

Strategies for Providing and Promoting Global Access to Nigeria Local and Indigenous Contents by University Libraries: A Synthesis from the Literature

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Abstract

Purpose: This paper identifies how to improve global access to local contents by the university libraries in Nigeria. The local contents are entrusted to the care of the librarians in this digital era to ensure their generation and better visibility through the internet.

Methodology: The exploratory approach was adopted for the study. Firstly, a conceptual framework was developed in order to identify local contents, the scope and the imperative of generating and promoting local contents. The next approach is the identification of the functions of the university libraries and problems involved in providing and promoting global access to local and indigenous contents followed by the strategies and major steps in facilitating global access to local and indigenous contents in Nigeria.

Findings: The strategies for enhancing global access to local contents as revealed by the study include: digitization, creation of database of Nigerian contents, dissemination of information to people, etc.

Practical Implications: Access to local contents should be provided in the university repositories visible to the entire world. Information resources in Nigeria should be revitalized and harnessed by the use of gatekeepers in the local communities for global competitiveness. There should be affordable and free access to internet, quality internet access and connectivity, steady power supply, standardization of applications interface software's and hardware's.

Originality: The work identifies the local contents in Nigeria, the imperative of generating, promoting and disseminating them globally by university libraries in Nigeria. This can enhance wealth creation and development.

Key words: Local Contents, Nigerian Indigenous Knowledge, Global Access to Indigenous Contents, Information services, National Bibliography of Nigeria and University libraries.

Paper Type: Conceptual paper.

Introduction

Providing and promoting global access to Nigeria local and indigenous contents by university libraries is pertinent and involves strategic actions by university libraries in order to achieve an intended result which is globalizing the nation's local or indigenous contents. Strategy is a plan that is intended to achieve a purpose which can be developed by drawing series of action for achieving the aim (Hornby, 2000). It involves the measures of utilizing available human and material resources intelligently and skillfully to arrive to the vision. On the one hand, content may be taken to refer to one or many of the following text, e-journals, images, graphics, video sound, documents records (e-records) movies, iconographies, websites, online databases and e-mails, news,

advertisements, software's and animations (Mutula, 2008).

Local literally means "belonging to or connected with the particular place or area you are talking about or with the place where you live"; indigenous is "belonging to a particular place rather than coming to it from somewhere else" while contents are "the things contained in something" (Hornby, 2000:695,609,247). Local contents refer to "locally owned, adapted, produced or published contents such as artifacts, traditional medicine, architectural designs, music, government systems, arts, handcraft and attire" (Mutala, 2008). Local contents are the same with indigenous contents as they refer to contents from a place or an area and can be used interchangeably. Local contents resources from Nigeria are published and unpublished works of historical, research and intellectual value which

originates from the country. They can be categorized as follows: (Nigeria dailies, newspapers, magazines, journals) textbooks/monographs, government documents, audio-visuals, indigenous knowledge, literature, reference sources, historical documents (archival documents, artifacts, ancient antiquities) theses/dissertations, research reports, musicals/home video, photographs, broadcast, retrieval tools (indexes, abstracts, bibliographies, thesaurus, classification schemes) (Ballantype, 2002). Local contents are valuable because they provide relevant contents; mirror real life situations and operations, draw on local resources and operations, and make people less dependent on outside supplies. They enhance productivity, competitiveness and lower costs. They are useful for acceptability; enhance adaptation, skills and technology transfer. They allow members of a community to express their values and be identified as unique entities.

Libraries over the ages have been potent instrument for creation, acquisition and dissemination of local contents thereby preserving and promoting transmission of cultural practices and values from one generation to another. They are reservoir of recorded knowledge of a community which is being preserved for posterity. Nigerian libraries store contents in form of cultural, educational, scientific and aesthetic creation of Nigeria (Nnebe, 2006). For instance, quick reference materials from Nigeria that contain comprehensive information about places, people, events, personalities etc. are either scarce or unavailable in Nigeria libraries. One can hardly find in many libraries any rich biographical dictionaries containing information on Nigerian/African heroes who have contributed immensely to the development of the country or region of Africa for example who is who for living personality only and dictionary of National Bibliography for deceased personalities or a combination of both. The local contents in Nigeria are to be generated, preserved and disseminated via internet in order to protect the knowledge contents for posterity, ensure global visibility and accessibility by the university libraries.

The Concept of Local / Indigenous Contents

Local contents mean development of local skills, technology transfer, use of local manpower and manufacturers. Abdul Wahheed Khan as cited in Uzuegbu (2012) defines local contents as “an

expression and communication of a community’s locally generated, owned and adapted knowledge and experience that is relevant to the community’s situation”. These definitions show that local contents are indigenous literally or artistic works, best and relevant practices that can impact positively on people’s lives if created and packaged by the university libraries. Therefore local contents can be defined as all raw, untapped and virgin contents embedded in indigenous knowledge of a defined geographical boundary. The local contents of Nigerians encompass indigenous knowledge, Nigerians work, images and graphics. In addition, there are many local skills and crafts in diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria such as traditional textiles, arts and handcrafts, medicine, building and architectural designs, fashion and designs, hair styles, indigenous tools, etc. Local contents differ from indigenous knowledge in the sense that indigenous knowledge is a local knowledge unique to a given culture which is not generally available but local contents embrace wide range of things resulting from the codification of indigenous knowledge in the right format aiming at different audiences (Jain, 2008 and Mutula, 2008).

Nigeria literary works and musicals are very rich in certain aspects of religious knowledge for instance, oral tradition, folklores, proverbs, and idioms. Festival can be very useful in the codification of Nigeria’s indigenous knowledge (Mabawonku, 2005 and Anyira, Onode and Nwabueze, 2010). These form different bodies of knowledge which library can repackage, preserve for accessibility, and disseminate globally. Moreover, indigenous contents can be accessible in not only the libraries but also museums, archives, electronic and mass media, Nigeria national government and financial institutions.

A key resource in generation of local contents is the National Bibliography of Nigeria which is published by the National Library of Nigeria annually and contains lists of bibliographic resources, prints or audio-visuals acquired as legal deposit. The legal deposit Act mandates private publishers, state and federal government to deposit three or ten and twenty-five copies of any published materials respectively in the national library of Nigeria within one month of publication at their own expense. All these materials are then published in the National Bibliography of Nigeria (NBN) as some of the local contents from Nigeria (Ayotunde, 1996).

The Imperative of Generating and Promoting Local and Indigenous Contents

Local contents are both important and necessary in today's world. They serve as avenue for preserving and conserving Nigerian cultural heritage for posterity as well as its promotion on global scale. Local contents serve as an indicator of sustainable national development. They are avenues for empowerment of Nigerian citizenry for various purposes i.e. problem solving, decision making, provision of employment, deployment of local manpower effective governance hereby contributing to poverty eradication programme of federal and state government (Mabawonku, 2005). In addition, local contents are vital source of development for every nation, in view of that the Africans especially the information experts such as the librarians who have not realized the worth of their own local contents are to do so by organizing, disseminating and applying the information at every sphere of life (Uzuegbu,2012).

Local contents enhance equal access and engage communities by communication strategies. They provide basis for access and participation by all in the information society and improve service delivery especially by government (Aina, 2004). They enhance the visibility of people's culture and their way of life and consequently provide them with an opportunity to link with the outside world. Although local contents access is gained through knowledge and information yet they can help to bridge the knowledge divide with other communities (Raven, 2005). According to Grenier in Ekere and Ekere (2009), indigenous contents can encourage local participation and build partnerships for joint problem solutions, enhance the design and implementation of culturally appropriate development programmes in order to avoid mistakes and help to build up a more suitable future amongst others.

The creation and dissemination of local contents are imperative for enhancing national image. Local contents are therefore, tools for projecting the image of Nigeria and Africa as a whole and key factor in the success of Nigeria rebranding project. Local contents offer avenues for libraries and related institutions to generate revenue to improve their services. This also implies revenue generation for publishers and authors through compensation from libraries. Local contents allow for preservation and diffusion of indigenous knowledge. They are

tools for documenting, preserving and disseminating indigenous knowledge most especially in the areas of health and medicine which are being referred to as alternate medicine. This is gaining acceptance globally and should be perceived so that science and other communities can benefit from them (Ballantype, 2002).

Local contents are the key factor for national cultural development. They can play pivotal roles in the so-called "African Renaissance" such as creating cultural awareness, minimizing outward migration, reducing the incidence of brain drain in our schools etc. For Nigerians at home and abroad their access to indigenous contents implies to access to valuable information to meet their needs in addition to facilitating communication and interaction among them. It is the platform for them to share information, ideas and advice which will foster patriotism and nationalism.

The creation of local contents on the internet according to Rowlee's as cited in Uzuegbu (2012) is vital as consumers spend over forty percent (40%) of their time online while searching for contents such as e-mails, community sites, commerce and other information packages. The local contents of Nigeria can be useful for these consumers for a wide range of things like culture assimilation, personal enlightenment, knowledge transfer and utilization.

The Functions of the University Libraries

The university libraries are those libraries that are set up in the university in order to serve the host institutions where they exist. They are established and maintained to promote teaching, learning and research. In addition, the university libraries promote the acquisition of information materials in different formats, documentation and preservation of knowledge. Other functions of the university libraries are as follows:

- Pursuit, promotion and dissemination of knowledge.
- Research,
- Manpower development,
- Promoting social and economic modernization (Ifidon, 1985).

The university libraries carry out these functions by training the users in the right thinking direction and problem solving processes or in assisting them to develop their vocational skills. They provide materials that are needed for

learning of the entire courses that may be offered. The main purpose of a university library is to support the objectives of a university in the areas of learning, teaching, research and service. The library provides all resources needed for carrying out effective learning and research activities. To the teaching staff, it provides resources and services to support teaching, learning and research. The university libraries provide intellectual leadership, the university serve as the torchbearers who provide the beacons with which government and industry can plan their social and economic development programmes. The university libraries help to train individual intellectuals in academics, social, political, economic developmental programmes of the government policies which helps in molding and re-molding the individual to become a responsible and genuine citizen of our time. The university libraries contribute very greatly in the intellectual development of the citizenry and non-citizenry of the country, Nigeria.

The goals of the university libraries are as follows:

- Encouraging reading,
- Expanding learning resources,
- Developing learning skills,
- Developing critical thought,
- Developing values, attitudes and appreciation,
- Assisting with developmental tasks.

Although, lending and all services rendered by university libraries have been greatly influenced by the evolution of information and communication technologies yet they have the mandate to provide information services.

Problem Involved in Providing and Promoting Global Access to Local and Indigenous Contents in Nigerian Libraries.

Local contents reflect to the communities' way of life and mannerism such as language, attire, traditional regalia, artifacts, embroidery skills, traditional medicine (e.g. dental care), architectural design, music dance community theatre, governance system etc. Generally, Nigeria faces problems such as poverty, malnutrition, high infant mortality rates, insurgency, ethnic strife and environmental degradation, political, economic and social instability. In addition, certain cultural practices hinder access to local contents such as indigenous knowledge. Okoro (2010) notes that

monopolizing indigenous knowledge, cultural values and fear of lose of cultural heritage impede access to local contents in Nigeria. Some local contents such as the traditional bone setting and treatment of some ailments are reserved for the oldest members of families in the lineage of those who are endowed with the potential. The secrets are not open for any other person. These challenges impede information gathering, repackaging, dissemination and globalization by libraries.

Providing global access to local contents involves unlimited availability of information systems including study survey from laptop. Jensen as cited in Mutula (2008) discusses the factors that hinder Nigerians contribution to global content as:

- Low level of computerization,
- Scarcity of computers,
- Lack of proper guideline on the use of computer facilities,
- Limited training,
- Lack of skilled manpower,
- Lack of mechanism to improve collaboration in some areas as electronic networking.
- Vandalism of network infrastructure ,
- High import duties on computer and communication equipment etc.

Other challenges of providing global access to indigenous contents as identified by (Mutula:2008) are lack of : preservation plans for contents, tools for contents creation and sharing, content capacity building strategies, standards for metadata and best practice security issues, access to electricity, content developers, cultural policies. Others are theft of content, language barriers, and poor reading habits.

In Nigeria, most communities do not have access to electricity services. This hampers development of local contents on the web. Also, where electricity power supply is available, there is always high tariff for electricity and internet. The attitude of the populace towards accessing information is poor. There is shortage of publications generated locally and little has been done in order to promote indigenous knowledge. Furthermore, there are generally few well-established local content developers in Nigeria as most research publications are produced in the western part of the world and universities in Nigeria use them for teaching, research and publications. In addition, in Nigerian no cultural

policies are in place to harness the rich cultural practices of the people. As a result of that, the traditional ways of life, knowledge and know how are fast disappearing with the onslaught of foreign cultures through globalization.

In Nigerian libraries there are a number of problems in providing access to local contents in university libraries. These include stock reinforcement, sensitization, indigenous language codification, digitization and documentation of “cultural heritage resources”. The issue of how to reinforce the stock of existing local contents is still a challenge. For instance, the Nigerian libraries are hard-pressed on the need to increase the stock of local content to meet local and global information needs. The available local contents in some of the nation’s libraries are inadequate (Mabawonku, 2005). The main factors responsible for this include: dwindling funding, high prices of books and high cost of publishing.

Sensitization remains a challenge and it is imperative for Nigerian Library Association to sensitize the Nigerian government to sponsor publication of some vital reference materials already mentioned. In addition, the issue of codification of indigenous knowledge and acquisition of materials in indigenous languages including institutionalization of local translation services are factors that hinder global access to Nigerian indigenous contents. Nigerian libraries particularly university, national, public and community libraries are to place more emphasis on generation of local and indigenous contents in the notable Nigerian Languages, most importantly the designated national languages (Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba).

Strategies for Facilitating Global Access to Local and Indigenous Contents in Nigeria Libraries

Global access to local contents can be facilitated through a number of strategies such as: digital literacy, procurement of information and communication technology devices, digitization, creation of database of Nigerian local contents, abstracting and indexing, dissemination of local contents, and provision of opportunities for users.

Digital Literacy:

Digital literacy is all about basic computer skills, ability to navigate on the web and the acquisition of the required skills in information and communication technology. It is the skills and

knowledge needed in order to use a variety of digitally media software applications and hardware devices such as mobile phone, computer, internet technology etc. It also goes further to the ability to understand the digital media content and applications, knowledge and capacity, creation of digital technology. In order to ensure that Nigerians are digitally literate, Mutula, (2008) suggests that the librarians should advice the government to: offer job training and skill development, drive new business models and practices, promote increased public awareness of the opportunities and risk of the online environment. Digital literacy implies creativity, innovative, communicative, and collaborative, research and information fluent, right critical thinking, problem solving and decision making. The increase in digital literacy in Nigeria universities libraries will promote global access to local contents.

Procurement of Information and Communication Devices:

One of the strategies of providing global access to indigenous contents in the university libraries is by acquiring information and communication devices in the university libraries. Oriaifo (2005) defined ICT as the integrated application of computers and telecommunications system in the collection, collation, analysis, processing, storage, retrieval, transmission and communication of information, data and knowledge through different media, which may include audio, visual or the combination of both. Some examples of ICT’s are computer, internet, wide web, teleconferencing, telephone, satellite technology, radio, television, internet scanner, digital video discs etc. The university libraries are mandated to select, acquire, organize collections so as to meet the needs of the information seeker in the required format in addition to timely access.

ICT is a tool for social and economic development which helps to sensitize and create awareness among the general public and all stakeholders about the role of information in the society. It provides establishments for an enabling and desirable legal and regulatory framework that among other things takes into account the convergence of technologies. Therefore, it is pertinent to identify and establish innovative financing mechanism that addresses specific needs of ICT development to local contents (Mutula, 2008).

ICT application to local contents development can be categorized into three broad categories: primary, secondary and tertiary. The primary is simply the availability and affordability of access, the secondary has to do with national developmental goals while the tertiary has to do with the appropriate technology, technological obsolescence and sustainability.

Digitization:

Digitization is simply the conversion of analogue materials to digital formats. It is the creation of multimedia databases enhanced by digital information and offering easy access to cultural and scientific heritage for large population of the users (Masakai cited in Echezona, 2010). The major objective of digitization is to create an institutional repository which can be accessed online thereby enhancing visibility, accessibility and preservation. One of the specific objectives is to develop a mechanism for future use.

The digitization of information materials in Nigeria university libraries is vital to the provision and promotion of global access to local contents. This simply means that the local contents generated in the libraries such as thesis and dissertations, conference proceedings, and other contents are to be converted from analogue to digital formats. In addition, other local contents in Nigeria such as oral literature, indigenous knowledge, proverbs, folklores' etc. will be collected, repackaged and converted to digital formats by libraries before uploading them to the internet.

Creation of Database of Nigerian Local and Indigenous Contents:

Creation of database of Nigerian local contents is vital to the provision and promotion of global access to the local contents. This involves creation of electronic resources which will provide reliable information on local contents published in Nigeria by the university libraries. It should include bibliographic description of titles as well as specific information on university libraries holdings. The database should serve as a central focus for information on Nigeria local content collections in their university libraries, providing tools for resource discovery, access and collection management. The database should be an integral mechanism for identifying existing materials pertinent for accessing local contents globally (Curras, 1987).

Abstracting and Indexing:

An abstract is a synopsis of an information material such as articles, books, etc. It is usually short but contains the salient points like the primary points, methodology, arguments, main results and conclusion. Abstracting services refer to collections of abstracts especially on specific subject areas or fields. An index on the one hand, is an alphabetical listing of ideas, concepts used in a book, periodical and other publications as well as a guide to their locations. Indexing services refer to the collection of indexes which are published on their own right. The essence of indexing is for easy location of the items required. An index reflects such components as authors, titles of contributions, titles of periodicals or other serial publications, place of publication, volumes, issue number, date of issue and page reference (Edoka, 2000).

Abstracting and indexing constitute a vital component in the communication links between the information sources and the ultimate consumer of information. Through abstracting and indexing services information in local contents can be organized so that users can identify documents of interest more easily (Oguntuase, 2004).

Disseminating Indigenous Knowledge:

Indigenous knowledge refers to the local knowledge that is peculiar to a given culture of society. In addition, it is the body of knowledge and skills that has been developed by local people through the acquisition of both formal and informal experience (Warren et. al. in Okoro, 2010). University libraries are hub of intellectual activities and as a result acquire, organize, preserve and disseminate information and as well indigenous knowledge repackaged in appropriate format.

In order to facilitate the creation and dissemination of indigenous knowledge, the department of Library and Information Science in Nigerian universities are offering courses on indigenous knowledge and cultural resources to equip the librarians on the required skills and competencies to carry out the function effectively (Ekere and Ekere, 2009).

Providing Opportunities for Users:

Opportunities are provided for users in order to acquire and create knowledge of local contents and social intelligence through informal channels, patron interactions and social

networks, which are embedded in the web 2.0 tools. The library can facilitate information transfer and process of connecting individuals to the full portfolio of resources available in the community. The use of innovative web 2.0 technologies can be useful for librarians to enhance participation, interaction and user engagement in local content knowledge construction and delivery of library services (Arson, 2003).

Major Steps in Generating and Promoting Local Contents:

The basic steps required in generating and promoting local contents are:

- Increased funding for libraries to enable them increase the stock of their content.
- Inclusion in the curriculum training of librarians in the acquisition, documentation and publication of indigenous knowledge.
- Emphasis on employment of translators, for translation services and dissemination of information in the local languages and vice-verse.
- Subsidizing the cost of the book production to boost book publishing in the country.
- The establishment of printing press in libraries and related institutions for maintenance of bibliographic materials.
- Assurance of protection of intellectual property rights of indigenous repositories.

Recommendations

In view of the thorough examination of the measures by which global access to local contents in Nigeria can be provided and promoted, the following recommendations are made:

- There is need to explore several avenues for raising funds to increase the stock of local contents of the Nigerians by soliciting for funds from national and international organization, friends of the library and making a strong case for increase subvention.
- There is need to digitize the available local contents and placing them on the World Wide Web for both local and global consumption. Digitization of local contents helps to create visibility of these local contents especially when

placed on the internet and as well preserve them for posterity. It also enhances accessibility and globalization of local contents.

- There is need to document the cultural heritage resources in Nigeria and show cases them to the world. In order to enrich the contents of Nigerian libraries, some cultural activities and Nigerian cultural heritage should be documented in both audio-visual and other electronic formats and then place on the web for global consumption.
- Librarians in Nigeria should liaise with gatekeepers in the communities in order to generate and disseminate local contents in local languages for their university libraries. This will create a platform for harmonious development of information society strengthened by the availability of multilingual and multicultural information.
- The Nigerian university libraries should be adequately funded by the government and non-governmental agencies in order to carry out the enormous task of provision of local contents globally.
- The libraries on their own should be able to come up with proposals to modernize their services and attract funding for most of these proposals.
- The university strategic plan should include preservation and conservation of local contents as one of its strategic objectives.
- Nigerian Library Association and National Library of Nigeria should spearhead publication of rich and authoritative biographical dictionaries to cover Nigeria and Africa to enrich the local contents of Nigerian libraries.

Conclusion

Providing and promoting access to local contents in Nigerian libraries is vital and requires the efforts of the governments, librarians, and the individual members of the society. The resource persons, custodians of culture, skillful and talented members of the society must be willing to share their knowledge with others by allowing librarians to gather the needed information, repackage and upload via internet. In addition, the librarians as information professionals have the mandate to revitalize and harness information resources presently lying fallow by

the use of gatekeepers who are like stakeholders in the local communities in order to develop and nurture local contents. University libraries and librarians have a key role to play in promoting African renaissance through the generation of local contents for local and global consumption. They require the co-operation and support of stakeholders in national development most importantly federal and state governments through funding and procurement of ICT facilities needed in the libraries for effective provision of global access to local contents in Nigeria.

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