons (SNIC), Information Commons, Learning Commons, Information and Protocol unit, media and communication unit, parking lot and such other areas where customers may have to meet up to certain expectations before they are served in any way.

c) **Restrictive spaces and places**-where customers are by design not allowed to freely access at will.

These areas include staff offices, backend activities and operations units, server room, data warehouse, reprographics and digitisation units and such other spaces and places where by policy, customers are prohibited to freely access and utilise.

Space, Place and Time Management

Conceptually, space, place and time management can simply be conceived as the act of administering whatever it is to ensure that it serves the purpose for which it is acquired within the required time. Management of space, place and time, whether physical or virtual, is necessary due to constancy in the changing milieu of things to cope with the existing and anticipated expectations and challenges. Leasha Jackson(2018) is of the view that space management involves the management of a company's physical space inventory. Also, Space Management according to Planon (2019),is the management of an organisations's physical space inventory. Generally, it is an acceptable fact that every establishment no matter what structure it is, how magnificent it is and whether it is public or private own, require some space, place and time of any sort (physical and virtual) to operate and function. Naturally too, due to growth, developments, creativity and innovations, things, which include spaces and places, have to continually change as a result of the dynamic changes of human behaviour, environmental conditions and other human and material primordial dispositions to allow for systematic coping with existing, anticipated and non anticipated needs, expectations and challenges of the time. The extent of success or otherwise of effective access and utilisation of space and place of any type and dimension for any purpose at wherever and whenever, can largely be a function of the administrative or managerial structure and style put in place to cope with the exigencies of the time in focus.

In all both formal and informal establishments and settings, there should be an established policy and procedure for effective and maximum utilisation of available spaces and places to reflect the dictates of the time. This is in addition to provision of comfortable working place and environment for the personnel to effectively perform their duties and responsibilities on time. There should be provision of space and place portfolio and inventory especially as it relates to:

- what activity should be located at where;
- who should be where and when;
- what should be where and when;
- what facility and system should be placed where and for how long;
- what services should be provided at where, when and for how long; and
- how much space is needed for what now and in future, etc.

Thus, spaces, places and time earmarked for anything at wherever need to be accordingly managed to facilitate and enhance their utility functions at least costs and also to accommodate growth and development. For efficiency and ease of optimisation of spaces and places, there should be provision for:

- space and place plans, allocations and reallocations;
- tracking and reporting on space, place, resources and facilities utilisations;
- assurance of ease of collaborations with whoever at anytime and anywhere;
- promptness of reports generation and analysis;
- effective and efficient management of time schedules; and
- efficient visualisation and management of space changes.

In addition, for more effectiveness and efficiency, establishments of which libraries and information centres are included, may adopt the application of automated solutions such as: Automated Space Management System(ASMS), AutoCAD, Excel spreadsheets, Computer

Aided Facility Management (CAFM), Integrated Workplace Management System (IWMS), Computerised Maintenance Management System (CMMS) platforms, etc.

Spaces, places and time should be seen as living organisms which require strategic management and sustenance to be effectively useful and relevant to the purposes for which they were acquired. More often than not, successful management and sustenance of spaces, places and time are functions of:

- ❖ the mission, goals and objectives for having the space and place;
- ❖ the type of functions and activities being performed;
- ❖ the composition, nature and expectations of the stakeholders;
- ❖ the type of customers being served;
- ❖ the extent of the reconciliations of the perspectives, expectations and priorities of the management on the available space and place with those of the customers and other stakeholders;
- ❖ the type of systems, facilities and resources being used;
- ❖ the nature of the environment of operation;
- ❖ the available opportunities for networking and collaboration;
- ❖ the prevailing economic circumstance;
- ❖ the extent of the level of education, trainings, skills and working capacity of the staff;
- ❖ the nature of employment and working conditions of the staff;
- ❖ the strategic plan being implemented;
- ❖ the management structure and style being adopted;
- ❖ the time schedules for whatever; and
- ❖ the objective outcome of the analysis of the strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of the establishment.

In effect, It is important that there should exist an established policy, guidelines and time schedules for periodic evaluation of available space and place to confirm their availability and levels of relevance to the motives for having them. Some of the elements to be considered for physical and virtual spaces and place evaluations include:

- a) a-legality and legitimacy of space and place ownership for assurance of unrestricted access and utilisation .
- b) suitability of the space and place especially as it relates to structural design and locational attraction, aesthetic, ease of reach and usage, physical and sociological orientation and reorientation, safety and convenience as well as physiological satisfaction;
- c) human and material costs of functionalities especially as it relates to human and managerial efforts involved , the financial implications of required human capital, material resources and facilities installations as well as ventilation, energy, lightening and other vital human needs supplies;
- d) environmental and ecological predispositions especially as it relates to negative concomitant effects on habitation, environmental degradation, material preservation and conservation, material resources and facilities durability, ruggedness and longevity
- e) compliance to time schedules for whatever; and
- f) type and efficacy of the information security mechanisms and other strategic strategies and policies employed to secure and combat unwanted attacks on libraries and information centres' websites, portals and other online networks and databases.

Conclusion

If not for satisfying the individual and collective motives and interests of beings resulting into some forms of interventions and transformations, spaces, places and time as they were, are by nature and characteristically hollow, infinite and idle without defined functions and relevance to an extent. Thus,

whichever decision is taken on space, place and time allocations for library and information systems, resources and services and also for whatever other type of project in focus, there should be provision for expansion, remodeling, rescheduling and rejuvenation to accommodate existing and anticipated growth, development, needs, expectations, creativity, innovations, initiatives and challenges.

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