



THE LIBRARY AS A MEANS TO AN END AND NOT AN END IN ITSELF

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to present the library as an instrument that could be use in achieving so many set out goals and objectives if its usage is optimized. The work whoops around the various services and operations of libraries to present the opportunities that users could benefit from the use of libraries of all types.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The methodology adopted for use in this work is an exploratory approach. A conceptual framework of the library servicing two worlds was used in enumerating the functionalities of the library. The work also conceptualizes information realm into three difference phases.

Findings: The work found out that the essence of establishing all forms of libraries is to service two separate worlds. The work also noted the need to leverage on information access, use and re-use for self-actualization, presentation and management. The work found out that the essence of libraries of all type is to help individuals or group in the attainment of set aim and objectives.

Practical Implication: From the operations and services rendered by libraries, it is conspicuous that they are not just structured to service itself (Libraries and or Librarians). Libraries acquire resources of all types to service the information requirements of others. The satisfaction of the needs of library users serves as the purpose of library establishment while the needs met are the end means of library usage.

Originality/Value: The work concluded that the entirety of library operation and services is nothing but an act of service to the community (means to an end). The library thereby plays an indirect role in the attainment of set aims and objectives.

Keywords: End Users; Information Service; Information Needs; Library Operation

Introduction

The need and value of information is waxing stronger by the day and it is becoming exceedingly difficult to play down the effects of information on growth and developmental processes. The advent of numerous means through which information is creatable, accessible and shareable is an issue of great concern to everyone that has anything to do with information. It is obvious that people need information but the fact that remains unclear is the volume of information needed at every point in time. Bawden and Robinson (2008) seek to know what quantum of information that could be ascribed to be too much information in a study titled "the dark side of information". Apparently, there are some negative aspects of information access and use that run concurrently with the positive aspect of

information access and use. It is thereby tough to place the multiplicity of information handling options to be positive or negative; it is usually a better option to let the information handler be the judge in each case.

Hjorland (2012) posited that information could be sourced from several means as highlighted in his study on methods of evaluating information sources. The fact that information could be sourced from several means ought to be a blessing but it also appears to be a problem that smile at every information seeker / users. The evolution of information explosion and overload are matters of concern in a technology driven age and time. Everyone seems to be an expert when it comes to information sourcing but the reality of it all is that everyone cannot be an expert in information access, use and management. It is the professional

responsibility of some set of people to help others in their quest for needed information / information materials. Librarians and people of allied professions are trained to do what they do; all of them go through formal educational processes and amass experience over the years to become masters in different aspect of information handling. Information handling is a very serious business and any wrongly executed task has a corresponding ghastly effect on the receiver and the community at large. Man is an information-being that will continue to need information for as long as he lives. Everyone needs information but not everyone knows how to source for needed information. Oshilalu (2018) posited that information seekers are rational beings that are likely to need same information differently. The modern day's library is thereby charge with the task of acquiring same information in multiple ways to ensure that the needs of information users are satisfied in every possible means. Some information users crave for information materials in print formats while some crave for information materials in electronic forms.

Information hubs such as the library engage the services of professionals that are trained to apply techniques in information creation, handling, processing and dissemination. Professional information handlers do not just have the natural flair to handling information, they are meant to go through the required

training process to get the exercise done professionally. Much like other information hubs, the library is charged with the basic task of establishing an effective link between two worlds (the world of information seekers and the world of information users). This work thereby presented the library as a means to an end for the roles they are expected to play in information life cycle. The work related the library to a door with two-faces that is capable of seeing what is happening within and outside.

Libraries Satisfying End Means

The Library as an entity is expected to service two interlinking worlds concurrently. Information is abstract in nature but the point of generating information; it is clearly different from the point of need and / or use. Man needs information as much as information needs man; it cannot be separated from each other. Ibiyeomie (2019) posited that one of the outstanding things needed for self-actualization is information. The likes of Bill Gates, Folorunsho Alakija and Aliko Dangote leverage on information access and use; this people are seriously paying their bills in terms of information access and use. They obviously strive on information accessed and put into effective use at the right point in time. Man desists from existence when he stops seeking / using information while information will not see the light of the day without man playing the expected roles and responsibilities.

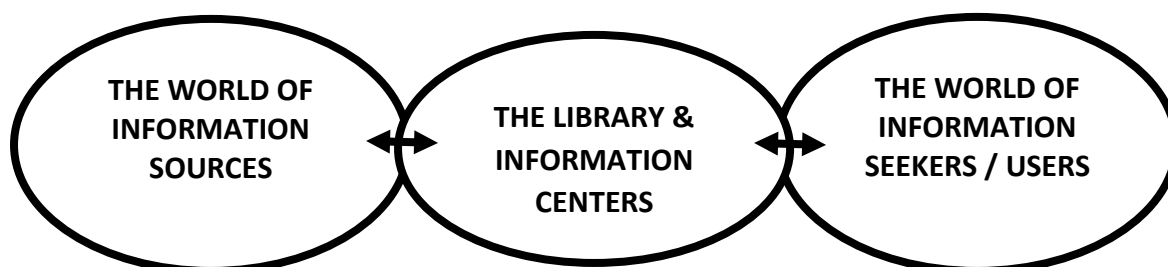


Fig 1: the library servicing two worlds

The figure above presents the library to have a two-face that is capable of seeing the world where information is generated and the world where information is needed / used. The library approaches the various sources of information to acquire information and do the necessary things to get the information ready for dissemination and use by the third party

(information seekers / users). Basically, the essence of operating all forms of libraries is to acquire information materials for eventual dissemination to those that are in need of the information therein. Unlike some other information centers, the library is not expected to hoard information / information materials.

The principle of Library and Information Science propounded by Dr. Ranganathan (1932) posited that “books are for use” and “every book its users”. Libraries are able to sustain this notion by shuttling between the two worlds; the library knows the sources of information in to and they also know the world of users very well to be able to serve each other accordingly. The library interacts with a world where information is sourced, process the sourced information and present the processed information to the other world that is expected to make use of the information. The library thereby services the two parties concurrently. Conscious efforts are made by the library to be sure that information is sourced while same library ensure that necessary measures are taken to see to effective dissemination in the most suitable formats.

Conceptualizing Information Realm

Information is a product that emanated from series of concurrently occurring activities of individuals or group. For every piece of information in circulation, an individual or group must serve as the “source”, a “communication medium” must be employed while some set of individuals or groups must consider the “target audience”. Alvarez (2018) posited that information is an abstract concept based on the “theory of information” propounded by Claude Shannon in the mid-twentieth century. The abstract nature of information makes people pay little or no attention to the various stages that are involve in information generation, organization, processing, packaging, re-package and lot of other activities. The information sourced from a textbook or any other source did not just appear as text, lot of efforts must have been pulled together to get that done. Some must have produced the manuscript; someone must have done the typesetting while someone must have done the editing, publishing, publicizing and other processes involved. Information could thereby be related to a finished product that is not likely to make sense if not well refined from it raw state.

The finish product that is eventually seen as information by everyone has gone through series of realms. As presented in the “information life cycle management theory”

described by Sharma (2011), information is created and received, distributed, used, maintained, and eventually disposed. This study thereby conceived information as a finished product that has gone through some revolving phases, which are;

- Information Source Phase
- Information Organization Phase
- Information Dissemination Phase

Information Source Phase

This phase encompasses all the sources of information that could be consulted during the point of amassing information to further produce information. Information could be sourced from several angles; primary, secondary or tertiary source and printed and or non-printed forms. Information is source-able from virtually everywhere but the ability and interest of the seeker of information plays a lot of roles in determining the quantity and quality of information sourced. An information source to a party may not constitute an information source to another as this is relative in nature. This phase thereby posited that information to be circulated is an offshoot of information sourced over a period of time.

Information Processing Phase

The task of processing information is basically aimed at smoothing the process of getting information to the point-of-use. The phase considered the need in processing information for ease of access and use. At this phase, information seekers devise series of forms to ensure that sourced information is accessible and usable within a reasonable point in time. It is obviously absurd to spend five hours searching for an information material to be used for five minutes. The information compilers that are professionals will apparently adopt the use of a Classification Scheme in organizing their sourced information while the laymen might just organize sourced information using color-code, size and or shapes. Irrespective of the measure adopted, the main thing is that some measures must be put into place to ensure that acquired information are easily accessible and useable when and where needed.

Information Seeking / Use Phase

Ranganathan (1932) posited that “information is for use” simply because information is not expected to be in motion. Every information is expected to have corresponding target audience that need the information for one thing or the other. Information could be said to be useless if there is no end-user; in fact, the information process is incomplete when information is not at the point of use. “Every user his information” is another position of Dr. Ranganathan that points to the fact that the user of information is king and must be reckon with in the information phase. This phase ascribed so much importance to the various information access and usage points. Users / Seekers of information happen to be the essence why information is created and the use of information in most cases was presented by Oshilalu 2008 as the genesis of new set of information.

The Library in an Information Realm

The Library as an information hub plays crucial role in every aspect of information realm. In the information sourcing realm, the library source for information that are expected to sourced by authors, editors, compilers and others in manufacturing new set of information. Information begets information and the end-product of every use of information is the generation of new set of information. Everybody needs information but the fact remains that not everyone knows how to source for needed information. The library uses its professionalism to ensure that needed information are provided to the right set of users(s), at the right set of time and in the more required form(s).

The library ensures that the information sourcing realm is provided with sufficient information to the realm to come-up with quality information. Akindipe (2014) opined that quality of product is grossly influenced by the quality of the raw material. As such, the library uses her professionalism to ensure that necessary scrutiny is done to ensure that information sourced generate new information or set of information that are of good quality. In addition to this, the library serve as a bank were information produced at the information generation realm are sorted, organized and

preserved for continuous access and use. Apotiade (2015) refers to the library as the giant-brain that keeps track of the existence of man and his environment.

The information processing realm is assisted in some ways by the library. The provision of information retrieval techniques helps libraries to ensure that needed information is accessed within a reasonable point in time. The library spends ample time in processing sourced information to simplify retrieval process. Library managers are trained to ensure that minimal time are spent in retrieving information from the shelves. Robert (2001) reported that libraries process information resources by stamping, accessioning, cataloguing, classifying and others.

The essence of processing the acquired resources is to facilitate easy retrieval when and where required. The information seeking / use realm takes advantage of the soon retrieval system in library to ascertain that seekers / users of information spend minimal time accessing needed information. Oshilalu (2018) posited that there is no sense in spending hours looking for information material that is needed for minutes. The library channels all resources to ensure that information seekers / users gain access to needed information resources within a reasonable period of time. One of the library principles propounded by Dr. Ranganathan in 1932 posited that “the time of the Library users should not be wasted”.

A Cross-Section of Library Ends

The library in its own creative and innovative ways contributes to the growth and development of itself and some other parties which are not limited to the list below;

- **Provides Employment (Library Staff):** The Library serves as a means to an end by providing employment opportunity to all the categories of staff in the library. For a library to operate effectively there is the need to engage the service of some people to get the library operations rolling. Abban (2018) categorized the staff in all forms of libraries to be subdivided into professional, para-professional and auxiliary staff.

- **To The Government (Educating the Populace):** One of the key responsibilities of the government of every state is to ensure that the people are educated and this governmental function could be supported with effective library services. Libraries acquire educational materials with the aim of making them accessible, available and usable to the populace. The library thereby join-hands with other educational bodies to ensure that the educational needs of the populace are satisfactorily met. Eze and Uzoigwe (2013) enumerated series of means through which the library could serve as a means to an end in an article titled “the place of academic libraries in Nigerian university education: contributing to the education for all initiative”.
- **To The Community (Preserving Cultures):** In addition to resource acquisition and processing, the library ensures that array of materials possessed are well preserved and or conserved to ensure that there is continuity of access and use. By so doing, the library is serving as a means to an end in helping the people in preserving documented cultures. With the library in good condition, the society can be rest assured that their culture is in safe hands. Oshilalu (2011) posited that library preserve materials in their original forms while conserving materials in forms different from their original forms.
- **To Individuals (Source of Knowledge):** People across age groups need information for different things in different measures but the sources of information remain a big challenge to every information seeker / user. The library absorbed the pains of acquiring knowledge materials in different

ways just to ensure that the information needs of their clientele are well taken care of within a reasonable period in time. The library thereby serves as a source of knowledge to individuals that are willing to profit from the array of holdings in libraries and information centers.

- **To Authors, Editors and Writers:** The library serves this category of people in two classical angles. In the first instance, this category of people consults the holdings in the library to nourish, enrich and develop their respective publications. Graf (2015) argued that publications are as good as materials consulted and used during the course of writing the publication. Secondly, the library provides this category of people with a readymade market for their output. Be it directly or not, publications from several authors, editors and writers gulp a good portion of budgetary allocation in all libraries.

Conclusion

Libraries are service centre that go out of the box to service the needs of others while fewer attention are paid to the satisfaction of their own needs. It is even noted in most cases that more than 90% of the needs of the library are needed because of the library's need to meet with the needs of some other people. The need why library crave to acquire additional resources is simply for the library to be able to meet with the growing needs of the users. Libraries crave to acquire operation materials and host many others because of meeting the information needs of information seekers/users. Over the years, the library has indeed established itself as a means to servicing other ends but never as an end in itself.

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