Talking Up Libraries –21st Century Library Advocacy
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Abstract:

Purpose: The study examined the importance of library advocacy in the digital era.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The methodology adopted was 'contextual analysis', which involved the review of publications on the subject matter, from library collections and the Internet.

Findings: The study discovered total non-involvement of librarians in lobbying programmes, although, some libraries/ librarians are engaged in advocacy activities. It was also discovered that the identification of infrastructure, budget allocation, positive legislation for library development and services as the areas that should be on priority list. It was found out among other things that time, expenses, fatigue, impede effective advocacy.

Implication: The study recommends improvement in leaderships of libraries, good rapport between heads of libraries and policy makers and change of attitude among librarians. The study recommended that Nigerian Library Association should engage all sectors of libraries in articulating the best practices and areas that need immediate lobbying and advocacy.

Originality/Value: Libraries of all kinds should be involved in lobbying and advocacy. Also, libraries should formulate strong and robust policies that would ensure effective and efficient advocacy policy and strictly effect their implementation.

Keywords: Libraries, Advocacy, Lobbying, Contextual analysis, Nigerian Library, Association, Digital Age

Paper type: Non-empirical research

INTRODUCTION

In the past, the library was a place where the history, culture and knowledge of nations were preserved. Their uses were restricted to kings, the nobility and the rich. More recently the library has become the medium through which educational, social and economic information is made available to all. Library information is stored in print media – books, magazines, and newspapers and in non-print media as in slides, films, photographic prints, tapes, microforms, cassettes among other formats. Today, libraries are no longer contained within the physical walls of buildings. Due to the needs of distance education, academic libraries may have been the first to break down those walls, but the demand for at-home access to library materials is being felt in all types of libraries. It is true that people can sit at their home computer and access the Internet, but why can't they also sit at their home and access all of the wonderful worlds of information and entertainment available in their local library? Every library material cannot be ordered online and delivered to their doorsteps the way everything from groceries to automobiles now can be. There is therefore a salient need for libraries in the face of digital era.

Definition of the Library

The word "library" seems to be used in so many different aspects now, from the brick-and-mortar public library to the digital library. Libraries--are changing and dynamic places where librarians help people find the best source of information whether it's a book, a web site, or database entry. In *The Librarian's Book of Lists* (ALA, 2010), George Eberhart offers this definition:

> A library is a collection of resources in a variety of formats that is organized by information professionals or other experts who provide convenient physical, digital, bibliographic, or intellectual access and offer targeted services and programs with the mission of educating, informing, or entertaining a variety of audiences and the goal of stimulating individual learning and advancing society as a whole.(p .1)

The Library as an institution is a collection of books and other informational materials made available to people for reading, study, or

reference. According to Young (1983), the word *library* comes from *liber*, the Latin word for "book." However, library collections have almost always contained a variety of materials. Contemporary libraries maintain collections that include not only printed materials such as manuscripts, books, newspapers, and magazines, but also art reproductions, films, sound and video recordings, maps, photographs, microfiches, CD-ROMs, computer software, online databases, and other media. In addition to maintaining collections within library buildings, modern libraries often feature telecommunications links that provide users with access to information at remote sites (Martin 2003).

The central mission of a library is to collect, organize, preserve, and provide access to knowledge and information. In fulfilling this mission, libraries preserve a valuable record of culture that can be passed down to succeeding generations. Libraries are an essential link in this communication between the past, present, and future. Whether the cultural record is contained in000 books or in electronic formats, libraries ensure that the record is preserved and made available for later use. Libraries provide people with access to the information they need to work, play, learn, and govern.

Types of Library

Different types of libraries exist to serve different needs of users because no single library can possess the information sought by every potential patron. Libraries are generally classified into four major categories: public (as in your local library, often funded by city/local government/state/nation), school media centers (the libraries that cater for primary and secondary school students), academic (libraries at public and private universities and institutions of higher learning), and special libraries (libraries that deal specifically with special items like legal or medical resources, or libraries that are part of institutions dedicated to the study of special subjects.(Mlanga 2014)

However, one should note that these categories are fluid and can often overlap (for example, a law school's library may be considered both special and academic; a local historical society might also be both public in that members of the local community may be able to borrow books, and may even receive public funds, but might also be considered "special" due to a concentration of holdings on a specific topic). Also, many academic libraries have what is called a "Special Collections" section in which books and other media related to a specific topic are collected and cataloged for use

by scholars and members of the public (although non-university supported persons may need special permission to use these resources as they are sometimes old, fragile, and in need of special upkeep or preservation). Each type of library develops its mission statement, collections, services, and facilities to satisfy the needs of its particular clientele.

Academic libraries - are libraries that are hosted in post-secondary educational institutions, such as colleges and universities. Their main function is to provide support in research and resource linkage for students and faculty of the educational institution. Some authors used to have university library as a separate type of library, but they are just the same with academic library save the place of assignment.

National library - serves as a national repository of information, and has the right of legal deposit which is a legal requirement that publishers in the country need to deposit a specified copy of each publication with the library. A National Library is that library which has the duty of collecting and preserving the literature of the nation within and outside the country. Thus, National Libraries are those libraries whose community is the nation at large.

Public library- The public library is an organization established, supported and funded by the community either through local, regional or national government or through some other form of community organization. It provides access to knowledge, information and works of imagination through a wide range of resources and services, making it available equally to all members of the community regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion, language, disability, economic & employment status and educational attainment (ALA 2010).

School library- is a place in the primary and secondary schools where a full range of information resources and accompanying services are accessible to both teachers and students. It represents the unified programme involving the use of audio-visual, printed resources and tools necessary to satisfy the educational needs and recreational interests of pupils, students and their teachers. This include a variety of information resources such as textbooks, journals, reference books, multimedia, etc., selected systematically, organized and disseminated to pupils, students and teachers with the sole aim of supporting and enriching the school curriculum (Anyanwu 2013).

Special library – Special libraries are libraries established in governmental or private institutions to help manage information resources for the benefit of workers and the institution so that the goals of these special libraries can be attained. Many private businesses and public organizations, including hospitals, churches, museums, research laboratories, law firms, and many government departments and agencies, maintain their own libraries for the use of their employees in doing specialized research related to their work. Depending on the particular institution, special libraries may or may not be accessible to the general public or elements thereof.

Do we really need Library in the Digital Age?
The library, for ages has been seen as a repository of information and knowledge. There is hardly any information that will not be the subject of books and other resources of various types of libraries – National, Public, Academic, Social and Special libraries. Since the library could satisfy virtually all the information needs of users, it was heavily relied upon for information for studies, research and other socio-economic and administrative purposes; it is needed at all ages.

Digital age library is simply modern library which involves internet. Librarians described the internet as ubiquitous library; so it is not quite a different thing from traditional library. It just added value to library activities. The impact of change, like in every other spheres of life, attracts great resistances; so, the advent of internet with its attendant knowledge, creativity and literacy is a great challenge to the relevance of library. Consequently, economic and social impacts of library services are poorly understood by the users. There is therefore a need for library advocacy to increase awareness for the role of library in the life of the user community.

What is Library Advocacy?
Library Advocacy is the deliberate, sustained effort to foster understanding of the library program while influencing the attitudes of stakeholders. It can also be seen as support given to a library for its financial and philosophical goals or needs. Most often this takes the form of monetary or material donations or campaigning to the institutions which oversee the library.

Gorman (2005) defines advocate as to plead in favour of, in support of, promote and defend publicly, and advocacy as "a system of organised support, promotion, and defence of a cause, an association, or an institution in the public arena". In specific terms, library advocacy therefore translates into public support and promotion of individual libraries or library services in the public domain. This support has to be properly organised, the action has to be concerted and the campaign should be public. There can be individual private support which is helpful, but for advocacy to be fruitful it has to be by organised group action around a clearly stated goal.

Furthermore, Marcum (2003) states that advocacy is a sustained effort by Librarians and Library associations to keep libraries and the work they do in the minds of the people who make the decisions that affect libraries. Issues in library advocacy include funding, accessibility for specialized groups, intellectual freedom, preferential treatment given to libraries as compared to other sectors amongst many others. Advocacy is to speak on behalf of; to positively argue on behalf of another. It means communication, as an individual or group with decision makers, and others in support of; or opposition to specific issues.

Originally, library advocacy was centered on the library itself, but current trends show libraries positioning themselves to demonstrate how useful they are to their communities. They are enabling forces for learning, providing environment in which creativity is fostered, and repository of culture; in fact, advocacy is planned to capture values and transformative impacts of libraries and librarianship through information service sequel to the changes brought by new technological developments in the libraries.. Thereafter, library advocacy campaign started from America to the rest of the world to uplift the declining position of library in the information world.

The American Library Association (ALA) in 2001, partnered with the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) to create campaign for the World's libraries, a valuable tool for anyone attempting to generate more support for her local library. This is because; there can never be enough resources to fully promote library services and literacy to our communities. Library Advocacy was found useful to help librarians around the world to share ideas, resources and many more things.

For advocacy to succeed as a concept, it has to employ marketing strategies. Kotler (2002) says that marketing deals with identifying and meeting human and social needs. Besant (2002) supports Kotler and argues that librarians and information professionals using this concept are heading for

success. It is in this context that marketing strategies will be used for advancing library and library services advocacy. Advocacy as a system that must survive and succeed must be cognitive of its prevailing environment; both internal and external. It must have a vision and a mission in order to employ strategies and actions to the achievements of its stated goals and objectives. The environment comprises of the acronym '**PEST**'which are elaborated as:

- **P**olitics- The political environment's effect on library and library services can either be negative or positive; for a library to function the political environment must be conducive and supportive.
- **E**conomy- The economic environment needs to be adequately resourced in order for the library and library services to benefit.
- **S**ocial- Society's view and opinion as well as beliefs need to be supportive of the library and library services.
- **T**echnology- Technological changes must be facilitative to the enhancement of libraries and their services, for example, cloud computing in the world of Internet. How is the age of World Wide Web benefiting library services and the library? Activities must be in tandem with technology (Kotler, 2002).

Also the library and information service's advocacy has to address its strengths and weaknesses and deal with its opportunities and threats. Strength occurs when PEST is in favour and support of library and library services. A weakness occurs when PEST is not in favour and support of library and library services. Opportunities come when the environment can be manipulated to favour and support library and library services given limited competing resources. Threats are seen when the environment is not ready and cannot be easily manipulated to support the library and library services given the limited competing resources and also the emergence of competition such as substitute or direct replacement.

Methods of Library Advocacy

There are different campaign methods to showcase library and its activities:

Media campaigns- a diversified collection of media technologies that reach a large audience via mass communication. The technologies through which this communication takes place include a variety of outlets like; film, radio, recorded music, or television.

Public speaking (oratory) is the process or act of performing a speech to a live audience. This type of speech is deliberately structured with three general purposes: to inform, to persuade and to entertain.

Lobbying is a form of advocacy where a direct approach is made to legislators on an issue which plays a significant role in modern politics. Advocacy groups are currently using social media to facilitate civic engagement and collective action.

Public Relations is part of advocacy

Letter writing has been a valuable form of communication among public library advocates. A well-timed and hand-crafted email or strategically sent letter can be a potent mechanism used to sway the decisions of elected officials and the masses. Letters are practical because they can be distributed to many individuals and can serve as representation for library advocates who cannot attend crucial meetings or rallies.

Library programs: libraries frequently use programming to increase awareness of the valuable services and resources that they offer to the community. Some of these programs offer information and educational resources for library advocates and librarians while others are directed towards increasing public knowledge of library services and resources.

Advocacy for different types of Libraries

Advocacy is not simple or easy; it takes some soul-searching, deep thinking, and on-going, hard work. But, with a good plan, it becomes easier and the plan provides a road map to it. A library may make use of the Internet in a number of ways to advertise its contents; from creating their own library website to making the contents of its catalogues searchable online. Some specialised search engines such as Google Scholar offer a way to facilitate searching for academic resources such as journal articles and research papers. The Online Computer Library Center allows library records to be searched online through its WorldCat database. Websites such as Library Thing and Amazon provide abstracts, reviews, and recommendations of books. Libraries provide computers and Internet access to allow people to search for information online. Online information access is particularly attractive to younger library users. All the mentioned processes are advocacy in disguise.

How to get involved in library advocacy

Librarians are not mere spectators but active participants in all library activities. They, along with friends of the library enjoy testifying to the truth about library and librarianship because they are too good not to share. This can be done through organizing library programs where relationships can easily be built with people from outside library profession.

Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

In the school library, the PTA and the library could work collaboratively to build involvement in the school community for both student and parents. When the PTA promotes, invites, and supports library events and initiatives it also can benefit greatly by seeing engagement in the parent teacher organization grow.

Library week

Library week promote library services; build relationships with our patrons and user community. The library is also building the foundation for the families they serve to become powerful advocates for libraries.

Donors Choose

This is a very popular website that enables educators to get donations of supplies, field trips and other learning experiences. It is an incredible way to get projects funded quickly and not have to deal with the bureaucracy of grants. You write it, make a wish list, post it and get funded. As a recipient, you are then required to have the children write thank you notes and take pictures of the donated goods in use for online posting; and speaking to local groups about library needs and issues.

Join the library professional association

Library association activities will help to attract library advocates from far and near.

CONCLUSION

Library advocacy is a powerful tool for library development. Therefore, the professionals should appropriate it knowing fully well that the vision of librarians is shifting rapidly, but the multiple personalities of our work persist. We will collectively be the legacy; responsible for managing centuries of societal records in all formats. We will be the infrastructure; serving as the space, the technology, systems and the expertise. As the repository, we will be held responsible for ensuring the long term availability and usability of our scholarly and cultural output. We will be the portal; serving as a sophisticated and intelligent gateway to expanding multimedia, interactive content and tools. We will be the enterprise; more focused on innovation, business planning, risk, and collaboration as the new completion. Finally, we will be the public interest, defending and expanding access to information.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study made the following recommendations:

- Good rapport between Heads of libraries and policy makers: various heads of libraries should ensure they maintain good relationship with policy makers in their institution, good relationship between both parties can also pave way for successful lobbying and advocacy.
- All libraries can organize special events in their institutions inviting library supporters to meet and speak with chief executives and legislators.
- Nigerian Library Association should seriously chart the modules of capacity building and engage all sectors of libraries in articulating the areas that need immediate lobbying and advocacy and the best strategy to adopt.
- Change of attitude among librarians: librarians should change their attitude towards library services. We should embrace the fact that we as librarians are of noble profession because you cannot lobby and advocate effectively in an environment where you display poor images of yourself and the library profession. When librarians change their attitude, the society at large will change their perception of librarians and library services.

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