

Libraries as Platforms for Innovation and Creativity in Information Delivery Services in a Depressed Economy: An Overview of Nigeria

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Abstract - Information explosion of the 21st century has no doubt its attendant challenges, one of which is the unlimited and uncertain information landscape brought about by the application of ICTs on information creation, repackaging and dissemination platforms thus the need for creativity and innovation. Libraries as platforms for innovation and creativity in library and information services involve a continuous improvement for individuals, groups, customers and the entire library setup. It is a process which aimed at continuous improvement. It is therefore not a quick management fix but changing the way things are done within the profession and professional lifetimes. The main objective of this article is to show the increasing relevance of the knowledge production capability of information professionals in the context of information society in a depressed economy like Nigeria. Traditionally Library and information profession services are devised by them as guidelines and facilitators of knowledge. This prevents library and information professionals from playing key roles in or lagging behind in an innovation based economy of the 21st century. In an innovative and creative society, Library and information services embedded in information communication technologies becomes the main source of professional success and capability. However the particular character of library and information services means that privately owned knowledge seems to flow back to the public domain. The peculiarity necessitates continuous production of new products and services and rendering techniques, creative and innovative acts in which ever professionals are not individualistic but collective collaborative process. Emerging collaborative systems on computer networks such as the nets make libraries platforms for innovative and creativity in library and information services. Library and information practitioners may find it useful to study such systems to be able to develop and render the much needed innovative and creative services.

Keywords – Libraries, Information Delivery Services

I. INTRODUCTION

The objective of this article is to show the increasing need and relevance of innovation and creativity function of the library in the knowledge based economies in a country like Nigeria which is faced by the great digital divide or as they are sometimes called challenges of innovative economies. Traditionally the role of the library and by extension information profession is seen to preserve and maintain knowledge contained in documents and other information objects to facilitate access to knowledge. From this perspective, library and information services are limited to transfer of knowledge stored in databases and other documents. This school of thought overlooks the fact that knowledge production involves creativity and

innovation. At present the innovative and creativity used in knowledge production and transfer is not unduly recognised in the information usage community or among the information practitioners in general (Murat, 1999).

It is the overall objectives of the author to help facilitate a better understanding and appreciation of the importance of the conceptualization of libraries as platforms for innovation and creativity in library and information services in the context of future Nigerian libraries with Infinite possibilities.

Concepts

1. Innovation Involves: the making of a change in something established. The new Webster's

Dictionary of the English language defines it as the act of innovating, something newly introduced.

2. Creativity: - Creativity is the ability to generate innovative ideas and manifest them from thought into reality. The word creation according to Webster Collegiate Dictionary (2008) means the act of creating, especially the act of making, inventing or production. Thus, seen broadly, creation involves creative activity which is aimed at doing a new thing, (Ikweegbu, 2010). The process therefore involves original thinking and then production. This cannot be done in void. Creativity is borne out of creation which means doing out of experiences, interpretation and evaluation of challenges encountered that result in something new or novel. Thus, creative principle cannot be attributed to some exclusive or exalted professions. It is common to every kind of labour whether in material or intellectual production; Ikweegbu (2010).

Modern practices in library and information profession is creative by its very nature, In achieving its purpose, the professional consciously sets him/herself to work using new devices, appropriate methods and techniques as well as employing his/her professional knowledge, and talents.

Challenges

If the knowledge based economy of the 21st century is to be achieved there is a greater need for creativity and innovation for the future Nigerian libraries. Because the higher the aim of the creative and innovative activities, and its attainment, the greater the satisfaction of the clientele. From the above one can look at innovation and creativity in library and information services as these activities aimed at sustainable development of the information provision and professionals because of its attributes to the intellectual, inspirational, physical development of man which helps him to overcome challenges in his search for knowledge and development.

Quality Control

It is a common knowledge that the introduction of new products in the market is usually accompanied by an increased demand in human labour in areas such as planning, coordination, management, administration design and research and development. Librarians and information professionals cannot be any exception. But it is worthwhile asking here that if it is certain whether the increase in the number of knowledge based jobs can

continue indefinitely and can help in the sustainability of the information delivery profession. The answer is in affirmative. The reason is not farfetched as an increasing number of organisations outside the library are engaged in the production and sale of consumer information that is books, periodicals, television programmes, videos and home computer soft-wares, website design and social networks etc.

Characteristics

Well known characteristics of information products and services should be recalled as a guide at this point:-

- Knowledge once produced can be reproduced and transmitted at a very low cost.
- Knowledge or information is never consumed (depleted).
- Principally, because of the above characteristics of the knowledge profession, it is extremely difficult to maintain monopolies of knowledge indefinitely and privately owned knowledge tends to flow back into the public domain.
- For the above reasons, knowledge or information is that matter can only acquire a prize (exchange value) when it is protected by some form of monopoly e.g. copyrights, patents etc. Moras-Susuki (1997)

Determinants

The above mentioned characteristics of knowledge generation mean that unless the cycle of production of new knowledge or rendering innovative information services and products is continually repeated, knowledge used will surely fall into the hands of competitors and libraries professionals will really have something to loss in a country like ours with low ICT usage. Though it has been observed elsewhere that much of the knowledge used by librarians in rendering information services and new information products comes as a free social knowledge and when appropriated turn into a source of private profits by other organisations. Maduewesi (2013).

Needs Can be categorized into rising readers needs, internal pressure for improvement, to get the best from the readers/users, low value addition in existing methods, organizational priorities for improvements, advent of ICT and information explosion.

Benefits can also be categorized into increase employee involvement, dedication, team work; elimination of defects and errors; higher quality of

services; increased user satisfaction; and modified budget submission process.

Innovation and Creativity

Now-a-days the conservation of knowledge is not considered the only activity of libraries. In order to adapt the libraries to the needs of the users, more attention is given to their vital functions, i.e. the repackaging and dissemination of right information at the right moment and in the right way.

To provide library services to any group of people requires the cooperative effort of many persons. Library managers (Librarians) should be the activating element in setting objectives, planning, services, programmes within the library and motivating people to work toward common goals.

Three Basic Functions

Since the library and information service process concentrates on 'user satisfaction' a study of the approach in the context of each of library functions appears meaningful. They include acquisition of knowledge/Information; organization of knowledge/Information; and dissemination of knowledge/Information.

To satisfy these three basic functions of any library, the innovative and creative services of the management must comprise a set of four principles and these four guiding principles are delight the use of library. i.e User satisfaction; management by fact; user based Management; and continuous improvement in its services.

Delight the customer

This focuses on library users and asks 'what would delight them? This implies a real need to understand the library service. Delight means being best at what really matters most to the users and this can change over time. Being in touch with these changes and always satisfying the users are an integral part of total quality management. The efficiency of the service is evaluated by the response of its users.

Management by fact

Knowing the current quality standards of the service in user's hands is the first stage of being able to improve. We can only measure our improvement if we know the base we are starting from. Decisions are based on fact, are an essential aspect of continuous improvement.

User based management

If the library staffs understands what to do, how to do it and obtain feedback on their performance, they can be encouraged to take responsibility for the quality of their own work. The more staff feels involved, the greater will be their commitment to user satisfaction. Systems, standards and technology themselves will not provide quality. The role of library staff is extremely important in the continuous improvement of quality within the library.

Continuous Improvement

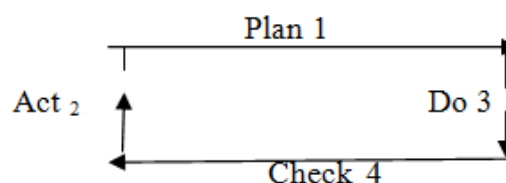
Total quality management is not a short-term activity that will finish when a set target has been achieved. It is not a programme or a project. It is a management process that recognizes that, however much we may improve, our users will help us.

Due to the knowledge explosion, the management of library in these days became less difficult. Acquisition, organization and dissemination of information day by day becoming less complex task, The main common purpose of library and information delivery services is the provision of accurate, prompt and up to date answers(information) in response to clientele's reference questions. Such a goal gets at the heart of the profession and suggests a primary mission (User Satisfaction) of the library is only done through creative and innovative library and information services.

Driving forces

Library and information services delivery in any library is supported by four driving forces or pillars that move the organisation toward full rendering of quality services. The four pillars of the house of quality are user service, continuous improvement, processes and facts, and respect for readers. All are distinct, but equal in strength.

The continuous improvement



Trinity

The library implies the close collaboration of the information recourses, clientele, and staff (brains) which we call trinity of the library. The activities

mainly involved in the acquisition process are selection, ordering, processing and budget keeping.

Information is power and this should be meant for use as kinetic power. This power is continued in the form of information materials. Libraries generally select these resources on the basis of book trade lists, reviewing periodicals, exhibitions and also user requests. Library holdings are useful and good collections only when it is user oriented for future use. The above acquisition helps a lot. But academically brilliant persons are most of the time took part in selection of library resources. Most of the time librarians selecting the information recourses in 1. Targeted mode 2. Financial year pressure 3. Budget allocation and alteration etc. Every library has its book selection committee and is useful for having a balanced stock, yet its recommendations should be advisory in nature instead of mandatory.

While selecting the books for a particular library, we should keep alive in our mind the purpose of the particular library and means through which this purpose can be fulfilled properly. Our efforts should be in the view of Dr. Ranganathan's five laws of library science. Mainly on the fourth (save the time of the reader). Usually the particular book takes a long procedure to be made available to the library user. The user will affect by then directly or indirectly. As our key consideration is user satisfaction which is the primary mission any library. We have to make available resources in least possible time to the user and payment should be prompt enough to the supplier. The main important is the collection development should be balanced in the allotted budget.

The collection has to fulfill the futuristic requirements in the emerging potential fields of significance, and not just providing materials in areas of immediate concern. The pattern and content of collection of books and other reference material really reflect the quality and standards of libraries.

The library performance package of many related services: provision of information recourses - books, journals, documentation, SDI, current awareness, indexing and abstracting, bibliography, reprography, translation, inter library loan, reference service, advisory service on source materials and retrieval of information and documents. All these require creativity and innovation.

Organisation

This organising work involves many more ingredient works which helps to process the books quickly so that

user can get desired resources in minimum possible time. This process includes classification, cataloguing, indexing, abstracting downloading e-materials etc.

This organisation method involves so many things and helps in the transformation of information resources into serviceable articles. Here we have to give up old traditional methods to classify, to catalogue, etc, which is not a good sense as this is computer age. Today library softwares are available and due to these softwares you can serve the user very helpfully and quickly by maintaining computer based management. These require creative minds and innovative approaches.

Dissemination

This function is actual service to the reader. The former functions are worked behind the scene but the present one is with the readers. We have to cut out (minimise the technical services in library even though these are essential for the successfully implementing any any library activity. But our main objective is to develop the resource and make them to utilization according to the users needs. Here we have to plan for the services and its rate should be effective. Usually the library of any kind render the following services to its users: circulation service; user orientation programme; reference services; inter library loan; reprographic service; and documentation service.

Library service is primarily a service for promotion of education and research. Some other special services like CAS SDI services are also rendered in some libraries.

Circulation Service

We find in every library, the information resources are issued to its membered patrons. This is what we call lending service or circulation of reading materials. This service involves every use of library reading materials. The systems and the procedures for this purpose may be different. This service provide quick and accurate information on documents present/not, due for return, reserving system, user category, return statistics etc are very essential for optimum use of library resources and further collection development of resources.

The primary function of circulation department is to get materials to the readers without any delay. Policies concerning the use of books are normally decided by the librarian, frequently with the advice of the library committee. Efficiency of service, prompt delivery of

materials to readers on request is the principal service of the library.

Orientation (User Education)

Usually new members of the library don't know how to use the resources. Even frequent visitor of the library find it very difficult in search of information due to complex nature of information sources and electronic gadget. Therefore he/she must have to get knowledge about the sources. For this purpose library staff should teach and orient in the use of modern library resources.

The term user education, user orientation and user assistance are often used interchangeably. User orientation and user assistance activities relate to a specific information service, while user education is general education activity not relating to particular information system and service.

User orientation covers two interrelated activities which are: familiarizing users with a particular information system or type of system and designing of information systems to meet the requirements of the respective clientele they serve.

According to Ranganathan the equation of document is
Document = Information + Expression + Embodiment

Reference and Information Service

Every library should think about better (quality) service rather than more service. Give the correct information to the queries asked by library users. Make them to use the available reference sources.

It consists in the assistance given to readers in their use of library resources through personal contact. The department has two functions: making resources available to readers and instructions for the use of library.

Inter Library Loan

No library is fully satisfied with its resources and also satisfies its readers. Books, journals in hard or electronic forms are published every year in increasing number, which are important constituent of the library in satisfying the fifth law of library science i.e. Library is a growing organism. If every library wants to purchase all the information resources, it requires huge amount of funds and space. Unfortunately it becomes difficult to procure all books published. An alternative to this situation is to depend on each other for fulfilling the needs of its clientele, this method is called inter library loan (ILL).

Though the ILL is an old concept in librarianship, even today every library most of the time depends on other libraries. This dependence on each other is increasing day-by-day to satisfy their users due to the information explosion, balanced collection of reading materials, non availability of fund.

Modern Trends (ICT)

While innovation and creativity can be applied into rendering the above services to enhance users satisfaction much can also be achieved in the following overview using the much tested, time saving and less labor computer aided information on networks of the 21st century.

Discussion Lists and Usenet Newsgroups

Our libraries as platforms for innovation and creativity embraces discussion and usenet groups. According to Karanl Hagl (2000) discussion lists enable people with a common interest to exchange views, ideas and manages to share their knowledge and expertise to solve problems. This is mostly achieved through e-mails, as most e-mails softwares enable one message to be sent to multiple recipients. Thus using a simple e-mail programme or dedicated list manager can help build a conferencing system that focus on a single or closely selected subjects. Usenet is a distributed conferencing system based on the unix to unix copy program (UUCP) and Network news transport protocol (NNTP). A server to server distribution scheme is used. In this case anyone with appropriate software can read the message, reply and post relevant URL information elsewhere. It is noted that discussion on the list is interdisciplinary and inclusive therefore making it a new medium for the creation of new knowledge.

Social Networks (Information filtering system)

This system is based on the assumption that in everyday life people rely on recommendations made by other people in deciding whether or not to read a book, see a movie, by a CD and so on, Karanl (1999). These systems rely on the voluntary efforts of several people that relate to each other through network information systems to discover and evaluate new information sources. Swasen, 1997.

Research and Electronic Community Systems

Many types of knowledge information professionals including managers, researchers and academics work in groups. This facilitates group cohesiveness and collaborations. Different systems e.g. The integrated

collaborative research systems(ICRS) have been developed. The ICRS supports various stages of knowledge production activities such as research. Good examples of the ICRS include the worm community system, electronic community for molecular bioplasts and Arizona analyst information system for information management and collaboration, Shadanadad Meirs (1998). The system integrates many of the functions needed to support activities in modern libraries and research cycles including entry, indexing, retrieval, analysis and writing of large volumes of textual information.

Internet, Intranet And Extranet

The web has brought to the library and information worked and inexpensive but demanding way of sharing information. The term Intranet describes a closed computer network built upon world wide web technology in which access is restricted to a particular group of users, typically staff of an organization. The term Extranet is used when access is extended to a privilege user group: customers for example. As noted by Watson,(1999) the creation of the intranet into the information world has been accompanied by a redefining of staff roles in an attempt to change them from passive librarian to dynamic research specialist so for the library and information professionals the Intranet offers a wider range of technologies on which they can develop information management skills and ability to render innovative and creative services . The web is not just about finding information: It is about publishing, broadcasting, establishing networks and developing interactive system which has revolutionized the way and manner library and information professionals render this services. For example desktop access to archives using friendly search engines. it has not only been a major boon to libraries, it has also freed library staff from certain amount of routine searching, allowing them to concentrate on the management of information resources with the technology in place now, customizing the browser requires only a minimal knowledge of HTML and the necessary steps of : guide to information services, catalogue of books and CD ROMs and readership information.

II. CONCLUSION

The overall objective of the article is to show the importance of technology, and social knowledge as collaborative means of gathering, distribution and use of information in innovative and creative services in library and information Dissemination Professionals

have seen from the discussion that perpetual innovation and creativity in social means of gathering, sharing and using information is increasingly important as a way of possible and dissemination of new knowledge. It is therefore to argue that for the library and information professional to hold an important stake in the future libraries i.e (Information economy or society) it is necessary to reconceptualizes the role and services of library and information practitioners as producers of information knowledge as well as neutral guardian of knowledge and the tools and systems for production, distribution and management.

The peculiarity of library and information services necessitates renewable and modification of products, production techniques and services: innovative and generally creative services are fundamentally collective and collaborative processes. It is therefore necessary to cultivate, manage and harness the social skills and knowledge of the clientele to maintain constant product renewal and development.

As information professionals it is appropriate to consider the role of collaborative technologies emerging on information networks in the content of innovative and creative services of the library and information professionals. What our perpetual innovation economy requires is creative individuals who work in teams to generate innovative designs, products and services with the changing tastes of the end users to achieving the objective of the old reference of library and information professionals as custodians of books and knowledge must be abandoned. In information based society the library is reconceptualized and managed as a learning environment which continuously harnesses the human capability to be innovative and creative of course, the fundamental unit in a creative learning environment is the team or social group. Since most successful production facilities adapt this principles. The library and information profession should not be an exception such management techniques explicitly resocialize the work place and manage the social aspect of innovation process. This is unlike the old system of isolation and compartmentalized. Not unlike users and information objects- documents, keywords, description etc in most traditional retrieval systems. Libraries and information professional databases are traditionally seen as depositories of objective knowledge. Consequently their role is seen.

III. RECOMMENDATION

This paper wishes to make the following recommendations: For the Nigerian libraries to be

platforms for innovation and creativity in library and information services, library education which emanates from culture with creativity and innovation activities should be used to expose library and information professionals to such resources. Library schools must be proactive in finding and supporting such policies and curricula that are creativity based and which helps professional development, motivation in career path and planning targets at certain stages. Again talent management and personal skills, team buildings, relational management and presentation skills must be encouraged. Innovation and creativity go hand in hand as activities in science and technology have also shown the relevance of creativity towards the achievement of goals. It is the right attitude that propels creativity, innovation and career development and not aptitude.

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