The Library Development Fund (LDF) and Library Automation:

Issues in Library Development in Nigeria.

By
Nassir Bello (PhD)
Department of Library and Information Technology
Federal University of Technology, Minna, Niger State, Nigeria.

Abstract

The article intends to let the Government see the importance of libraries in higher education. The study postulates that the LDF allocated to libraries from annual budget of Universities should not be abolished The study shows that before the agreement between Government and ASUU, the university libraries were in deplorable condition with outdated collections. In 1980s and 1990s, university libraries were unable to support the teaching, learning and research of their universities let alone to maintain international standard for lack of funds. Reference is made to the computer into the libraries to facilitate their functions. The paper cites instances why computer has not come to displace librarians. A call is made to the Committee of University Librarians of Nigeria Universities (CULNU) to pressurize the Government and National Universities Commission (NUC) not only to restore the LDF, but to increase it from 10% to 20%. This is to ameliorate the financial burden imposed by the escalating cost of hooks journals which remains sources of information for years to come.

Introduction

No one denies the importance of library services to the development of human potentials. The library is the heart of the university. It provides facilities necessary for learning, teaching and research. Without provision of libraries in universities, the frontier of new knowledge in its ramifications might be a mirage. And the activities towards

to the Nigeria Library Association, Daniel (2004,pl2) maintained that libraries are tools for education and development. He further stated thus:

> *Consequently, libraries must, to a large extent be considered part of a total educational policy in a country. Such libraries can be supportive in terms of educational activities at nearly all levels of the educational system. With the development of life long learning and distance learning concepts like these, libraries will be even more important as political instruments than ever before. The libraries can also be considered important elements in a national cultural policy.*

In agreeing with the statement made above, Aina (2004) further strengthened the importance of library to education. He noted:

> *A library is concerned with the collection, processing, storage and dissemination of recorded information for the purpose of reading, study and consultation. In order for a library to attain this goal, many activities are performed by a library which translates to library and information services over the years. The external environment has been a tremendous impact on the practice of the profession. It is generally known that the library and information profession borrows from a number of disciplines such as Sociology, Psychology, Computer science, Business, Marketing etc. Thus anything that imparts on any of these disciplines would have a direct influence on library and information science profession.*

In the real sense of it the importance of a library to one's education can never be quantified. In 1970s, during the oil boom, the funding of universities by the Federal government of Nigeria was problem free, so also their libraries. During this period, all federally owned Universities had overseas account. Books and journals purchased from overseas were paid from this account. The problem the libraries were facing by then was how to process a large quantity of books and journals for the library users. Surprisingly things started to fall a part in 1980s, when oil boom was no more booming and more so, the depreciating value of our national currency against internal currencies ie US dollars and the British Pounds worsened the situation. The foreign exchange earning was not encouraging, yet the demand for new books and current journals was on the increase.

Between 90% and 95% books and journals needed in Nigeria were imported from outside the country .The federal government on its part has to take drastic measure to curtail its expenses to be able to meet other social demands. So the funding of the federally owned Universities and their libraries were cut drastically. The result of this meager funding to the university libraries was that no more new books or current journals were purchased. During this period what we saw in the libraries were obsolete reading materials. This negatively affected the research work in the universities.

Steps Taken to Ameliorate the situations.

Many studies have been initiated to propose way forward. The National Universities Commission (NUC 1990) has been very active in this direction and was ready to salvage the situation. It set up a committee of experienced librarians to study the real problem in federal universities and their libraries. The committee tagged "Situation Report on Libraries in Nigeria Federal Universities" was set up in 1989 and submitted its report in 1990. The purpose of setting up the committee was to draw the attention of the Federal government of Nigeria to the dearth of books and journals in Nigerian institutions of higher learning and to come up with some recommendations for remedying the deficiencies. The members visited almost all federally owned university libraries. It was observed by the committee that the books stock of Nigerian university libraries is in deplorable state. The university libraries can no longer support the academic programmes of their institutions. No university library was able to maintain or renew invoices for 1982 or beyond. Between 1982 and 1988 no serious books acquisition was made for lack of funds. On matters of academic minimum standard, it was stated that a library must be able to meet 70% of its readers' demands from its own collection. No university library in Nigeria satisfied this standard.

However, the committee came up with the following recommendations: N.U.C.(1990)

* *Provision of funds for renewal of core journals on regular basis for the next five years in all fields of each university's endeavors.*
* *Provision of funds for bridging gaps that have occurred in the holding of these core journals in the past five years.*
* *Provision of funds for current book acquisitions to enable libraries keep abreast of publishing in their respective subject fields for the next five years.*
* *Provision of funds for retrospective book purchased to enable libraries acquire books that they have missed in the last five years.*
* *The level of funding to the libraries should be raised.*

It is to be noted that apart from this report, there were many other studies on the university libraries in Nigeria by even foreign organizations ie. E.U. Study Project, ODA and World Bank Sector Study. Based on these various studies, the federal government of Nigerian has to shift its attention on financial situation in the universities particularly the University libraries. In this regard the federal government entered into agreement with the World Bank in 1989 for a loan of $120 million facility for f the federal universities. However, the scheme was terminated in 1996. Though, the universities were unable to utilize the whole $120 million before the termination of the agreement, the university libraries were able to count on their gains from the loan during the period. New books and current journals found their way again into the libraries. Heavy book/journal traffic surfaced again.

Another land mark in the history of university libraries in Nigeria was the celebrated agreement between the Federal Government of Nigeria and the Academic Staff Union of University (ASUU) in 1992. It was agreed by then that each federal university should set aside ten percent (10%) of its total recurrent annual budget to the library under a new title: "Library Development Fund" (LDF). This was a relief to

University Libraries after the World Bank loan was over. With this agreement, scholars and students jubilated saying that academic activities have returned to the universities.

The Reaction of University Library users and others over ASUU agreement

Bello, (2001, p7) quoting Anafulu (1977), noted with gladness the comments made by the then Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission (NUC) on the significance of the agreement.

> *The Central focus of any educational institution is its library. It is the hub of the system to which both students and staff resort for academic nourishment. Thus an up to — date*
> *library contributes in no small measure to paving the way for academic excellence.*

Abubakar (2007, P.28) quoted Professor Doris Bozimo, the then Ahmadu Bello University Librarian that during the tenure of Professor Idrisu Abdulkadir as the Executive Secretary of the NUC, there was a mandatory 10% cut from the recurrent funds accruing to the Universities channeled to their libraries. With those funds they were able to buy books and journals but lamented that: now those funds are not forth coming. Those statements emanating from Nigerian scholars showed how happy Nigerians were on the 1992 government and ASUU agreement of 10% of the university budget to the university libraries. It was a reversal of gladness to see that, the celebrated agreement was dead. Needless to repeat here the importance of university libraries to one's education. With the repudiation or cancellation of the agreement, observers believed that university education will witness yet another generation of darkness, as we witnessed in 1980s. It is very unfortunate to see that when the government has variously been called upon to increase the funding from 10% to 20% due to high cost of books and journals and because of depreciation of Nigerian currency against foreign currencies eg US dollars and the British pounds, the reverse has always been the case. This only reflects a bad image

of many governments worldwide that negate agreement entered into with any organization particularly labour unions. It is also a bad omen for any government to deny education to its citizenry. It is very surprising to note that a government that is spending more than one trillion naira a year can not fund its education sector properly. To finance education sector was one of the cardinal points of ASUU's agreement with the government. This means that the UN resolution which states that education for all in 2015 of which Nigeria was a signatory to, is a farce. It is to be noted that the Committee of University Librarians of Nigerian Universities (CULNU) has mounted pressure on the Minister of Education and the Executive Secretary of National Universities Commission (NUC) to see that the government restores the ten percent (10%) and not to negate on the agreement.

Perception of Traditional Libraries and the Computer Age; funds not withstanding.

There is no doubt that the computer technology and telecommunication technology have changed and transformed the university library activities. It is a wrong perception that computer has come to replace the services being rendered by the libraries and librarians and as such there is no need to finance the university libraries again. Computer has come to make the work of the libraries more effective, faster, accurate, current and easy to access information. History has shown that the libraries globally utilize the services of computer more than any other organizations. For example, Ohio College Library Center was established in 1967 to share the cataloguing of resources in the state of Ohio. In 1973 members were admitted outside Ohio and rapid expansion ensured, while in 1981 a new name was adopted which is now known as "Online Computer Library Center (OCLC). Currently its computer network and services linked over 31,000 libraries in 65 countries. The services of the OCLC include World Cat,

which is claimed to be the world's largest and most comprehensive data base for libraries. It involves numerous bibliographic projects and initiatives on electronic or digital libraries in a global context. In the same vein, Stephen (2004. P14) stressed the relationship between the library and ICT:

> *Libraries therefore play a significant role in the development of ICT in the United Kingdom, for instance, the Durban Public Library has nearly 200 public access computers in libraries within its network. The Internet, E-mail facilities, a range of software application including Micro-Soft, Access, Excel, PowerPoint, Scanning facilities, as well as Video conferencing are available in this library.*

The Leicester County Council has a similar programme called "The People Network". The Tony-Pandy libraries on the other hand have a project, which they describe as ICT for learning project". They offer free access to those services. In his presidential address to the Nigerian Library Association meeting, Daniel (2004, 11) warned that:-

> *Meaningful access to ICT encompasses far more than merely providing computers and Internet connections. Rather access to ICT is embedded in a complex array of actors encompassing physical, digital, human and social resources and relationships.*

Based on what has been said above, it is clear that libraries all over the world use the computer more than any other organizations. It has not been shown in the above literature parade that computer has come to replace the cultural, educative, economic services of the libraries. It is a baseless allusion on the part of the government to assume that with the availability of computer or internet connectivity, there is no need for library development project. If the government believes that the computer can solve all the library problems, where then is the well publicized Virtual Library Project, the Digital Library Project, the Peoples Library, the Electronic Library, the Paperless Library, the

Library Without Walls? All these are horses not wishes. Do we have to close down our traditional libraries because of the proponent of unachievable project and still parade that computers have taken over library functions?

Virtual Library

Abdullahi and Aliyu (2006 p.83-84) quoting Ojedokun (2000) defines Virtual Library as a "computerized system which provides multiple access to the entire collection of a library by means of electronic media". What is conspicuous in this definition is the use of "access to the entire collection of a library" The word "library" is not missing. The authors went further to describe the *operation of* a virtual library as "harnessing digital technology and internet technology to search, collect, organize, store and distribute cultural, historical and scientific information whether text, visual images or sound".

In addition to what has been stated above, the authors enumerated some problems of virtual libraries in Nigeria:

i) Lack of adequate infrastructural facilities

ii) One of the most essential components of the virtual library system is the telecommunication facilities which are grossly in adequate. This is the component that will facilitate exchange of data and information from one library to another.

iii) Erratic power supply: In spite recent effort to revive the energy sector unsteady power supply still plague the nation.

iv) Lack of Manpower in the areas of Computer and internet technology.

It is observed that some graduates of computer and library science know little about modern information technology.

As Okuni (2000), puts it," there is widespread, inadequate computer literacy in Nigeria."

The author mentioned "erratic power supply" as a draw back for effective virtual library though, it is to be noted with air of relief that the present Government said she is

doing every thing within her power to put a end to blackout it is a recurring statement by successive governments.

What is worrisome was that the National Universities Commission (NTJC) failed to tell the nation how much the "Digital project" would cost and whether the digital library when it is operational its services will be free

The perception of students and staff of Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria on library and computer

Abubakar (2006) referred to the statement made by Dr. Kabir S Chafe. the Director ICT of Ahmadu Bello University. as taking a middle road statement on what I.C.T.is to the library when he said,

"ICT is going to revolutionalise the entire library system. It is going to change completely, research /teaching and... There may still be hard copies in libraries. Even in the US the ICT does not eliminate hard copies... You may need these hard copies of books. They are part of the material culture. People will still need them".

The director believes that, though the ICT plays an important role in transforming library functions the hard copies of books could still be maintained for cultural value. Abubakar (2006)reported that ABU and Polytechnic have aired their feelings concerning the library services and computer and internet technology. They maintained that even though they go to internet to source for information, not every student can afford the payment for the café. They still believe that University libraries and computer are both complementary They contend that they can hardly get all the information they need through internets. And that a times the computers may be out of service. Computer did not come to eliminate the libraries. You are therefore bound to go back to the library. This translates to mean that the problem of the library must be promptly attended to.

Durability of Paper

In support of longevity y of paper vis a vis the library stock, the American Library Association (2001 p.2), commented on deterioration of media;

> *Stone tablets have a considerable advantage over today digital media for long term storage. The problem of deterioration limits the useful life of today digital media to between 5 and 50 years, while librarians debate how to retain the artifacts of our civilization for thousand of years to come*

It was equally reported that with the improvement in the paper industry, using chemical of alkaline instead of acid, a paper can stay for at least 1000 yrs (one thousand years), while electronic media can only stay between 5 and 50 years. We can now see clearly the advantages of paper (library) over electronic media.(automated library)

Conclusion:

The author has made himself clear over the introduction of computer into the library. The library has not come to displace the libraries from performing their traditional and cultural functions. With the information explosion no sane person will dispute the importance of the computer in making the work of the library faster, accurate and current. After all, with the internet connectivity, students and lecturers can have access to "online" as the world has become a global village for information resources. Libraries, and computer technology and telecommunication technology should be considered as twins helping each other for information delivery.

It is very wrong for any government therefore to suspend her mandatory role of funding the university libraries for qualitative education just because of availability of electronic media. The risk that electronic media entails suggests that books and journals should still be the main sources of information for many years to come. Libraries are the places for poor students and researchers to get information freely as against Café or Internet for rich students and researchers. Internet searching is not all that free as some people take it to be. The irksome thing is that internet can not give you all what you want. You still have to go back to books as what some students and staff have said in ABU

based on their experiences. You can read books or journals for your research work from morning till evening and you still enjoy the reading. This is not the case with electronic media. You may not be able to afford the payment for such electronic services. Without mincing words, the government has to fund or bring back the Library Development Fund (LDF) for qualitative education in Nigeria. As it has been said earlier, paper's life span is longer than computer. For developing Countries therefore, it is too early to be talking of paperless society or libraries without wall.

Suggestions:-

1. Based on what has been said above, it is strongly suggested that traditional libraries should stay side by side with electronic libraries.
2. Efforts should be made to make proper preparation for the proposed "Virtual Library" and "ICT" for it not to collapse on the way side.
3. Adequate funding should be given to the federal university libraries from 10% to 20% in view of escalating cost of books and journals coupled with high demands of these hard copies by the library clientele.
4. There is no alternative for L.D.F. The Committee of University Librarians of Nigerian Universities (CULNU), should put double pressure and prevail on the Minister of Education and NUC Executive Secretary to see that (LDF) is properly restored with increased f unding.

References

Abdullah Abubakar, Mohammed and Aliyu Yusufu Shehu (2006) Virtual Library for Nigerian Tertiary Institutions. Borno Library Archival and Information Science Journal *,v.5 (2)*

bubakar, Uthman (2007). Nigerian library system: Is it collapsing or transforming? The Daily Trust *3rd July, 2006.*

Ama, I..O (2004). "Coping with the challenges of library and information services delivery: the need for institutionalized professional development". Paper presented at the 42nd of the Nigeria Library Association; National Conference and Annual General Meeting (AGM), 20th — 25th June, 2004, Akure.

American Library Association (2001) Preservation policy: revised. New York : Sun Microsystems Inc.

Bello, Nasir (2001). "Problems and Prospect of Library Cooperation in developing Countries: The Nigerian Situation". Library Focus. v.19,

Bello, Nasir (2006) "Traditional libraries in an era of information technology: a review of state of the art." Paper presented during the School Seminar Series, Department of Library and Information Technology, FUT, Minna 27t June 2006.

Daniel James, 0. (2004) "Libraries: tools for education and development" Key note Presidential address presented to the 42uid Nigeria Library Association; National Conference and Annual General Meeting (AGM) 20th - 25th June, 2004. Akure .

Daniel James, 0. (2004) "Libraries: tools for education and development" Paper presented at the 42 of the National Conference and Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Nigeria Library Association, 20th 25th June, 2004. Akure.

National Universities Commission (NUC) (1990). "The situation report on libraries in Nigerian Federal Universities" Lagos, NUC.

Stephen, Akintunde A. (2004) "Libraries as tool for ICT Development". Paper presented at the 42' Conference and Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Nigerian Library Association 20th- 25thJune, 2004, Akure.