KNOWLEDGE ORGANISATION AND ACCESS IN SCHOOL LIBRARY

By

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Abstract

The paper discusses the concepts of knowledge, information and the relevance of school library in the scheme of school activities. It highlights issues related to the organisation and access to knowledge in school libraries what should be done to facilitate and ensure effective utilisation of school libraries. It concludes that schools need to establish functional libraries staffed with trained/professional personnel in order to achieve the objectives establishing them.

Introduction

Knowledge can simply be defined as all that a person knows about something. This is usually acquired through education, training, teaching, learning, reading, apprenticeship, interaction with others especially at socio-political economic and cultural activities as well as through other literary activities. It could also be said to be an organised body of information. Whereas, information can be said to be anything that adds to our existing experience, skill, idea and knowledge consciously or unconsciously. By and large, it could be said that there is a chain relationship between knowledge and information as each of them gives rise to the other.

In librarianship, knowledge organisation or rather, organisation of knowledge implies the art of arranging information materials/resources according to a given order or pattern for easy retrieval, access and use. Beside collecting or acquiring information resources such as books, journals, A/Vs, etc, it is one of the most important functions of library aimed at easing the retrieval, access and use of its collections. This is done through cataloguing, classifying and arranging the information resources/materials on the library shelves as well as in computer databases for easy retrieval, access and use.

The collections of a library usually comprised of printed documents such as books, periodicals, maps, paintings, pictures, etc as well as non-printed documents such as Audio-Visuals,

CDs, and DVDs, slides, microfilms, etc. Thus, it could be said that the collecting of a library is made up of recorded/documented knowledge (information) organised and preserved for use.

School Library

Essentially, a library can be defined as an organised collection of printed and non-printed information materials/resources preserved/kept for reading, study and consultations. It could also be defined as "a place", "a building", "room or rooms" dedicated for preservation and use of organised collection of information resources. Thus, a library could be considered as an organized collection of information resources regardless of its location and owner, as well as a building meant to house an organized collection of information resources of any type for access and use.

Thus, a school library can be defined as an organised collection of information resources dedicated for teaching, learning and consultation by both the students/pupils and staff of a school. More often than not, the collection usually reflects all the subjects taught in the school it is situated regardless of the levels of the classes.

A visit to most of the primary and secondary schools, in Nigeria revealed that most of them, especially the public ones,

their growth and development as individuals and as members of progressive society and nation;

(iii) To stimulate and guide students/pupils in all phases of their reading, studying ,learning and consultation so that they may find increasing enjoyment and satisfaction in their academic and social activities in the school;

(iv) To provide an opportunity for the students/pupils to develop interests in acquiring desirable social attitudes.

(v) To help children/ students become skillful and untiring users of library's printed and non-printed information resources/materials;

(vi) To create interest in the students/pupils in the use of libraries for their continuing education and self development;

(vii) To work with teachers in selection and use of all types of library information resources/materials that contributes to teaching , learning , study consultation; and

(viii) To build in the children permanent interest in the use of library even after they must have left the school for further education. This emphasizes the importance of '**catching them young**'.

Organization of School Library

In order to achieve most of the objectives of establishing school library, its collection has to be properly organized so that it can be effectively utilized by the target customers. Unlike in the early days of library development where its collections are organized for example by colour, shape and size of the books rather than by their respective contents, today, the content of library collections play a great role in their organisation. A Library collection is said to be organized in an alphabetical order when they are recorded/documented and arranged according to their respective author/title names. On the other hand, a library collection is said to be organized in classified order when they are recorded/documented and arranged according to their respective subject groups.

Knowledge/Information Organisation in Library

There are two (2) major activities involved in the organisation of library information resources. These are: **Cataloguing and classification.** Cataloguing is the description of any library information resources based on international rules and standards. The known rule is Anglo American Cataloguing Rules (AACR) used to maintain standard. The description of a library information resource is done on a catalogue card of 3" by 5". These rules guide the school librarian and indeed all other librarians on how to record /document the needed information

about the resource on the said card to be kept in the library catalogue.

The AACR provides the catalogue access point to use for the retrieval of a library information resource or to at least identify it. An access point is the name or heading by which a library information resource is identified. This can be the name of the author/editor/compiler, the title, or the name of the body that produced the material. Other information such as the title of the resource, the place it was published, the publisher and the date of its publication are reflected on the card as well.

It is also necessary to provide on the catalogue card the number of pages of the resource and its volume (if it's in volumes). Other information to be provided on the catalogue card includes bibliography and reference (if any). Where to locate the information resource in the library is also shown on the card. For example, if it is in the reference section of the library a sign "R" is provided. Also, if it is in the Document area of the library it is indicated by the sign "Doc", and if the library acquires theses, the sign to use is "T". However, no sign is provided if it is in the open shelves of the library.

Classification of Knowledge/Information

Classification of library information resources simply means the grouping of the resources according to the degree of their subject contents or relationship. In order to classify library information resources, certain symbols or notations are used to represent their subjects or disciplines. The symbols are found in system books called classification schemes. The scheme that most school libraries use is the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC). The scheme has divided human knowledge/information into ten main classes. These are:

000 to represent general works;

100 to represent Philosophy, Psychology, Occultism;

200 to represent Religion;

300 to represent the Social Sciences;

400 to represent Language;

500 to represent Pure Science and Mathematics;

600 to represent Technology or Applied Science;

700 to represent Fine Art and Decorative Art;

800 to represent Literature; and

900 to represent History and Geography.

These notations serve as the origins of the number you see on the catalogue cards in your library catalogue. These numbers are mostly used in school libraries and are called class marks.

The classmarks are used for shelving library information resources and for the retrieval of same. It is thus expected that the librarian examines a new library information resources/material,

determine its content and assign a classmark that is most appropriate for it for easy retrieval, identification and use.

There is however other classification schemes for use in different libraries. These include the:

- Universal Decimal Classification Scheme (UDC);
- Library of Congress Classification Scheme (LC);
- Colon Classification Scheme,((CCS);
- Benards' Medical Classification Scheme; and
- Bliss Classification Scheme.

Library Catalogue

The key to any school library's collection and indeed any other type of library is the catalogue. The catalogue is a list of books and other information resources in the library arranged in some definite order such as by author/title or subject of the material. The classmark is used to produce a classified catalogue of a library. Without consulting the catalogue of a library, the success in retrieving any information resource from it will definitely be very limited. The information needed from a library catalogue for information retrieval purposes are two: the classmark and the name of the author/title of the material/resource. Every library, the type not withstanding, must have a catalogue cabinet where all catalogue cards are housed for consultation.

However, with the automation of library systems, the traditional library catalogue cards and cabinet have been transformed into Open Access Catalogue (OPAC) which functions are the same. The major difference in between them is that the traditional one is in physical format while the OPAC is in soft copy (Computer based) .They both have the same pattern of arrangement such as by the author/title or subject of the material or by any other type of arrangement as may be dictated by the proprietor of the library.

Sections of a School Library

Every library, no matter the type, is usually divided into sections for administrative convenience and ease of distinct functions. School libraries have limitations in this aspect of administrative organisation perhaps due to the type and structure of building/room housing it; share size of collections and staff; type of functions; nature and type of services; type/category of users ;and level of material and financial support it receives from the school management of the library. Other libraries, especially academic , have the following sections sometimes referred to as divisions. These are:

- the Collection Development Division or Acquisitions Division. The primary function of this Division is to acquire books for the library. This is

done in collaboration with the staff and students of the Institution;

- ❖ the Cataloguing Division which does the organization of knowledge earlier defined in this paper. This division catalogues and classifies all the information resources/materials coming into the Library;
- ❖ the Readers Services division. This Division registers students and other library users for the use of the library, charge and discharge library materials, shelve books and do shelve reading;
- ❖ the Reference Division which keeps the information resources/materials that are for reference purposes only. Part of what it keeps is rare books, very costly books, some times out of print books, dictionaries, encyclopedias, biographies, wall maps and national bibliographies and other bibliographies and biographies;
- ❖ the Serials Division houses the dailies; journals ; magazines; and other types of periodical publications;
- ❖ the Media Division which handles all the electronic media of the library as well as all forms of audio-visual collections;
- ❖ the Research and Bibliographic Division of the library. This division houses thesis and dissertations

from both foreign and local tertiary educational institutions, document published by governments and international bodies.

However what we see in the school libraries in most cases are few sections and a miniature of the sections mentioned above.

School Library Services

By and large, the school library is suppose to serve as veritable link between the information resources it housed and its school community it is to serve. Some of the services required of it to serve its community better include:

- ✓ provision current information resources for the use of its customers;
- ✓ provision of reference services whereby the user will easily retrieve and make the best use of the information in need;
- ✓ directing the user to where a needed information or information resource can easily be obtained within and outside the library;
- ✓ teaching the library user how to use the library;
- ✓ teaching the users how to use information resources in the library;
- ✓ link the library with other libraries around ,especially through interlibrary cooperation so that its users can have access to the services of the cooperating libraries as well as their resources;

- ✓ creating a conducive atmosphere for the library customers so that they can feel at home to use the library much better;
- ✓ beautify the library environment so that it will look more attractive to its customers;
- ✓ encourage academic and other literary activities in the library so as to create more awareness of its existences and services;
- ✓ encourage exhibition of products produced by/in the school and for the school to attract more customers for the library;
- ✓ solicit for material and financial support for the library from the friends of the library within and outside the school as well as from well meaning individuals, organisations and institutions within and outside the country;
- ✓ provide current awareness services so to keep its customers abreast of the latest scio-political, economic, cultural and academic developments and advancements especially as reported in news media and other important and reliable channels/means of communication; etc

School Library Personnel

An assessment of the staffing situation in most primary and secondary schools suggests an outright ignorance of what a school library should be more especially terms of staffing. A proper organization of knowledge/information in school libraries cannot be done by anyone less than a professional/trained librarian. What happens in many school libraries is making do

with anybody/staff /student that is less occupied in the school without regard to whether such person has little or no knowledge or idea of what library and information science, or rather, library management entails. If a school library is to fulfill the aforementioned objectives for which it was established, the collection of such library must be well organised and managed prom professional perspectives. This will need a professional/trained librarian with no less than a diploma certificate in library and information science. On no account should a school library be staffed with untrained/unprofessional staff. It does more harm than good to a library if such staff are deployed.

(k) Other Types of Libraries to Note

Apart from school libraries there are other libraries. At this juncture it is important to mention them as you are likely to use them in your future academic pursuit. As mentioned earlier the type of library and readers give the library its name. There are:

(i) **Public library**. This type of library is wholly or partly provided from public fund and meant to serve all in its community. E.g. Zaria Public Library is funded by the Kaduna State government and it serves all the inhabitants of Zaria.

(ii) **Special library.** A library maintained to render specialised service to specialized users. This type of library is often stocked with materials on special subjects. E.g. the Library in the College of Aviation Technology, Zaria.

(iii) **College Library.** This type of library is established, maintained and administered by the College to meet the needs of its students. E.g. Colleges of Education Libraries, Polytechnic and Institute libraries.

(iv) **Academic Libraries.** They are those of Universities and their colleges. An example of this type is the Ahmadu Bello University Library (Kashim Ibrahim Library), Zaria.

(v) **National Library.** This is the library of any nation and it serves as a depository of works published in the country. It is a Reference library.

Conclusion

For all intent and purposes, it is clear that schools need to have functional libraries as a matter of policy. Hence the focus of the paper mainly on schools library, knowledge organisation and its objectives. It is very unfortunate that many schools do not have libraries, and where they exist their collections are neither properly organised nor manned/managed by trained/professional library staff. It should be the desire of every stakeholder in education that every school should have a school

library. The library should be well stocked, organised and managed by a trained/ professional staff so as to achieve its objectives. Besides, it is also important that such staffs are given the opportunity regularly to pursue further academic studies as well as attend professional academic programmes such as conferences, seminars and workshops so to cope the dictates/challenges of the time.