Library: pillar of lifelong learning and foundation for literacy skills

Biblioteca: pilar del aprendizaje permanente y cimiento de otras capacidades

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Resumen: Las bibliotecas de su creación como estado una casa de poder de knwowledge, sin ella, ningún organismo vivo puede crecer. Esto ha hecho que su papel crecido exponencialmente reducir la brecha digital mediante el aprovisionamiento de recursos de información a través de herramientas de Internet y otras instalaciones informáticas a sus usuarios. La cada vez mayor disponidad y el acceso a la información, tanto virtual como tradicionalmente como bibliotecas de carga con la función de aprovisionamiento de la igualdad de acceso a la información, para todos los miembros de las comunidades y su entorno, el valor de. alfabetización informacional es una habilidad esencial en el siglo xxi, que cada información y biblioteca profesionales deben adquirir en la asistencia a los grupos de usuarios / consumidores de información de la biblioteca para desarrollar y adquirir recursos de información pertinentes, qualittative para satisfacer sus necesidades de información, ya que estos no pueden lograrse sin la acqusition de las habilidades básicas de lectura de la información. Este documento se centra en proporcionar una visión general sobre el papel de las bibliotecas en la promoción de la alfabetización entre los compañeros y las oportunidades de aprendizaje permanente que puedan estar disponibles para todos los grupos de edad de primaria a la edad adulta.
Palabras clave: bibliotecas; información; profesionales; de alfabetización; de aprendizaje; de toda la vida.

Abstract: Libraries from its inception as been a power house of knwowledge, without it, no living organism can grow. This has made its role grown exponentially bridging the digital divide through provisioning of information resources through Internet tools and other computer facilities to its users. The ever increasing availablity and access to information, both virtually and traditionally as charge libraries with the role of provisioning equal access to information, for all members of the communities and its surrounding environment, The value of. Information Literacy is an essential skill in the 21st century which every information and

library professionals must acquire in assisting its library's user groups/information consumers to develop and acquire relevant, qualittative information resources to meet their information needs, as these cannot be achieved without the acqusition of basic information literacy skills. This paper focuses on providing an overview on the role of libraries in promoting literacy skills among peers and lifelong learning opportunities which can be available for all age brackets from elementary to adulthood.

***Keywords:** libraries; information; professionals; literacy; learning; lifelong.*

Introduction

Libraries were originally set up with the sole aim of educating the masses. Library is an indispensable facility of any educational institution. A well-equipped library is therefore very crucial to the education and general information needs of teachers, students and its community. This is why the thought of stocking library with adequate information resources readily comes to mind when an institution is to be established either in print and electronic format. A library is one of the social institutions that have the primary role of acquiring, processing, organizing, preserving as well as conserving the print and non-print information resources for users. There is no institution that can be established without a library in existence, in fact, the library is the power house of knowledge with every information resources made available to its clientele (Yancey, 2005).

The ideology of lifelong learning has strong roots in the philosophies of social mobility and emerging library models of the 19th century. During this period, "library service was seen as part of an education continuum, with formal education providing but the first step." This system was based upon a belief in self-improvement manifested in various areas of vocational training and intellectual development. (Vanfleet, 1990). However, there was little proactive response by librarians during this time, who continued to see their roles as custodians and organizers of material collections rather than facilitators of education (Vanfleet, 1990).

The late 19th century brought increased professionalism to the field of librarianship, and with it the concept of librarians as stewards of the "people's university." (Birge & Lynn, 1981). Information Literacy is also becoming an essential skill which every information and library professionals must take into consideration by assisting its library's

user groups to develop and acquire information literacy skills. Information literacy as a vital factor in the development of an individual's learning ability not only in a structured educational programmes but which covers the spheres of different social, cultural, political and economic arenas (Coonan, 2011).

The Concept of Lifelong Learning

The term 'lifelong learning' is often used to signify the ideal of an informed, independent and self-reliant individual who is capable of finding and using the information s/he needs within all these arenas. Being information literate can therefore be seen as a key part of lifelong learning, and "central to achieving both personal empowerment and economic development" (Bruce, 2002:1). It is a means of enriching human experience and the individual's quality of life and living. The library, which is still a combination of the past (print collections) and the present (new information technologies), must be viewed with a new perspective and understanding if it is to fulfill its potential in adding value to the advancement of the institution's academic mission and in moving with that institution into the future (Bennett, Freeman, Demas, Frischer, Peterson & Oliver, 2005).

The educative role of libraries in facilitating lifelong learning began a century ago, when the library was traditionally viewed as a place of learning for citizens, from monarchy, council's users in making decisions and policies (Julien, 2001). Developing basic literacy skills has been a fundamental and important skill for an individual for self improvement and development, and library professionals have continued to promote and support initiatives to develop basic literacy skills among all its citizens (Fitch & Warner, 1996). The concept "Information Literacy (IL)" was first used by Breivik, where she described Information Literacy "as an integrated set of skills and the knowledge of tools and resources" (Grassian & Kaplowitz; 2001:5; Maguire, 2012, Breivik, 1985).

Information Literacy had its roots in the Library Instruction Movement which began in early academic libraries in the early 1960's (Grassian, & Kaplowitz, 2001:14). This concept was also used by Dewey, Melville at the first ALA Conference in 1876, where he stated that 'the library is a school and the librarian is in the highest sense a teacher…' (ibid). With the advancement in technology been incorporated in the library led to the founda-

tion of library instruction which Breivik defined as "information literacy, which is widely used up till today, and described as a core literacy programme in the 21st century (Grassian & Kaplowitz, 2001:20; Maguire, 2012; Garner, 2006:68).

Many definitions of Information Literacy therefore address "learning as an ongoing, developmental process, a continuous evaluation of an adaptation to the information environment: "information literacy cannot be seen as something to be addressed once, It is an integrated part of lifelong learning which must be recognised, *enhanced* and continually updated" (Welsh Information Literacy Project, 2011; Conan, 2011).

Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) in the *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education (Competency Standards) (2000)* gave a concise definition of "Information literacy" as the ability to identify a need for information, locate, evaluate, and use information ethically and responsibly to meet their need.

Lifelong learning

Broader scope of learning encompasses by giving a defined concepts of what learning is all about. *Learning is a complex and personal process occurring in many contexts; however, at its core is the importance of personal experience, transformation, understanding, identity and agency* (The State Library of Queensland, 2006). According to Jarvis (2004: 111), Human learning is a combination of processes whereby whole persons construct experiences of situations and transform them into knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, values, emotions and the senses, and integrate the outcomes into their own biographies.

Delors (1998) defined Lifelong learning as the continuous acquisition of knowledge, skills and understandings from the "cradle to the grave." UNESCO (1995:5), refers to human potential development:

"as a continuous supportive process which stimulates and empowers an individual's urge to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills and understanding that they will require through their lifetimes and to apply them with confidence, creativity and enjoyment in all roles, circumstances and environments".

Bennett (2009) sees a librarian as more than professionals that renders support service to its client, but also incorporating innovative library education, resources, and services in the teaching and learning activities of their institutions by designing programmes that would motivate students in Learning (Gilchrist & Oakleaf, 2012).

With the increasing emphasis on information literacy to support lifelong learning among students (Brahmi et al; 1999) they would be responsible for their learning goals which they receive in their educational institutions (Roes, 2001).

Libraries as Learning Laboratories

As new technologies emerged the increasingly reformation in the library from the traditional view to digital usage and acquisition of learning experience in any learning environment for any institution to meet the current and future needs of its users in an academic and its surrounding environment, the library must be flexible, adaptive and sufficiently provide the changing needs of its users. To accomplish this, library planners must be more entrepreneurial in outlook, periodically evaluating the effective use of space and assessing new placements of services and configurations of learning spaces in response to changes in user demand (Bennett, Freeman, Demas, Frischer, Peterson & Oliver, 2005).

In forestalling Lifelong literacy skills and lifelong learning goes far ahead than what is provided in the library but it is something that must be incorporated into learning programmes conducted in schools from the elementary by introducing pupils into the skill acquisition till the student enters college and what he would use throughout his entire life. This was conveyed and practiced in different countries like the USA, UK, from where guidelines were outlined for its functionality; According to Webber and Johnston (2003) outlined strategies/standards which must be applicable in enriching the lives of American citizens, in partnership with the US Higher Education Standards evolved a work on Information Literacy drafted for the American Library Association (ALA).

The US standards states that the information-literate student:

- determines the nature and extent of information needed;
- accesses needed information effectively and efficiently;
- evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information

into his or her knowledge base and value system;

- individually, or as a member of a group, uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose; and
- understands many of the economic, legal and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally.

Tremendous effort has also been made by the British Higher Education, UK, SCONUL where they identified "seven pillars of information literacy" (Webber & Johnston, 2003; SCONUL, 1999; Hopkinson, 2010).

These are:

i. the ability to recognize a need for information;
ii. the ability to distinguish ways in which the information "gap" may be addressed;
iii. the ability to construct strategies for locating information;
iv. the ability to locate and access information;
v. the ability to compare and evaluate information obtained from different sources;
vi. the ability to organize, apply and communicate information to others in ways appropriate to the situation; and
vii. the ability to synthesize and build upon existing information, thus contributing to the creation of new knowledge.

Adoption of Information Literacy programmes in Nigerian Education System

Information literacy instruction is very crucial component in any education system, as it entails acquisition of information resources. For any nation to grow, the peak of excellence can only be reached when information required for development is acquired, and implemented. A country like Nigeria is faced with the problems when future leaders of tomorrow who are supposed to be groomed with qualitative information are more confused when it comes to acquisition of information for mental, intellectual, and for economic development of the country. The viable role of a librarian cannot be overemphasized, as information literacy instruction can be organized in a formal or non-formal learning environment. This can

programmes as been seen other developed countries like USA who has already incorporated Information Literacy Programmes right from the Kindergarten levels on how pupils can acquire, utilize information resources.

The major challenge faced in the Nigerian educational system at the secondary levels has been non implementation of information Literacy instructions among subjects to be taught in schools. These non-implementation of information literacy programmes at the grassroots level of education would have laid a solid foundation for students (Ajayi, 1993).

In a study Yeboah (1999), the significant value of librarian was shown where librarians in University of Botswana in collaborated efforts with lecturers, planned, syllabus, timetable incorporated information literacy instructions programmes into the curriculum for 3rd and 4th year undergraduate students and this has provided a basic skills for students to select, acquire, and utilize proper information resources in meeting their information need. Undergraduate's students leave secondary schools with little or no library skills to transfer to a post-secondary institution (Kunkel, 1996).

The lack of basic library skills increases the students anxiety level as they see libraries as boredom environment for taking afternoon nap after morning class due to the sensitization for students on knowing the value of libraries in Nigerian universities. The role of a librarian is to select, acquire, organize and provide information resources and services to facilitate effective teaching, learning research and dissemination of existing and new information resources for its users (Crawford, 2003).

Information literacy is not only a key concept in learning but also fundamental in all context of mans daily living. There are several reasons why information literacy is not a mainstream element in its incorporation in the school curriculum. According to Stubbings & Franklin (2006:2) identified a number of reasons. Among these reasons are the following:

a. Academician lacks the basic understanding of what information literacy is all about.
b. Information literacy is confused with information Technology competency and usage.
c. Students carrying out research studies are so sure of getting information via the internet without assistance, and so they believe they are information literate.

Badke (2010) also supports these claims, he said that information literacy has not been recognized the way it should be and visualized "invisible" within the academic settings due to a number of reasons: misunderstanding among academic administrators not including it in their institutions agenda, where by making information literacy programmes lying in the libraries as souvenirs based on individual false beliefs that technology utilization of equipments is the same as information literacy skills acquisition.

The future role of lifelong learning among library professionals

The future of lifelong learning in the society depends on the traditions and culture practiced in such environment, recent scholarly research studies carried out as seen the roles of libraries in working in hand with public education, extending education beyond the walls of a structured library (Kirton & Barham, 2005).

Today in welfare-to work driven socio-economic context, acquisition of literacy skills and lifelong learning is coming to be seen more as a tool of workfare rather than a means of achieving critical consciousness. The way librarians frame and define "skills for every-day life" is important to the future of the cause of lifelong education from elementary to the aged. These are the same ideological questions that confront librarians challenged to develop literacy and lifelong learning programs within the structure of an educational settings, the settings of lifelong learning should not be viewed narrowly for adult education, but from elementary to aged and also the introduction of digital divide in the 21st century, when ICT has reformed the traditional view into a global village where information resources can be sourced online using distance education electronically. Librarians will be more needed in provisioning of reliable information, so the librarian profession should not only be limited to the traditional view of attending to its users but also in training personnel's on how to handle issues via virtual environment, where users can be trained on the go, no until in a formal environment, If all the steps are all put in place, the trained can make a significant contribution to the development of their community.

Conclusion

The greater involvement of civil society in the organization of lifelong learning has helped to strengthen the activities of the government and to develop alternative programmes with a greater sense of local community involvement in the programmes. Libraries will have to change their roles from ´gatekeepers´ to ´gateways´ of knowledge and in this way they should perform such tasks as information mapping, information audits, training in information literacy skills acquisition, and information of best practices to help its users to navigate the world of information more meaningful and resourceful. ■

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