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## The role of the library in the promotion of knowledge societies in Nigeria

L. T. Abdulsalami, Q. I. Okezie and A. D. Agbo

*Department of Library and Information Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State*

### ABSTRACT

*From time immemorial, both terms 'knowledge and information', which are central to the topic of our seminar today have remained the 'stock in trade' or better still, the 'articles of trade' in libraries and librarianship. From its earliest, humble beginning, libraries have, till today, been closely associated with and thus closely related to both concepts. Hence, knowledge and information have remained the familiar 'focus of interest' of libraries and librarianship thus giving rise to the term knowledge society which has become a household term these days. Yet in too many cases, the understanding of it remains erroneous or shallow. At the same time, deep transformative currents related to knowledge and its production and dissemination in society promise to change the world as we know it, perhaps in the historically short time of a few generations. We are witnessing the beginnings of this transformation and our understanding of the pattern of changes in the library services with very serious positive long-term consequences. That is why a profound understanding of knowledge societies, as they are emerging the world over, is of such great importance. This paper examines the role of library in the promotion of knowledge societies in Nigeria.*

**Key words:** Information, Knowledge, Knowledge Society, Information Society and Library,

### INTRODUCTION

It is no longer news that the world has moved from the industrial age into information age. Man's quest for knowledge has led to the creation and accumulation of tremendous amount of information. The world today boast of a knowledge based society. This quest for knowledge knows no bounds and limits and is never satisfied. According to Issa (2003), [1] there has come to be in today's world, a full realization of the fact that information remains the prime commodity of present age. It has continued since the dawn of civilization to the modern age. Indeed, the availability and free flow of information bring about knowledge which has great potentials to provide impetus for the social, cultural, spiritual, political, economic, scientific and technological advancement of a nation. This hard-earned knowledge and information is valuable for the entire mankind and therefore liable to be preserved. With the invention of paper man has been able to convey this knowledge to others by writing books. The need for the preservation of knowledge and dissemination of information led to the establishment of more and more libraries. Ikoku (1971), [2] described library as the foyer of living ideas – ideas that permeate and animate all aspect of national life, a place where the dead are alive, where the ideas, knowledge and experience of great men though dead continue to live. Thus libraries acquired a great importance in the knowledge society. Libraries which have been variously referred to as the purveyor of information, the custodian of knowledge, and the house of learning plays a vital role in the development of any society by catering for the information needs of thousands of peoples within a particular community. Affirming to this, Reding (2005), [3] noted that libraries play a fundamental role in our society. They are the collectors and stewards of our heritage; they are organizers of the knowledge in the books they

collect – adding value by cataloguing, classifying and describing them; and, as public institutions, they assure equality of access for all citizens. They take the knowledge of the past and present, and lay it down for the future.

In this present era, knowledge society has become a key resource and a concept of importance in the library. Faced with increasingly dynamic environment and changes, libraries are beginning to realize that there is a vast largely untapped assets diffused in the organization – knowledge. However, the environment in which the library operates today and their role is drastically changing. The traditional image of the library as a quiet place of study, housing mostly print collections, is changing. In order to meet the growing needs of users the library system has been greatly improved and upgraded to meet the new challenges. The services offered by libraries have also undergone a great change with the advent of new technologies in the field of computers, telecommunications and Internet facilities thereby making libraries leaders in knowledge management.

### **The Concept of Library**

The collection of written knowledge in some sort of repository is a practice as old as civilization itself. The name for the repository eventually became the library. Library derived from the word “*liber*” meaning book can be defined as organized collection of published and unpublished books and audiovisual materials with the aid of services of staff that are able to provide and interpret such materials as required, to meet the informative research, educational and recreational needs of its users. Libraries are regarded as agencies through which sources of information of accumulated knowledge and experiences are selected, acquired, organized, preserved and disseminated to those who need them. In line with this, Onwubiko and Uzoigwe (2004) [4] defined library as an information center located in an organization, institute, agency, industry, government agencies etc to satisfy the information needs of the individual client and the realization of the broad goals and objectives of the parent organization. This can be achieved through the acquisition and dissemination of information to specific kinds of users. Libraries are established for the systematic collection, organization, preservation and dissemination of knowledge and information. Rajkoomar (2012) [5] affirmed this by stating that library is a treasure-house of knowledge. It is very important for man to preserve and maintain the valuable knowledge and information contained in the books and documents because we want to preserve our knowledge and wisdom for the coming generations. By preserving the documents in a library this knowledge can be made available to others so that they can benefit from it. The central mission of a library is to collect, organize, preserve, and provide access to knowledge and information. In fulfilling this mission, libraries preserve a valuable record of culture that can be passed down to succeeding generations. Libraries are an essential link in this communication between the past, present, and future. Whether the cultural record is contained in books or in electronic formats, libraries ensure that the record is preserved and made available for later use. Libraries provide people with access to the information they need to work, play, learn, and govern.

The purposes of libraries have been changing over times becoming more faceted and multifarious. This modern concept of the library makes it defy the definition given to it in the earlier times. Libraries are not institutions/building/warehouses/stores etc. of materials, but are agents of educational, social, economic and political changes or revolutions in the community and their doors are now open to all who need them. Leheman (2011) [6] was of the opinion that the future of library will be as a knowledge center that is dynamic, where not only the librarian, the “books” (whether real or virtual), and the users engage in an interchange of ideas — but the library architecture acts as not only a surrounding framework, but also as a healthy “space” where ideas can flourish, live, grow and even be protected. Hence, the library has become a place entrusted with the acquisition, organization, preservation, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information in whatever format it might appear. . In addition to providing materials, libraries also provide the services of librarians who are experts at finding and organizing information and at interpreting information needs. The excellence of the library, it should be remembered, is dependent on the quality of its personnel and their zeal.

It is obvious from the foregoing that the changing concept of the library calls for the need to learn the basic common library routines and practices to save time and avoid frustration.

### **The Concept of Knowledge**

Knowledge can be defined as what one knows or understands. It can also be seen as the awareness one has about something. Renfree (1981) [7] describes knowledge as “the body of information and understanding which individuals acquire through life experiences and education”. In line with this also Davenport and Prusak (1998) [8] were of the view that knowledge is a fluid mix of framed experience, contextual information, values and expert

insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experience and information. Knowledge has also been defined as the ability to produce facts.

In modern times, the addition of knowledge has changed both in value and in use, Mohammed (2006), [9] explains the concepts of knowledge in this era as follows:

- (a) Knowledge is an international commodity of trade which can be used by government, corporations and individuals to gain advantage.
- (b) Knowledge as restricted commodity for National Corporation and personal security.
- (c) Knowledge as patent commodity with rights and privileges of ownership and access.
- (d) Knowledge as a commodity which is advertised and marketed and which recognizes the role of the supplier and consumer in the production chain.

Knowledge from this point of view is seen as a commodity that can be produced and bought by anyone who is in need of it and has the means to purchase it. In line with the above assertion Lyotard (1984) [10] opines that:

*Knowledge is produced in order to be sold and be consumed in order to expand production. In both cases, the goal is use and knowledge has lost its traditional use and value. It has become a means of exchange where those who can afford it will have it.*

Knowledge is very vital in attaining scientific, technological, political and economic development of any nation. For any nation to progress, it depends on how knowledgeable the citizens of that nation are. A nation whose citizens are ignorant cannot be empowered economically. Okebukola (2004) [11] without mincing words says that “knowledge is the prime mover of prosperity”. A knowledge society is one of the basic foundations for the development of any nation and it is hard to think of the current knowledge evolution without information technology.

Mabogunje (2004)[12] advises that Nigeria must pay attention to knowledge acquisition. According to him “a nation which does not recognize and always think about money is lost”. He further advises that the nation should return to knowledge society, respect information communication technology and not money bags. Knowledge is power and information is the power of knowledge. It is a very good weapon to eradicate ignorance. However, as a nation, we cannot think of knowledge without thinking of information.

Aristotle said “all men by nature desire to know”. This in essence implies that man desires to understand the events and happenings around him. Also Akindede (1997) [13] argued that the urge to know cannot be dismissed or eradicated, no matter what the individual may be told by others and despite any attempt by others to dissuade him. Noting that he will know true peace of mind only if he follows this inner prompting to knowledge. Human beings are external seekers always wanting to resolve these issues around their environment that pose problem to them. To resolve these issues he has found solace in many ways of understanding things affecting him.

Spinoza, for example distinguishes three methods devised by man to do this:

- (i) **Opinions or imaginations**, this he called “knowledge from vague experience”. This depends on ideas formed by the memory and imagination (Great Books of Western World Vol. 1:685): Other writers refer to this as uncritical experience. That is experience which has not been subjected to full reasoning. One only accepts the evidence of random events without testing. For instance European and American scientists once believed that diseases are caused by bad night air and that living organisms can be spontaneously generated.
- (ii) **Reasoning and inferring the essence of one thing from another**. This is knowledge derived from one having or possessing common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things. For instance how does one know that if  $x$  is greater than  $y$  and  $y$  is greater than  $z$ , then  $x$  is greater than  $z$ ? Though one does not see or feel anything but reasoning dictates that the relation is true.
- (iii) **Intuition (Intuitive Science)**, the sort of knowledge which advances from an adequate idea of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of essence of things which can be passed to man mainly in a flash.

Arising from the above we will consider three definitions of knowledge as given by the Oxford English Dictionary.

- (a) “Intellectual acquaintance, or perception of fact or truth, clear and certain mental apprehension, the fact, state or condition of understanding”.

(b) “Acquaintance with a branch of learning, acquiring information, or the like, theoretical or political understanding of an art, science and industry etc. skill in or to do something.

(c) “In general sense; the fact or condition of being instructed or of having information acquired by study or research; acquaintance with ascertained truths, facts or principles; information acquired by study; learning; erudition.

The three definitions above satisfy the three types of information needs in the process of acquiring knowledge. Viogt, an American information scientist, in the early 1960s through questioning a hundred Scandinavian scientists in chemistry, physics and biology ascertained that scientist could acquire knowledge by referring to information sources mainly in three circumstances.

- While getting current awareness of results both in their particular narrow field and related discipline (definitions a and b)
- In their day-to-day work, when they need some factual information, figures, methods and designs; (definition a, b and c)
- When embarking on a new problem or a project, as well as when completing it and writing about it-a retrospective search to identify as many published and unpublished sources on the subject as possible (definition c).

From the above it could then be argued that knowledge acquired through definition c is in consonance with the second reason adduced by Spinoza above, as to the ways used by man in understanding things affecting him. Knowledge then could be defined as the condition of being instructed or having information acquired by erudition and research, which results in one getting acquainted with ascertained truth, facts or principle.

### **Concept of Information**

The term information is now used in a wide variety of ways by different people in different discipline in order to allow them make a particular case as they seek to advance understanding of their discipline, and as they attempt to relate various aspects of their discipline in the broader field of knowledge. This has led to some confusion especially as aspect of definition from one discipline may be inappropriately more widely or be adopted in part by those in another discipline.

Until recently there has not been any widely acceptable definition of information. If you put the question, what is information, to a group of people of mixed professionals, you might get as many definitions as there are people in the group. So diverse are the definitions of information today that for the most part, it is impossible to reconcile them, nevertheless definitions of information should incorporate one of or a combination of the following characteristics: is represented by a set of symbols which has some structure and can be read and to some extent understood by users of information (Meadow; 1992) [14].

Most definitions of information conform to the following three forms:

Firstly any physical form of representation of a particular thought used for communication.

Based on the mental state of the recipient i.e. the ultimate effect the communicated information has on the mental state of the recipient. Some properties have been attached to some effects. These may include “increment of knowledge”, “resolving uncertainty”, “and value in decision making” etc. some holistic “system” concept involving people, their attitudes and needs.

The second form is the most prevalent among the definitions. Let us consider the following definitions:

- i. Information is data that has been processed into a form that is meaningful to the recipient and is of real perceived value in current or prospective decisions (Davis: 1974) [15].
- ii. Information is data that changes the states of a system that perceives it, whether a computer or a brain, hence a stream of data that does not change the state of its receiver is not information (Meadow: 1992) [14].

Thirdly, the above definitions relate more to the physical form of representation of information.

- i. Information is the factual ideas and other knowledge emanating from any segment of society that are identified as being of value, sometimes gathered on a regular basis, organized in some fashion, transmitted to others, and used in some meaningful fashion (Norman, 1986) [16].
- ii. Information is the name for the content of what is exchanged in the outer world when we adjust to it and make our adjustment left upon it (Norbet: 1960) [17].

- iii. Information both in the real sense is used by the biologist and the librarians as fact. It is the stimulus we receive through our senses, it may be an isolated fact or a whole cluster of facts, but it is still a unit of thought (Shera: 1971) [18].

These definitions recognize the fact that information affects some changes in the cognitive status of the recipient making the recipient adjust to it. Other related definitions of information to be considered are those which believe that information adds some new structure to the existing knowledge base of the recipient. This added new structure being capable of changing the existing knowledge structure of the recipient.

- (i) Information is “that which is capable of transforming structure” (Belkin: 1978) [19].
- (ii) Information is a “written or spoken surrogate of knowledge” (Farradene: 1980) [20].
- (iii) Information is a measure of one’s freedom of choice when one selects a message. However, the information applies not to the individual message but to the situation as a whole (Mackey: 1967) [21].

Any of these definitions implies that information satisfies a basic physical need. We are informed when our cognitive structure is reshaped or altered as a result of an external stimulus which changes our existing knowledge about any phenomenon. Debons as cites in Fine (1984) [22] argued that people need information in order to reduce the ambiguity in their environment and that they use information to impose some structure on the unstructured event

### **The Relations between Knowledge and Information**

Ireogbu (2004) [23] describes knowledge as “information”. This is because information is the communication of idea, facts meant to be used to achieve some goals. Similarly, Garfield (1979) [24] sees it as “facts, data, ideas and knowledge conveyed by any available means to an individual, groups of individuals or society for enlightenment, education and behavioural change”. Jwaddak et al (2003) [25] agreed with Garfield definition by stating that “information is facts told, heard, or discusses about knowledge, while Ejima (2003) [26] sees it as knowledge. Thus, the communication of knowledge has come to be referred to as information where the term ‘knowledge’ is the ‘state of knowing about a particular fact or situation’.

Information is knowledge and knowledge is power. The level of growth and development of any individual or nation or system are largely associated with relevant information available to the individuals etc. The United Nations Development Programme Report (2004) [27] placed Nigeria among the poorest nations of the world in terms of human development. How did they arrive at this result, one may ask? According to the report, one criteria used in the assessment is knowledge, i.e. the level of adult literacy, Nigeria is only the giant of Africa in name and not in human development. Countries like the United States of America, Britain, France, Japan, and Germany etc are leading the world today because of what they know that other nations do not know and not because of what they have. Garfield quoted earlier explained that the developed countries of the world such as mentioned above use information as a basic resource to supplement national resources of matter and energy. According to him they spend a large portion of their nation’s resources on information system. If information is so important to them that are already developed, what more do we need as a nation more than to invest in acquiring as such knowledge as we can in order to join the main stream of development and be able to compete with other developing nations of the world. Library is needed as a tool for the acquisitions of information and for knowledge delivery. It is the only major means to accede to information. Information that is not shared adequately cannot communicate the desired knowledge.

### **Knowledge Delivery**

A reviewed of literature of civilization and library development will show how knowledge has grown from oral/aural mode of communication and learning to this stage when knowledge, learning and information is communicated via space and satellite through the help of telecommunication equipments, microcomputers and networking delivery in the context of this study is any process used by humanity to seek information to reduce the ambiguity in his environment. Given the context of our definition of knowledge as being instructed or having information acquired by erudition which results in one getting acquainted with ascertained truth facts or principle. Knowledge delivery is implied in the whole process of seeking information.

Coshen (1974) [28] argue that some knowledge users are concern exclusively with their own problem, others make decision on behalf of many others with effects lasting for decades and others pursue academic activities of enriching the literature presumably these two will improve the lives of people who use the literature at unspecified future time. This implies that knowledge seekers or users can be classified.

Atta (1983) [29] classified information users into specialist, policies makers, planners, administrators and students. Tocathian (1978) [30] streamlined this to three groups namely:

1. **The specialist users** are people who create information and use information as the basis upon which to build their contribution to world development.
2. **Administrators, planners and policies maker**, these need technical information repackaged in a different fashion to help make decision.
3. **The non technical user**, need information appropriately interpreted and made available in order to understand the society they live in.

In line with Brooke's interpretation of poppers' world three, Fine (1984) [22] argued that the mission of Librarianship need to be based on well founded theoretical understanding about the nature of information, the nature and need of human being, the transfer process between people and information resources and the way people use information. Kenam (1996) [31] therefore defined library and information science as a field of knowledge, theory and technology dealing with the collection of facts and figures and the processes and method involved in their manipulation, storage, dissemination, publication and retrieval. Having this in mind, the World Book Encyclopedia (2004) [32] pointed that the job of providing materials for patrons is a challenging. To do it, librarian must constantly stay aware of new publications and other materials. He or she evaluates vast amount of materials either through personal inspections or by reading reviews, deciding which ones should be available in the library. Given the above scenario the immediate questions that should be uppermost in the minds of library and information professionals include, given the above mission imposed on them as professionals, how have they discharged themselves? A more fundamental question that is begging for answer is, given the rate at which information is generated and disseminated, especially using the ICTs, is the librarian or information professional still relevant in the knowledge circle?

#### **The Information Society and Knowledge Society**

The term "Information society" (or "information age") has come to epitomize the changes brought about by technological advance and globalization towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The concept of the information society sums up the new world order, where the position of nations, their power, wealth and influence, increasingly depends on their access to and ability to use information. The development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has vastly increased the amount of information available and the speed and the ease with which it can be disseminated. Omekwu (2005) [33] noted that the increasing prime of place giving to information through technological development and deployment evolves into an Information Society. Information is increasingly seen as a commodity that can be acquired, possessed, bought and sold. Issa (2003) [1] pointed this out when he defined an information society as one whereby information is seen as a tradable commodity. A commodity that can be bought and sold in the information market place for a given price. A commodity that is indispensable for national development. As a result, all people do not enjoy equal access to information. Rather, globalization has brought a deepening divide between the information 'haves and have not's. A divide between privileged and unprivileged, rich and poor, North and South. Information can be viewed as a thing, and therefore can be a commodity, the predominant understanding and the one connoted by the terms information society/age. But it can be viewed in terms of effects, that is, information developing in interaction with the people seeking it. This perspective brings information closer to the concepts of knowledge and learning.

Development of the information society has established some necessary conditions for the development of knowledge societies. However, there are essential differences: knowledge societies are more empowering and all embracing than the information society. They are also pluralistic - we talk of the information society, but knowledge societies. While the information society focuses on networks and connectivity through the technological advances of ICTs, knowledge societies use these to open access to all, to increase utilization of knowledge in all its forms for human development. It is not merely having ICTs, an abundance of information, global access and networking, but using these to construct a desirable society for all, that is, to construct knowledge societies.

The term "knowledge society" ("*sociedad del conocimiento*") as an alternative by some in academic circles to the "information society" first used by Peter Drucker in 1969, builds on the concept of the information society. Knowledge society which involves all members of a community in knowledge creation and utilization is a fuller and richer concept where the emphasis is on content – the creation, distribution and use of information and knowledge in

society. It is not merely the result of collection, processing and distribution. Knowledge society requires application, experience and the exercise of judgment.

The idea emerged at about the same time as the closely related concept of learning society and lifelong education. While it can be argued that all societies are in some sense knowledge societies, the UNESCO report of 2005 [35] argues that in the past control of knowledge was part of a system supporting inequality, exclusion and social conflict. The Age of Enlightenment in Europe spread demands for democracy, openness, equality and freedom, with regard to knowledge and education as well as other areas of life. This came along with the greater diffusion of knowledge through books and printing and extension of education to more citizens through development of schools and universities. With recent technological developments, humanity has learned how to mass-produce knowledge, but how will this knowledge be used? The use of ICTs offers us new opportunities to achieve equal and universal access to knowledge and genuine changing in a public knowledge forum, thereby, realizing the idea of democracy and freedom of expression. According to the UNESCO report (2005) [35], these new developments “should be the cornerstone of true knowledge societies, which are a source of human and sustainable development”. Societies that set up institutions and organizations enabling people and information to develop without limits and open opportunities for all kinds of knowledge to be mass-produced and mass-utilized are knowledge societies. Lor and Britz (2006) [36] defined knowledge society as a society that operates within the paradigm of the economics of information. It values human capital as the prime input to production and innovation.

Dike (2007) [37] enumerated five features of knowledge societies as thus:

1. Knowledge societies are pluralistic and culturally diverse.
2. Knowledge societies are democratic societies for all and by all.
3. Knowledge societies are learning societies.
4. Knowledge societies foster full human development.
5. Knowledge societies build better future.

#### **Approaches to Knowledge Revolution**

What is knowledge? Knowledge as defined by Harbert and Payton (1995) [38] is an acquaintance with or understanding of facts, actions, etc or as that which is known. However, knowledge in the fast changing world needs to be put in its dynamic functional and humanistic dimension to be appreciated. Information becomes knowledge when it is decoded, interpreted and given a context by the individual and embodied in his/her beliefs, values and commitments. Knowledge may be classified into subject’s knowledge, general knowledge and professional knowledge. Since knowledge is becoming the most important factor in economic and social development, managers of institutions in Nigeria should accordingly shift emphasis to functional knowledge creation, delivery, dissemination and application (knowledge processes): skill training and technology acquisition and innovation.

Institutions here include universities, polytechnics, monotechnics, colleges of education, research institutes and other post-secondary school-level institutions. Tertiary institutions are yet to make the desired impact on knowledge revolution, apparently because the country has not effectively integrated into the global knowledge economy.

According to World Bank (2002) [39] many developing countries have neither articulated a development strategy linking the application of knowledge to economic growth, nor built up their national science and technology capacity. The current economic, social and educational reforms in Nigeria based on microeconomics, knowledge, innovation and creativity are therefore commendable. The fact is that it is mandatory for Nigeria to embark on the reforms as developing and transition countries are at risk of being further marginalized thereby widening the digital divide and remaining underdeveloped if they continued to sit on the fence.

Managers of institutions in Nigeria, particularly the universities should see the global knowledge revolution as a critical challenge and play a leading role (as in other countries) in the production of intellectual and social capital necessary for the construction of modern knowledge societies for sustainable development and poverty reduction. Unfortunately, this is not yet happening in Nigeria though some institutions have introduced e-teaching and e-learning. Effective knowledge creation delivery and application in Tertiary Education Institution (TEI) require proper management strategies. Alabi (2001) [40] opines that effective management strategies constitute a necessity for the success of any educational policy or programme. Management is the process of planning, organizing, directing/leading, staffing, coordinating and evaluating the human and material resources designed to accomplish the pre-determined goals and objectives of an organization. The managers of TEI need to understand the dynamic

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processes of knowing knowledge creation, sharing, transformation and application as well as the role played by communication in knowledge construction and delivery.

Dike (2007) [37] posed several questions thus: what will library be like in the future? Some questioned whether libraries will disappear, to be replaced by other forms? Or will they radically change character, focus, opinion, directions to be scarcely recognizable? Or will library services become totally virtual? Selling commodities and services to clientele? Or will libraries incorporate new ideas, new media and technologies, new services to meet new needs, circumstances and challenges of today and tomorrow?

Based on the aforementioned there can be no knowledge revolution if there is no library or if library have no future, knowledge revolution cannot occur if we are standing still while the world is changing, we assure you that the world cannot change without the library, every revolution in knowledge is attached to the library while library is knowledge. Libraries and librarians must put extract effort so that self made libraries (researchers) will not overtake our role. Libraries must move forward, make progress and develop in response to the opportunities and challenges of an ever-changing world, to make the role of the library and librarians prominent.

Knowledge revolution is the aim of nations around the world. According to Dike (2007) [37], every country seeks to develop their agriculture and industrial base and to increase their wealth and prosper. The level of development was formerly measured by a country's Gross National Product (GNP) or Gross Domestic Product (GDP), this model was found wanting. Based on this, issues on human development were added to the development of model knowledge which began as an issues of equity, gender, equality, literacy, health, education for all human rights and participation in society. This precipitated the movement from an "industry-based" to an "Information-based" society which lent more emphasis to human resources development, as human beings with the requisite education and skills leaving the library as centre of development.

Dike (2007) [37] expresses that the concept of sustainable development grew out of concerns that the planet could not continue to support certain patterns of human and economic development indefinites to development. It was feared that degradation, over population, pollution, global warming, etc would lead to declining standards of living and increasing conflicts over dwindling resources. It could even lead to the extinction of humanity in the long run. Balancing the fulfillment of human needs with the protections of the national environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but in the indefinite future. Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The library forms part of this development. Knowledge revolution is forward looking, requiring planning, foresight, concern for others and self control. It is also multi-dimensional, encompassing economic and human development as well as protection of the environment.

### **The Changing Roles of Libraries and Librarians**

Libraries are repository of all forms of graphic and oral communication organized to meet all facets of human information needs. It is a social institution, which came into existence when the accumulated body of man's knowledge became so voluminous that it superseded the limits of human memory and the records of that experience could no longer be left to survival through the oral tradition. The primary objective of any library is to bring together the man and the documents that would solve his information needs. To do this work the librarian acquires primary literature, store it, organize and control it. He equally performs a secondary function by compiling catalogs and reading list, providing up-to-date comprehensive bibliographic services that allow users identify essential information. With the emergence of ICT in library, electronic information provides librarians with challenges that are not necessary new. However, as the nature of the librarians' roles changes, so do the challenges to long-standing professional codes of ethics. Keyes (1999) [41] writes that in the future, as now, we can expect the virtual library to be the organization that identifies, selects, negotiates for, and provides access to an incredible range of information resources on our behalf. Keyes went further to writes that the evolution toward a digital library creates a change in the 'locus of control', as the library's collection is moving outside the library itself. The library is no longer defined simply as a building or a physical repository that houses information. The librarian is no longer the primary 'gatekeeper' or guide to information. The World Book Encyclopedia (2004) [32] argues that in services provided by librarians go far beyond getting and arranging library materials. As a result of the rapid growth in information generation and knowledge, the librarian and information professionals are constantly evolving ways of coping with professional expectations. Share (1971) [42], Ogunsheye (1976) [43] and Aiyepkun (1993) [44] have all described the changing functions of the librarian due to changes in the mode of transmission of information and graphic

records. Crawford(2000) [45], submits that ‘ongoing complexity and unpredictable currents of change will mark the future of libraries’. Before now, a user looked at one book or journal at a time. Now, electronic information can be stored and accessed by millions of users simultaneously from personal computers (PCs) with modems or through direct Internet connections from home, work, or practical anywhere. Patrons no longer have to physically visit the library to retrieve information. This ability to access full-text resources electronically from within the institution or from any PC provides the user with convenient and immediate access to information. Expanded use of interlibrary loan and document delivery also offers the potential to provide access to all materials, rather than only to materials owned locally. The library institution, which is traditionally and historically the custodian of knowledge and information, has witnessed a paradigm shift from traditional information handling methodologies to technological platforms. This tends to transfer the information and knowledge custodian roles of libraries to other institutions and professions like the computer, communication and information and knowledge. Yet, different types of libraries remain the dynamic engines for the knowledge and information society.

### **The Role of Library to the Promotion of Knowledge Societies in Nigeria.**

Libraries are centers of information, primarily established to generate knowledge, equip people with knowledge to serve the society and advance the well-being of mankind. Thus, library is like a storehouse of knowledge, a whole world encompassed in one room. In this digital age, libraries face challenges from both within (institutions) and within (the business sectors) for instance, academic departments, faculty members and even students may buy or build their own portals to meet their academic and research needs. Is it possible then that services offered by libraries may be marginalized?

A pivotal role played by the libraries it is one of the factors which helps in the development of a society or an even a civilization. It caters to the knowledge thirsty minds of thousands of people. With the onset and advancement of technologies, virtual libraries are created. These types of libraries are present in many colleges. Libraries are an integral part of the education system and development and one is incomplete without the other.

In order to continue to remain relevant and valuable libraries must strive to provide the right amount of information to the right clientele at the right time with a right expense of financial and human resources. With the ever dwindling library budget, libraries have to increase their operational efficiency in order to meet this challenge. One management tool that can help in this regard is Knowledge Management (KM). Lee (2006) [46] expressed that it was the business world that first recognized the importance of knowledge in the “global economy” of the “knowledge age” in the new knowledge economy, the possession of relevant and strategic knowledge and its increasing renewal enables business to gain competitive advantage. The palliatives of knowledge management have now spread to other sectors including government agencies, research and developments, departments, universities and others.

The basic aim of establishing libraries and other information organizations in modern societies is to be able to respond to the information needs of communities. And for the information organizations to function well there is the need to train the professionals who will be able to provide the needed resources and services to meet the development needs of individuals/governments. It is only through this process that Nigeria society can guarantee library and information services to all Nigerians irrespective of locations, age, religion, political and ethnic affiliations. It is thus safe to say that library (education) in Nigeria is about fifty years old. A discipline in its golden age must have passed through several revisions in its curriculum to keep pace with the trend of events that have been necessitated by force of change especially those of education, economy and technology. One may hasten to ask some pertinent questions which should direct the directions of this discourse. The first has to do with what have been put in place over those fifty years in the library (schools) to train and retain the professionals to achieve the above objectives? While the second question is what kind of structures have been established by the practitioners to render appropriate information resources and services to Nigerians information user communities? And even a third could be what types of user communities do we have in Nigeria in terms of their information literacy levels?

Onwubiko and Uzoigwe (2004) [4] observe that generally the role of libraries depend on the needs of the sponsoring organization or institution. Madu and Adeniran (2005) [47] assert that the feature of libraries is the fact that the primary purpose of collection, organization and dissemination of information is devoted to a special subject body offering specialized services to a specialized clientele. Nuut (2004) [48] opined that the library’s main role is to mediate existing and accessible information resources to users, providing materials according to its areas of responsibility in the form of databases, electronic serials, full texts and traditional publications. Libraries no matter

how they are grouped or classified always seem to show individuality than uniformity, each reflects the purpose of the group that establishes and supports it.

Edoka (2000) [49] notes that in view of the specialized character of the demands of libraries, considerable specialized training is required of the staff. He listed the following as the basic role of libraries.

1. To provide comprehensive and balanced information resources relevant to the activities of its parent organization;
2. To provide required information quickly and precisely;
3. To conduct retrospective literature search for as appropriate;
4. To acquire, organize, maintain and disseminate information materials relevant to the organization activities.

Librarians are information resources experts dedicated to putting knowledge to work to attain the goals of their organizations. They are employed most frequently by corporation, private business, government, agencies, and museums, colleges, hospitals associations and information management consulting firms. Today's libraries do far more than locate and collect data, with the internet and other current technology, they also evaluate, analyze, organize, package, and present information in a way that maximizes its usefulness (Special Libraries Association, 2003) [50].

Libraries provides the below services: Current Awareness Services (CAS), Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), Document Delivery Service (DDS), CD-ROM Service, Access to Internet and E-mail, Discussion Group/Bulletin Board Services etc.

**Other roles include:**

1. Library as an integral part of the system provide supplementary sources of information for students, lecturers, etc. in addition to what transpires in the classroom.
2. The provision of information communication technologies in the libraries such as computer is an added impetus to current trends in librarianship, their utilization serves a stepping-stone to becoming computer literate since present day appointment into positions emphasize the need to be computer literate.
3. Provide materials to support library users in their own personal development.
4. Provide information to meet the specialized needs of the community in which they are situated.
5. Helps to train information professionals with skills, who will be able to develop, appreciate strategies in response to the information needs of the Nigerian society. (ABU Undergraduate Student Hand Book 2007/2008) [51].
6. To provide the needed resources and services to meet the development needs of individual, groups, corporate, organizations and even governments. It is only through this process that the Nigerian society can guarantee library and information services to all Nigerians irrespective of locations, age, religion, political and ethnic affiliations.
7. Library got children acquainted with books so as to broaden their ideas and stimulate their appetite for knowledge.
8. Library prepared pupils to work independently so that when they leave the school they can carry on with their education without depending solely on teachers.
9. Library aid the students in making reasonable use of their leisure.
10. Participate effectively in the school programme as it strives to meet the need of pupils, teachers, parents, and other community members.
11. Provide an opportunity through library experiences for boys and girls to develop helpful interest to make satisfactory personal adjustments and to acquire desirable social attitudes.
12. Participate with teachers and administrators in programme for continuing professional and cultural growth of the school.
13. Collection, acquisition of knowledge in all formats and organization of knowledge for easy storage, preservation, retrieval and dissemination.
14. To ensure an even development of the library collection by making sure that the library purchases balanced collections so that no discipline is developed at the expense of the others.
15. Investigating problems which under the development of reading habits among the people and encouragement of reading habits in the people other than utilitarian purposes.
16. Encouragement of the provision of books and other reading materials in the right quality and these materials should be relevant to our culture.
17. Provide information about library collections and locations.

18. Reduce duplications and enable the participating libraries know what is available in the other libraries and help them to decide on what and what not to buy.

19. To bring out a printed national catalogue or a union list which can be used for Inter-Library? Lending (ILL)?

### **Summary**

Since information is increasingly seen as a commodity that can be acquired, processed, bought and sold. As a result, all people do not enjoyed equal access to information and globalization has brought a deepening divide between the information haves and have not, a divide between privileged and unprivileged, rich and poor (Dike, 2007) [37]. This brought challenge to the libraries and the inability of librarians to master and apply the art and science of the profession in their work environment, coupled with the reluctance to learn the operations or manipulations of the new information technologies which has restructured the work of the library to creating access to information and knowledge irrespective of its location in the world through the virtual nature to make librarians relevant in the world of information and knowledge acquisition. The challenge is now for us to stand up to our professional responsibilities to claim our professionalism to other contending professionals in the field of information and communication theory and knowledge management. Library services are our core need in the knowledge acquisition and development which has been acknowledged. The librarian must not be relaxed in his/her duty to be relevant to the profession in general.

### **CONCLUSION**

Do we live in an era of change or in a changing era? How can one characterize the deep transformations that come with the accelerated insertion of artificial intelligence and new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in our present society? Is it a question of a new stage in the industrial society or are we entering into a new era? “Global village”, “technotronic era”, “post-industrial society”, “information society” or “information age”, and “knowledge society” are just a few of the terms that have been coined in an attempt to identify and understand the extent of these changes.

Library and librarian has recognized the expanding nature of the challenges that is before them and the range of competencies required of them. The challenges represented by these competencies must be seized and acted upon today so as to ensure that professionals in the libraries are viable.

Dike (2007) [37] opined that the level of development which was formerly measured by a country’s Gross National Product (GNP) or Gross Domestic Product (GDP) i.e. the level of economic development, was found faulty due to its irregularities nature i.e. between the rich and the poor moving its industrial based to an information based society which lent more emphasis to human resources development as human beings with the requisite education and skills were seen as key societal resources.

Based on the above statement, library which is both knowledge society and information society is the key to achieving sustainable development which is said to meet the needs of the present without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Summarily, the roles of the library are ever growing because an attempt to educate a man invariably is an effort towards educating the society. Based on this argument put forward the library is the store house of these knowledge/development. It therefore behooves on the library professionals to possess the requisites competencies to be able to collect, process, store and disseminate information effectively so that knowledge and information management will not only affect communities but the society at large.

### **Recommendations**

The followings are recommended:

1. Library should be made to acquire and store modern information technological resources while the librarian should master the art and science of the profession in their work environment.
2. The libraries should grow alongside information technology which has restructured the role of the library to creating access to information and knowledge irrespective of its location in the world through virtual nature of technology.

3. As our counterpart in Europe, America etc prove the relevance of the role of the library; we must not out of laxity make ourselves irrelevant in our provision of information to the communities we serve.
4. Library should provide comprehensive and balanced information resources relevant to the activities of its parent organization.
5. Recognizing the increasing rate and nature of information, libraries should be adequately funded to enable them provide necessary infrastructure for knowledge acquisition and provision of services.
6. Public enlightenment programme, lectures, symposia, conferences should be organized in a non-formal scheme through the rural communities of the state through Federal Ministries of Education.

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