

Fostering Literacy through Extension Services: Academic Libraries for Sustainable Development

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ABSTRACT

Information literacy is the key to community learning and interaction through extension services to increase user statistics and enhance library usefulness in academic community and environment. The relationship between academic library and the community it serves can only work satisfactorily if there is a change process in access to information services. In spite of available library information services, there are clear indications that university community host do not use the library, thus, the need for more interactive approach. Promoting academic library outreach programs will provide the rural dwellers the opportunity to partake in globalization of a sustained knowledge economy. The Social Learning Theory (SLT) was used to explain the cognitive, behavioral and environmental influences of knowledge and skills acquired on problem solving. The paper highlights the need for librarians to move the library services to remote domain and attract users. The paper outline orientation, exhibitions, mobile library, library in cultural programs, reading boots, reading clubs, discussion groups as channels through which libraries in Nigeria can extend their services to support sustainable development goals in education. The study concludes that community literacy programs creates knowledge on new skills, strengthens and increases access to diverse information, thereby, bringing together different information seeking interest to improve human knowledge in the society.

Keywords: Information Literacy, Extension Services, Rural Dwellers, Outreach Programs, Sustainable Development Goals

INTRODUCTION

The word extension is the act of stretching out or expanding. Extension is a mechanism in which different participants are connected and share information, and it is a necessary step in the transition to a knowledge-based economy. In order to improve and transform rural areas into knowledge-based economies, more focus should be placed on information dissemination and learning system with the aim of reducing illiteracy and improving productivity in teeming population (Undiandeye and Vosanka 2008). Access to information is a catalyst for learning opportunities in diversified areas using all forms of education including the library. Thus, the academic library is positioned to be used as instrument for education and training of youths and adults especially girls and women to acquire relevant knowledge, skills, abilities and competencies for a productive life.

Fostering literacy through academic libraries extension services will provide rural dwellers the opportunity to partake in globalization of a

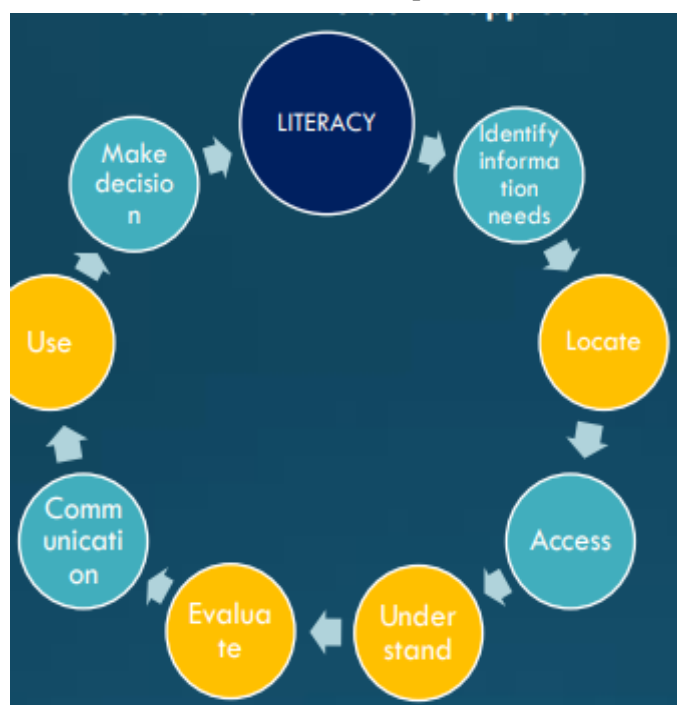
sustained knowledge economy. In addition to its primary clientele, an academic library can make its facilities and services available to all members of the community in which it is situated. This is especially important in Nigerian villages and communities where there are no public libraries but university institutions. Academic libraries can leverage on the United Nation (2015) Sustainable Development Goal number 4 "Quality Education" and Target 4.6 : call on universal literacy and numeracy, this call places literacy as a continuous proficiency level in achieving success in life endeavours. Hence, the call for literacy for all is a clarion one which academic libraries should key into and make its facilities and services accessible to all members of the host community regardless of gender, occupation, creed, age and social status to develop high cognitive skills such as critical thinking, problem solving innovative, creativity, communication, team work and conflict resolution for sustainable lifestyle and global citizenship.

Despite the fact that the academic library is a powerful information dissemination tool, Igbokwe, Ezeji, and Obidike (2010), opine that academic libraries in Nigeria have experienced shrinking budgets, knowledge explosion, and increase of information content prices over time. Also many factors such as technological transition, dwindling funding, budget cuts, and escalating library costs have discouraged library professionals from developing any extension strategies to win the heart of the public and generate full use of their services. The most serious problem confronting Nigerian libraries is a lack of funding (Adebayo, 2004). Igbokwe, Ezeji, and Obidike (2010) added that the lack of funding in libraries is a major setback and

sabotage to libraries' ability to design and deliver high-profit services in Nigeria.

CONCEPT OF INFORMATION LITERACY

Information, according to Nnadozie and Unagha (2015), is defined as answers to questions beginning with words like who, what, where, when, and how many. This means that it may be information about someone or something, as well as factors or specifics about a subject. Literacy is traditionally described as the ability to read and write (Abdulrahman; Rebecca and Egbe...). Knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to analyze, use, and communicate it ethically are all part of information literacy (CILIP, 2012).



Understanding the need for information, the tools available, how to find information, the need to interpret data, how to work with or manipulate results, how to communicate or share your findings, and how to handle your findings are all skills needed to be an information literate individual. As a concept, information literacy aids people in interpreting and making educated decisions. It is a requirement for successful participation in the knowledge society and a fundamental human right to lifelong learning.

Extension Services in Academic Libraries

Libraries play important part in advancing society and also catalysts for national growth. In order to promote the efficient use and application of knowledge to improve personal and societal growth, the 21st century library and

librarians must ensure that information gets to the domain of rural people through extension services literacy programme. The most cost-effective approach of literacy for all is the library's promotional and enhancement services to members of the community. If there is a sustainable mechanism of access to information resources, the partnership between academic libraries and the community will function satisfactorily. Kumar (1987) maintain that, the aim of an extension service is to turn non-readers into readers by putting together information and readers. Mc Colvin.... sees it as a way to "increase the number of readers, and then to make the library more useful to a wider range of people." It is described by the American Library Association's Glossary of Library and Information Science (1983) as the provision of materials and services (including

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advisory services) by a library to individuals and organizations outside of its normal service area, especially to areas where library service is not otherwise accessible.

The aim of the extension services is to establish communication between the librarian and the reader; this entails establishing a friendly and understanding relationship between the library and all members of the community. The librarians' goal is to turn the library into a social center and to:

create and stimulate a desire for good reading

act as a link between mind and idea

play an important role in the community's cultural program

provide library services to areas where there are no public libraries

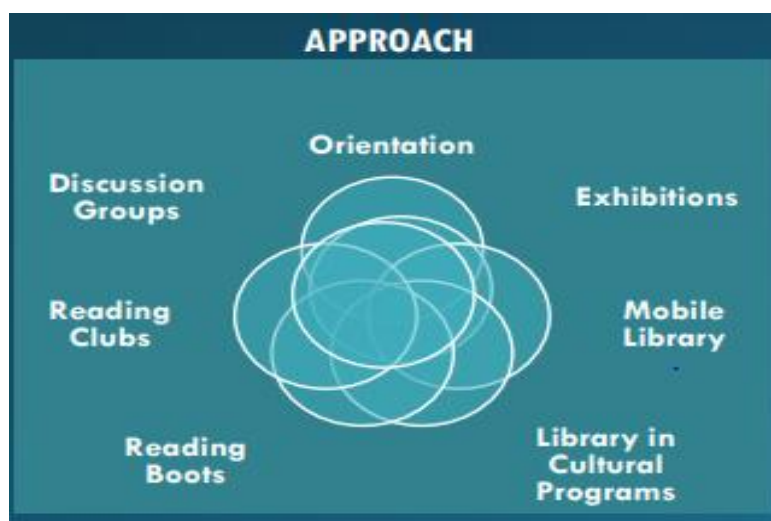
participate in adult education programs For maximum efficiency

Kumar (1987) maintains that enough facilities, equipment and personnel are needed to provide successful extension services in academic libraries

Approaches to Extension Services

Approaches to extension services are very crucial consideration with regards to target audience and participants.

Academic library extension services approach includes:



The academic library's approach to extension services may be of internal or external type. The internal extension service provides orientation programs, while the external extension service includes the mobile library service, marketing campaigns, and other activities. Some of the major types of extension services are defined by Isazadeh (2004) as follows:

Orientation/Library Tour

Many potential library supporters are unaware of how to properly use a library. This may be due to a lack of early presentation, shyness, or apprehension about displaying obliviousness. These concerns prompted the creation of library guidance, which aided library client preparation.

Libraries inform the general public of what items are available in their collections and how to access them. The reference staff may either formally or informally integrate the client into the library system.

Mobile Library Service

Open libraries will familiarize mobile library administrators with residents of remote locations who do not frequent open libraries. Via various tactics, the open library will provide books to them.

DISCUSSION GROUP

The library can also consider creating a "Friends of the Library Community," which can volunteer and advocate on its behalf and help share information resources.

Reading Clubs

Academic libraries can bring together people who share a common interest in a reading circle. The librarians can form a reading circle by bringing together subject specialists. Each reading circle should be provided with the required resources and a convenient meeting location so that they can discuss a variety of topics and share their ideas. Such reading circles are normally useful in ensuring that

library services are fully used for expert analysis of specific subjects.

Reading Boots

Study centers provides library resources to people who are unable to visit the library. These centers are open at all hours of the day and night. Books, periodicals, magazines, newspapers, and other materials are available at reading centers.

Exhibitions

Putting on a book show in the library is indeed a service extension. Exhibits are typically held to promote less well-known materials, encourage reading, promote interest in a specific field or group of subject fields, draw attention to a specific anniversary, encourage hobbies, and make use of the library's many resources. Each exhibit should have a distinct goal. The effective use of color contrasts, background lighting, and equipment can help to pique the readers' attention. An exhibition costs a lot of money, time, and resources, so it should be well thought out and prepared ahead of time.

Library in Cultural Programs

embed library outreach service in festivals and events in the community. Also organize drama, play, film show, enchantment show and book exhibition related to the programme.

The Learning Theory

The academic library as a social service centres driven by power of understanding modalities for impacting knowledge to classes of people not withstanding level of education, environment, diversity and culture. In this context the social learning theory is used to interpret the relationship between learning and literacy.

Social Learning Theory (SLT) as propounded by Albert Bandura (1960) states that most human behavior is learned through observation, imitation, and modeling. Also Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) as propounded by Albert Bandura (1986) asserts that learning can be from interactions, experiences and outside media influences.

Knowledge system constructed based on existing cognitive structures

COGNITIVE

Behavioural responds to environmental condition that shape actions.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Knowledge within social context through interaction and response to environmental stimuli Knowledge constructed within social context through interaction and response to environmental stimuli

BEHAVIOURAL

Learning theory

Describes how people receive, process, and retain information during learning. Cognitive, behavioural and environmental influences are integral part in understanding knowledge and skills for a changed behavior towards a better society. The mental mechanism between stimulus/input and response/output by which a learner takes in, interprets, stores, and retrieves knowledge. There are several components of these mental processes, including: observing, perceiving, interpreting, arranging, remembering, categorizing, and making generalizations. Jean Piaget (2001) states that information is deliberately built by learners based on their current cognitive constructs. Environmental factor concentrates on the person, culture, and relevant subject matter as agents. Observation is a major component of modelling and imitation which can guide subsequent behavior already learnt. Learning occurs as a result of reactions to external events and the library as an educational and social agent cable of changing the society through knowledge dissemination is poised to extend information services to rural communities where is suited to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development through education for human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, appreciation of cultural diversity and culture contribution to sustainable development.

Challenges

Lack of library policy on extension services

Most libraries including University libraries in developing countries such as Nigeria lack a structured library extension service policy, which impedes their deployment for effective user attraction.

Non-continuation of projects and programme initiation

This is a major challenge facing extension services by the library to University host communities. Good and wonderful programmes are usually initiated but unfortunately lack of continuation sets most often caused by change in leadership. Most often as the person at the helm of affairs will not see it as a priority.

Inadequate training and development of librarians for extension services

Another important problem faced by library employees during the process of providing information to the host community is extension staff's lack of expertise. Their level of ICT expertise may have an impact on the information dissemination process. As a result, Teshome, Sigute, and Shayom (2015) emphasized that extension staff's capacity influences the transfer of information and technology to the University host community.

Lack of facilities and infrastructure:

Basic infrastructure is required for libraries (academic libraries included) to function and operate properly and efficiently. Electricity, internet access, information and communication technology tools, audio-visual materials, and other infrastructures are among them. However, most libraries in Nigeria lack these fundamental infrastructure, making it difficult to provide meaningful information to the University host communities.

Lack of funding

The main challenge that libraries confront is a lack of funds, and this is a top concern. The government's shift in attitude toward library provision, as evidenced by the appropriation of funds for rural library services, will dispel this long-held perception in inadequate funding. In the long run, universities benefit because where the lives of rural residents in host communities are improved, their output rises and mutual coexistence grows.

RECOMMENDATION

- Encourage frequent informal interaction and socialization within the rural community preferably with gift items
- Initiate host teams for building meetings, discussions, collective and collaboration exercises

- Listen to the community information need
- Adapt to changing information needs of the community
- Adequate training of librarians who are personally motivated
- Sustainability of community engagement

CONCLUSION

It is important to strengthen literacy contribution to the fulfilment of human development, rights, citizenship from local communities to global levels in sustainable development. The knowledge, information, skills, values, aptitude, attitude and behavior required by human beings to live productive lives and make decisions that add value to the societal growth locally and internationally despite challenges can be achieved through literacy for all.

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