Role of Libraries in National Development: An Overview

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ABSTRACT

Building an ideal nation requires a holistic approach. The Library has a big role to play in national development. Consequently to guide in taking the advantage of the information resources at its disposal, it is pertinent for professionals with the requisite knowledge and competence at all levels to oversee the collection, management and dissemination of information. Library is an important institution in designing the establishment of an information policy since it has the expertise as an information provider.

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KEYWORDS: Library, Information Technology, National Development, Knowledge Society.

INTRODUCTION

Libraries as a social institution have considered being an integral part of the society. Library and society are interconnected and dependent each other. We all are living in an information age and recognized its significant role in the all round human development, enabling people to develop their full potential with appropriate education and skills preparing them for a paradigm shift from education stage to work stage. It is to be noted that libraries provide the basic conditions for life-long learning, independent decision making and cultural development of the individuals and groups of the society.

Libraries are as gateways to knowledge and cultural development. Institutions in all sectors of economy - be it an education, research or services sectors - needed libraries for the overall development. They need them because library is one of the most effective means of making information available for cultural, economic, education and recreation and social development. Educational institutes needed libraries to support formal and informal education, learning activities, to support literacy, check digital divide and help shape the new ideas and perspectives that are central to a creative and innovative society. Therefore libraries in particular offer a means by which institutions can gain the knowledge and its accessibility, thought and culture.

Why Communities Need Libraries

Society need libraries to create awareness among under-privileged sections of the society for their empowerment, such information on upcoming opportunities in the market for skill development, employment in the societal institutions, opportunities for their engagement in social and economic sectors. Communities need libraries so that people become well informed citizens; they are able to exercise their democratic rights and play an active role in societal development, human freedom and prosperity. The State, the largest institutional partner in the society also needs libraries for creating awareness in public about governmental policies, projects and programs, decision making, promoting trade and culture and so on. Hence libraries are rich repositories of historically and culturally significant collections, many of which are not available anywhere else in the world. Society needs libraries to reserve records of knowledge created and accumulated by present and past generations.

It would be difficult to advance research and human knowledge or preserve the world's cumulative knowledge and heritage for future generations in a world without libraries. Society needs libraries for capturing and preserving traditional knowledge, **"born digital"** works such as websites or electronic journals and manuscripts and other rare documents not available in print format.

Impact of Libraries in Society

Libraries necessitate societies as much as societies need libraries. Societies have impacted libraries in several ways. It was mainly due to advances and progressions in the ICT that ancient libraries could see change in their basic operations and services, bring change in their working situation, effect new modes of acquisitions such as e-resources that assume the adoption of new access ground plans, etc. In the interposing electronic generation, the mechanisms for information dissemination in libraries have since changed from print to online.

The operation of Web-based information sources and electronic privileges has elevated, hence libraries are managed in a more and more democratic way and that library services are more user-centric. The ever expanding user base of institutions in the education sector, service sector and Research and Development sector has certainly influenced and afforded to the outgrowth and expansion of libraries, the dynamics of libraries, and prompting libraries into collaborative system at all levels of library service. As societies advance and modernize, users' expectations from libraries have also changed. Societies have persons of all age groups-men, women and children, all classes of people-rich, middle income group, poor, scholars, teachers, students, semi-literates, illiterates, physically handicapped and blind, different races and ethnic groups and so on comprise modern societies.

Types of Libraries and their Basic Functions

It is important to note that libraries are not only repository of knowledge but has an active role to serve as a catalyst for national development. It opens up minds and inspires people to see vision because the mind is the center point where progress originates. Libraries are responsible for feeding the mind.

There are different types of libraries and each has their core functions

1. National Libraries: These are libraries established to collect and preserve publications of a country. According to the Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science, "a library is called a national one when it is the official

repository of printed works, a general access library; an information-bibliographical center and a center of coordination, planning and stimulation of the entire library system of the nation". In relation to other libraries, national libraries occupy an independent and exceptional position.

2. Public Libraries: In contrast to national libraries, public libraries are established for a region or a local community and supported substantially by public funds. The main purpose of public libraries is to make it possible for members of the community to meet their information needs. They collect materials of value to the community. Their duties are not only to meet existing demands but also to encourage and facilitate demands from more people. They have wide and varied responsibilities, ranging from promotion of individual development, commerce, technical progress, and social and cultural advancement.

3. Academic Libraries: Academic libraries are libraries in higher institutions of learning. They are varied and distinctive as the institutions they serve. These include college libraries, polytechnic libraries, and university libraries. Academic libraries are a place where students, lecturers, and researchers can seek for themselves information needed for their academic pursuit, which is the ultimate goal of education. The basic function of academic libraries is to aid the academic and research programs by acquiring and making available books, other materials, and services needed.

4. Special Libraries: Oti (2000) defined special library as those libraries in big corporations and industries as integral part of their organization. They are to serve the information needs of their parent organization, to enable them achieve their aims and objectives. Special libraries are distinguished by their characteristics, narrow subject interest coverage, and nature of services provided. They provide exhaustive and expeditious service to their users through selective dissemination of information and current awareness services.

5. School Libraries: School libraries are libraries in pre-tertiary institutions such as nursery, primary, and secondary schools with the mission of contributing to the intellectual development of pupils and students. They contain a collection of books and other learning materials, organized by trained professionals and placed in one or two big rooms in the school for the use of the pupils and teachers for learning, recreational activities, personal interest, and interpersonal relationships of children in school. School libraries encourage the development of skill in reading, support the school curriculum, and inculcate intellectual development in school children.

Volatile Role of Libraries

Difficulties in serving them with information and knowledge available in books in libraries still offer a question. The challenge is that their interests, demands and library uses are not routine. The nature of their activities vary sharply and accordingly their needs. Their information needs range from a simple to complex requirements reflecting their varied interests and activities.

Those institutions that handle and manage knowledge and information can only meet such growing expectations of modern society they are none other than libraries. One must understand that society without libraries has no

significance and libraries without society have no origin. Libraries have indeed become an integral part of the growth and development of the society in real sense.

Libraries portrays different things to varied people - from a place where students can go and study, to a service allowing anyone to borrow a book, access the Internet or do research. Quite simply, libraries offer a means by which students, scholars, teachers, professionals, or lay persons and others can gain access to information/knowledge, in particular to the organized collections of books and other published material for reading and borrowing. Being organizational facilities, access to libraries is limited; it is open only to such individuals who are members of the organization of which library is a segment.

Library Represent Trinity

Library is an institution based on users. To make library flourishing it is prudent that the services that a library provides must be user-oriented. User - library association will determine how users view their library. User - library relationships have to be nourished in an organized decorum. Every interaction that a librarian has with users is chance to build healthy relationships.

With a new customer building a relationship does not end after an introductory session about library services. The fact is that libraries have to gain trust and this takes time. It is necessary that libraries also give importance on building integrity between providing excellent advice and patron service. The following activities should assist librarians to build an effective tie ups.

- To facilitate training on information resources or information management tools.
- Attend a meeting, class or conference devoted to the users' area of expertise (not
- Oriented to librarians).
- Meet (in person or virtually) senior members of the user group to discuss
- Information - related needs and services.
- Attend user group meetings to learn about their work and information needs.
- Meet with regular user to discuss information needs and present results to them.
- Attend social events of user groups.

Worthiness of Libraries

Libraries are a dynamic environment in which to work, but they still are struggling to find their place, to establish their territory and define their services in the new information world. Libraries do not exist in vacuum. They are accountable to the funding institutions and their parent institutions; they need to exhibit to them the value of investments made on libraries otherwise their future will be at great risk. Value, of course, is not to be viewed strictly in the economic category. It is more about what meaning a society places on library outputs and outcomes

- Rejuvenating academic and research productivity.
- Connecting the links between information sources and users
- Bridging digital divide
- Libraries are the only institutions that can manage books and information resources without commercial interests.

- Library motivates individuals.
- Libraries are the only institutions that provide free access to resources.
- Libraries serve as gateways to rich library resources.

CONCLUSION

Information "is a vital tool in all forms of human endeavor. It is the link pin of national development" (Achitabwino, 2007). In order to grow more efficiently in all aspects of society, developing countries must collect and provide access to adequate and up-to-date "information on food security, health, democracy, population, education, family planning, youth empowerment, gender equality, environment, etc." (Achitabwino, 2007). In this regard, it is imperative that all hands must be on deck toward establishing effective libraries for the proper management, provision, and dissemination of information.

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