

## ICT'S AND STUDENTS LIBRARY PATRONAGE IN NIGERIA

CHRISTIANA O. CHUKWU

### ABSTRACT

The indispensability of information in the globalized 21<sup>st</sup> century in initiating, attaining and sustaining socio-economic development through enlightenment is significantly symmetric with the nature, nurture and function of libraries as an educational tool of development and empowerment. In the context of this study, the cogency of information and communication technologies (ICT's) is its impacts in capacity innovations and intellectual development. The place of commitment and responsibility of relevant stakeholders is what this research analyzes using Nigeria as a case study. It explores the nature of apathy to libraries and new modes of digital innovations by governments and academic institutions. It argues that the deteriorated states of libraries and library use is a focal factor in the intellectual decline in the educational development of the nation. It posits that spirited, virile, focused and monitored sense of structuring and managing library facilities. This will attuned to new digital realities and investing in the human capital relevant to the librarians and publishing companies. Also, will tremendously act as panacea to developing and harnessing the dividends of library use in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Information, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT's), Library, Nigeria, Intellectual Development, Academic institutions.

### INTRODUCTION

It is undisputable that the value, function and essence of any society in attaining seasoned development hinges largely on its intellectual strength. This truism, a function is conveniently the exclusive preserve of governments and academic institutions necessitates the spirited and strategic approaches. The preponderant relevance of information and communication technologies in catalyzing and giving fillip to library use in a developing country like Nigeria is one that holds the key to accentuating its relevance in the comity of nations.

Attuning to the realities of the digital age, this has become very important as information in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and not only a vehicle but a viable engineer of developments manifested in every facets of the society.

The essence of a digital library as one in which collections are stored in digital formats as opposed to print, microform, or other media are accessible via computers and traditional libraries.

They are an organized collection of information resources made accessible to a defined community for reference or borrowing represent repertoires of knowledge which Agboola and Bamigboye (2011), assert as being an information professionals.

Availability and accessibility are focal factors in the definition of library use. Allen (1984), enunciating the meaning of a library as providing physical or digital access to materials in the form of a building or virtual space explains the inter-working functions of traditional and new digital technologies

in today's world. This school of thought is easily understood when on the one hand, educational research is of immense importance in asserting the worth of academic institutions. On the other hand, the strength of inculcating knowledge in students, who represent future leaders will benefit from sterling workings of library facilities as personnel to be involved in later formulation and implementation of policies.

### **Nigeria and the Essence of the Intellectual drive**

Reading is defined as a complex activity which links the eyes with the mind to come up with the interpretation and evaluation of written symbols is a critical and crucial process that once imbibed and sustained is central to an individual's development. It is a mechanical and thoughtful process requiring the reader to understand what the author is endeavouring to communicate. It is of cogent importance to understand that we live in an information society where the creation, distribution, uses, integration and manipulation of information is a significant economic, political, and cultural activity. Thus, the ability of nations to maximize the gains of library potentials is essentially important in affecting societal output. There is a transmutation from an economy based on material goods to one based on knowledge. This creates an impetus and drive for sustainable development. Libraries as veritable means of general education often provide quiet areas for studying, and they also often offer common areas to facilitate group study and collaboration. Modern libraries are increasingly being redefined as places to get unrestricted access to information in many formats and sources. They are extending services beyond the physical walls of building by providing material accessible by electronic means, and by providing the assistance of libraries in navigating and analyzing very large amount of information with a variety of tools.

But the Nigerian nation is one continuously faced by the daunting challenges of standard libraries availability and utilization. As it is today, many libraries in the nation are dilapidated with most of the books archaic and out of tune with the present while existing ones are in the shape of public and academic libraries are yet to maximize the full potential of the digital drive in library use.

This grotesqueries has yielded in a decline patronage of libraries by relevant uses most significantly students. The implication of this is the abysmal performance in many student examinations in the country such as the West African Examination Council (WAEC), Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) etc.

The discovery is that students and youths generally find it worthwhile engaging in other online activities such as social networking through sites like Facebook, Tweeter, Whatsapp, 280 etc rather than using the internet for educational purposes. Mobile technological devices also play a role in this malaise, advancements in digital technologies have enhanced corruption among students as students now devise new methods to cheat during JAMB Examinations.

Adeleke (2001), notes that, contrary to what held sway in the past when students were dedicated to their studies, social media has come to be of prime essence in their priorities. There is also the phenomena of teachers' apathy as regards imbuing in students' conscientious attitudes to reading. This situation can be understood when viewed in the light of poor financial remuneration for teachers by governments.

Added to the corruption is the phenomenon of special examination centres that engage in fraudulent acts of aiding and abetting students in examinations. During examinations, students go to their special centres to get the answers to examination questions. But there is the argument that the lack of functional libraries can be largely attributed to the decline in patronage of libraries in Nigeria but another school of thought believes that equipping libraries does not guarantee students patronage. The solution is to engage in moral education. It is in this light that an initiative such as the "Bring Back the Book Campaign" an initiative President, Goodluck Jonathan transformation agenda is especially germane to library development in Nigeria. The initiative is geared at reviving a virile reading culture among Nigerian youths. To harness the gains of this programme, the role of libraries cannot be underestimated. What is requisite according to Lynda Akudo (2011), is the establishment of libraries and stocking them with relevant and current books.

Education as must be noted, drives a society with some laudable achievements manifested in various facets of the society. Education is life, traceable to the strength of knowledge to avail the populace. Man has various qualities, these qualities need to be developed for the development of the country. So education plays a complementary role for overall individual social and national development. Reading as a form of education enhances the development of inborn potentials. Furthermore, it develops an individual's personality by preparing him for the future. The whole personality of the child is developed physically, intellectually, morally, socially and aesthetically. With it, man differs from beast, he has reasoning and thinking powers.

### **Digital Libraries in Nigeria's Intellectual Development**

Digital library defined as all the library resources that are available, online through computers and databases differ from the open internet, as they sometimes have restricted access. E-library's edge over connectional libraries is that they provide powerful search capabilities including the abilities to search the text of recent, scanned documents using optional character recognition, desktop access to electronic fillings and issuances, scanned documents, and large format maps. The advantages of digital libraries according to the Gertz Janet (2000), is the leverage they provide in storage space. Digital libraries have the potential to store much more information, simply because digital information requires very little physical space to contain it.

It is however disheartening that Nigeria is yet to come to full grips with the necessities of library digitization. The notion of information as knowledge communicated or received concerning a particular fact or circumstance requires functional approach in making it a maximized gain for the society.

Trends in ICT's as they relate to library use include cataloguing and classification of library materials in the digital era. There is outstanding evidence that ICT has improved cataloguing activities but has at the sometime given rise to some issues of concern to the library, librarian and the users. This includes the training and retraining of personnel through capacity building through self-development, review of curriculum, constant power supply etc.

It must be realized that in academic communities where research plays pivotal role in giving fillip to educational institutions, investment in electronic-resources enhance research teaching of staff and students alike. It is recommended that an increase in the electronic resources is of immense importance as e-resources have removed walls from libraries thereby making library materials accessible to all regardless of time and location.

Librarianship has changed significantly and dramatically both in its role and services to its clientele. Since the emergence of K<sup>T</sup>, changes have occurred in areas of cataloguing, acquisition, circulation, serial control, reference, reprography, administration etc.

Academic institution libraries all over the world occupy prominent positions in the provision of university education. A university library is established to provide information services to enable the institution achieve excellence in the performance of its functions of research, teaching and community service. There are evidence that, academic institution libraries in Nigeria are losing these uses very fast since ICT is not fully embraced by most of the higher education libraries in library service delivery in the country.

Fewer patrons now visit the libraries, because what they used to go to library for are now easily available in electronic libraries accessible from anywhere in the world. In conducting a research, anybody with a computer can now go online to locate, order and receive a copy of articles and journals on diverse subject areas without ever leaving his home.

In order to retain their relevance in this digital age, libraries need to incorporate ICT in the services they offer to their numerous clientele even outside the four walls of their institutions. Libraries are being transferred from book centred to information centred institutions, and emphasis is shifting from book collection hand storage to access and provision of electronic information services.

ICT is applied in various library tasks/procedures, ranging from acquisition, cataloguing, circulation, serials control, reference services, reprography, administration etc. The new ICT has offered libraries more efficient ways of acquiring, organizing, processing, storing, retrieving and disseminating information to library users. It has therefore fulfilled a long dream and goal of librarianship of "anytime", "anything", and "anywhere" (Heterick 1999). That is, library users can now have access to relevant information anytime and anywhere without visiting the physical library, or the constraints of time and geographical barriers.

In other words, with the incorporation of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in libraries, library users (lecturers/students) could have access to relevant information in different university libraries within Nigeria and beyond without physical visits to such libraries for their teaching, learning and research. Many of the reference sources are now in electronic formats, especially in CD-ROM's and the Internet. Most reference librarians now use the internet (online databases) and CD-ROM search to answer queries from library users. Information and communication technologies now offer opportunities to improve academic environment, educational outcomes through efficient access to information within and outside the libraries. The Concept of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Information and Communication Technologies (ICT's) are tools that facilitate the production, transmission, and processing of information and these basically include the computers, the internet and telecommunications. Hence, ICT's consist of hardware, software, networks, and media for collection, storage, processing, transmission and presentation of information. . Information and communication technology (ICT) can be described as arrange of technologies for gathering, retrieving, processing analyzing and transmitting information. Akintunde (2004), *defined TCI' as a terminology which has overtaken information technology (IT) because of its appropriateness and relevance.*

While information technology (IT) focuses on the computer, information and communication technology (ICT) emphasizes the use of technology for development. Thus focusing on the use of computers and other technologies such as telephones to process, transport, transfer voice/video and other data singularly or mixed with least interference or distortion of content. Benefits derivable from

incorporating modern ICT's in library services include; increase in efficiency, productivity level, inter library co-operation and resource sharing.

### **Developing Nigerian Students Reading Culture through ICT Funding and Library Use**

Reading is essential to full participation in modern society. It adds quality to life, provides access to culture and cultural heritage, empowers and emancipate citizens as well as brings people together. It is indubitable that the level of development of any nation is directly proportional to the library level. Basic literacy refers to an individual's ability to read and write.

Libraries have a historic mission of fostering literacy and learning. Libraries are vital to education and research and has shown that current lower levels of proficiency in reading are due to underfunding of libraries and their services (Eyo, 2007). From North to South and from East to West of the country, schools are generally without libraries to support teaching, learning, there is no clear-cut policy on funding school libraries and so those libraries are generally ill-equipped, lacking proper accommodation, qualified staff, relevant information resources such as books and other education materials.

In a survey in Nigeria by Iyiade and Oyekanmi (2009), on the use of school libraries in Nigeria, it was discovered that the libraries are almost non-existent in primary schools while few secondary schools have what could be referred to as reading rooms".

Elaturoti, O. (2003), observed that the libraries of many primary and post-primary schools are so poor that they impede rather than promote learning and knowledge acquisition. They are cases of lack of (not inadequate) dedicated library space, poorly stocked and unattractive libraries etc, which lack the potentials to encourage anyone to read for knowledge or pleasure.

In some cases, majority of these schools exist without libraries. The same condition is applicable to public libraries as Ehigiator (1997), revealed that the funds governments releases to the public library boards amounts far less than what was approved for in a given year and which affects the quality and quantity of materials acquired and the level of services rendered. These are counter productive and constitute great impediment to Nigeria's quest for sustainable development.

### **Imperatives of Nigerian Libraries spirited Adaptation to trends III Globalization**

Globalization and technological innovations are processes that have created a new global change. A change powered by technology, fueled by information and driven by knowledge. Advances in ICT and globalization have enabled resource sharing and exchange of information for various purposes worldwide. This development has placed libraries in most advantageous position that will enable them to serve the information needs of the global village. This brings into focus the concept of digitization as a means of globalization. However, it has become necessary for Nigerian libraries to make their intellectual collections available for global access via the internet in order to fit into the new direction.

According to Ikpahindi (2007), libraries are duty bound to acquire and preserve information from whatever source. Hence there is need for such sources of information to be kept, preserved and made available in a more convenient and accessible format. The changing trend in the digital age has made it imperative for Nigerian libraries now to develop ways on how to manage access to materials available in electronic format and effectively share them, since the digital age has provided a platform which they have to share their resources in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. ICT's have offered

Nigerian libraries more efficient ways of acquiring, organizing, storing and disseminating or transmitting new information technologies which are integral components in the shaping of information systems and have the potential of changing the status quo of libraries, Mosuro, (2000).

In recent times, the traditional methods of providing information services is changing, and also the performance of library tasks in undergoing a major change process. Libraries are thus being transformed from book centred to information centred institutions, and emphasis is shifting from book collection and storage to access and provision of electronic information service, Atinmo (2000).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The current situation of libraries and their uses in Nigeria today is a story of pitiable neglect. Many public libraries in the nation today are choking under the problems of underfunding manifesting varyingly in issues like dilapidated structures, obsolete reading materials which have become daunting as to necessitate a study into the diverse problems impeding the development of libraries and a virile reading culture in Nigeria.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study is poised at analyzing and reviewing the decline in reading culture among Nigerian students, a decline which is viewed as largely orchestrated by the rise in information and communication technologies (ICT's), role of government and relevant stakeholders in resuscitating digitally functional libraries, good structures with relevant reading materials.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Historical Survey**

Doing a survey aimed at understanding the origin of libraries and their uses in Nigeria, this research looks at the antecedent of libraries in Nigeria. The development of university libraries in Nigeria cannot be separated from the evolution and growth of libraries in the country.

The history of library development in Nigeria dates to pre-independence, when the University of Ibadan and its library were established in 1948. Since independence in 1960, there has been an unrelenting upsurge in the establishment of educational institutions at all levels, but especially at the university level.

University libraries as integral academic parts of universities, generally emerged simultaneously with their parent institutions. At independence in 1960, the Federal Government of Nigeria wanted to bridge the literacy and administrative power to establish a university in each of the regions in existence at that time. This brought about the establishment of the University of Nigeria in Nsukka, University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) in Ile-Ife, and Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria (Mordi, 2008).

These universities all established libraries to meet the needs of their students and staff. Over the years, universities and public libraries have increased in number. Federal and state governments have opened more universities, while private individuals and organizations are now licensed to operate universities. There are currently one hundred and four universities with university libraries in Nigeria (Eyo, 2001).

In the light of this, the study will examine the role of relevant stakeholders in keying into advances in global library functions with digitization as a key component. This coupled with assiduous commitment to the import and impact of libraries to the development of the Nigerian nation, the research hopes to explore

how it will elevate the standard of literacy and students library patronage in Nigeria.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Technological Determinism Theory**

The technological determinism theory presumes that a society's technology drives the development of its social structure and cultural values (Wikipedia 2013). According to William Kunz (2006), the theory seeks to show technical developments, media, or technology as a while, as the key mover in history and social change.

It has been summarized as "the belief in technology as a key governing force in society" or alternatively, the idea that technological development determines social change. It is the belief that social progress is driven by technological innovation, which in turn follows an inevitable course.

In the context of this study, this theory will provide a guide to the nature of the research which is an analysis of the import and impact of technology innovations on the utilization of libraries among Nigerian students. The theory will provide a focus regarding the implication of keying into the innovations of information and communication technologies (ICT's) in Nigeria.

### **Impact of ICT on Nigerian Libraries In the Provision of Library and Information Services**

Oduwole, Oyewumi and Oyesiku (2002), viewed that, one of the major characteristics of the information age today is the growth of information services of various kinds in archives, libraries, museums and formal educational institutions which accounts for the bulk of what can be classified as information. The digital age has brought with it innovations meant to bridge the seeming gap that had existed between traditional and modern methods of information, organization and delivery in Nigerian libraries. Today, the advent of computer networks has ushered a new path to the concept of library. The pace of technological innovations and the need for different forms of information presentation in the digital age appeared to be some of the reasons why Nigerian libraries are using computers and other associated technologies in the organization and provision of information services.

In the digital age attention is given to ICT in Nigerian libraries being the engine room of developments and single most important technology that would drive the 21 st century libraries. One of the noticeable trends in the digital age today is the ever increasing demand for ICT facilities in the organization and provision of library and information services in Nigerian libraries.

The emergence of the digital economy is now redefining information search convenience for information seekers in Nigerian libraries, and librarians are now more interested in providing information services to library users with multiple integrated technologies due to easy accessibility and retrieval of the information needed.

Digitization is the new wave of air blowing many libraries globally simply because there is increasing amounts of information available in digital form and this is likely to have significant consequences for information retrieval. With digital libraries, abstracts and indexes are available online and there is easy access to computer held information, together with the possibility of including sound and video, which implies that for many other reference tools, digital format has notable advantage over print.

Williams and Sawy (2003), agree that, if the internet' is on its way to becoming the dominant mode of information exchange, then it is no longer a luxury but a necessity. Similarly, Foskett (1996),

notes that, with digital libraries, a full scale printed encyclopedia contains far more information than any currently available on CD-ROM, a storage method that is certainly the preferred form into the future.

The internet is linking computers together at an increasingly rapid rate. The digital gap is becoming narrowed, a development that make the future of libraries with walls bleak and has caused Jackson and Jackson (1998), to exclaim, will libraries be obsolete too? The answer is no, but library services will change. Multiple catalogues, indexes, abstracts and bibliographies will be replaced by finding tools that can help the user locate information that appears more format, from any source in any language.

What appears to be more certain in the digital age is that, libraries still will have books, films, tapes, etc, information that will ordinarily not be made available on grounds of distance can reach the users world through computer-controlled information network otherwise known as Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC).

This is the age that, information and communication network must and will reach the information seeker wherever he/she is. An age where wireless wallet-size terminals with digital key boards and folding screen will put information users in touch with all information and data sources from anywhere in the world. There is abundant evidence that, it will be a mistake to wait for the next breakthrough in information technology to begin work in libraries. The need already exists for absolute digitization of Nigerian Libraries resources.

Aina (2003), believes that, the availability of full internet access in Nigerian libraries will facilitate online, access to the world of information. The use of computers for example, in the circulation section of the library helps to eliminate some of the repetitive nature of manual work.

### **Closing the Digital Gap in Nigerian Libraries**

Globally, one of the common barriers to the use of ICT's in the digital age is associated with information literacy. Information literacy is an art that extends from knowing how to use computers and access information to critical reflection on the nature of information itself, its technical infrastructure and its social, cultural and philosophical context and impact.

The digital age is characterized with enormous challenges as new innovations in ICT's are emerging. The skills to find, locate and use information from print sources, computer and other storage media are to be acquired. To acquire these skills; Nigerian librarians need education which is K'T based.

Collins and Cheek (1999), described reading as a process that requires the use of complex thought processes to interpret printed symbols as meaningful units and comprehend them as a thought unit in order to understand a printed message. Reading is a total integrative process that starts with the reader and includes the effective, perceptual, and cognitive domains. Through reading, humans have the tools to transfer knowledge to each succeeding generation, it allows one to listen to the wisdom and people of the ages. Every child must, become fully competent in reading to succeed in school and discharge responsibilities as citizens of a democratic society.

Reading is a skill that must be matured from a child's earliest years. Once children know how to read they still need support to reach their full potentials as readers.

The decline in reading among children is offshoot of technological advancements that have brought overall change in the family's social and economic conditions.

Poor reading habits occur in children and young people because reading is not considered a relevant leisure activity as it doesn't form part of children's social interaction and reading is considered a solitary pursuit and is not attractive compared with interactive activity on the internet.

There is also an overriding desire amongst young people to spend more time with their friends than to remain at home reading. Children and consequently youth's social behavior, delinquency, school violence, bullying, internet fraud and examination only natives have a correlation with reading habits.

Poor reading habits are associated with such behavioural pattern, while good reading habits help develop a steady and constructive mind, dearth of libraries in Nigerian has tribute to an impediment in the promotion of reading habits. State and local government proprietors of schools (government and individuals) have not complied with library provisions in the National Policy on Education (NPE).

Public libraries are not being established where they are needed, while the few existing libraries are neither adequately funded nor stocked with reading resources that can affect the lives of the citizens.

### **Role of the Library in Promoting a Virile Reading Culture among Nigerian Students**

Libraries, especially school libraries are fundamental to the design, implementation, and attainment of educational excellence. Libraries are an integral part of the educational development of the school children and youths without the support of efficient libraries, schools cannot successfully achieve the goals of education, which are

1. The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity.
2. The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes of the individual and the Nigerian society.
3. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world, and
4. The acquisition of appropriate skills and social abilities and competence as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society.
5. Libraries provide materials that offer more extensive and varied information to the classroom study alone.

In Nigeria, literacy is recognized as a basic tool for personal and national development. Places permanent literacy and ability to communicate effectively as one of the objectives of school education. The library must provide resources to complement education. These resources can take children and youths far above technical literacy to developing a good reading culture which makes permanent literacy attainable.

The role of the libraries in promoting reading is essentially crucial in developing scientific, reflective thinking and creativity.

Apart from the development of creative and critical thought, the role of the library in the promotion of a good reading culture can be seen in the readers' development of values, attitudes and appreciation. These are difficult to teach in the classrooms.

Encouragement of library use by teachers is a veritable form of boosting the reading culture of Nigerian students; teachers should encourage maximum use of the library and its resources by giving pupils and student assignments and projects that would necessitate frequent visit to the library.

Another form of promoting the reading habit of Nigerian students is through library marketing which includes determining market niches, defining products and services and building good public relations.

**In** the university library setting, for instance, marketing library and information services entails understanding the objectives of the library, researching the needs of the large market, packaging the library and its services to achieve these needs, then promotion of the library and its services to attract the target market, and finally pricing.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study analyzes the general decline in library use among Nigerian students, the deteriorated state of many public libraries and the imperatives of spirited attention to trends and innovations in the new Information and Communication Technologies (ICT's) and their relevance to the existence of libraries.

Measures needed to bridge the digital divide were highlighted with their potential benefits. It notes that the coming into existence of information and communication technology (ICT) that includes palm tops, notebooks, laptops, desktops, computers and the internet have also contributed to the decline. However, their welcome presence should not take away the culture and habit of reading from students.

## **COMMENDATIONS**

In the light of the apparent decline in library patronage among Nigerian students and the deteriorated state of many public libraries in the nation, it is pertinent that more functional approaches be deployed by governments and relevant stakeholders in attending to the situation through the creation and sustenance of libraries in the institutions of learning.

Functional libraries attuned to the digital realities of the contemporary age with sensitization campaigns on the imperatives of a good reading culture should be promoted, an example is the "Bring Back the Book" campaign of Nigerian president, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan.

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