

## EFFECTIVE SELECTION AND ORGANIZATION OF INFORMATION RESOURCES IN SCHOOL LIBRARY

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**ABSTRACT:** *The paper provides an overview of some elements that are necessary for ensuring effective selection and organization of information resources in school library. It explained the meaning, importance and need for best practice in the selection and organization of information resources in school libraries and tied the effectiveness of the process to conformity with Ranganathan's five laws of library science. The paper also highlighted some selection criteria and tools as well as some expected qualities of a selector. Recommendations on the way forward in achieving effective selection and organization of acquired information resources in school library were also itemized.*

**KEYWORDS:** Selection, Organization, Information resources, Ranganathan's law, School library.

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### INTRODUCTION

A school library is one that is established in a primary or secondary school (Edoka 2000). In modern times these libraries are evolved into school library resource centers. According to Fayose (1995), a school library is that part of school where a collection of books periodicals, magazines, and newspapers, films and filmstrips, videotapes, recording of all types, slides, computers, study kits, and other information resources are housed for use by teachers and pupils for learning, recreational activities, personal interest and inter-personal relationships of children in school. This range of information resources is necessary to enable the school library fulfill its functions among which are: to systematically provide information resources required for the school's educational programmes and to assist in improving and increasing the reading skills and learning habits of students.

According to Edoka (2000), the objectives of school libraries is to acquire, process and make available to pupils and students, a wide range of books and audiovisual informations to supplement and enrich the teaching and learning situation in schools. The school library provided information and ideas that are fundamental to functioning successfully in today's information and knowledge based society (Elaturoti, 2000).

The fact has been established that a well-stocked, professionally staffed school library will assist individualized learning and improve students/pupils performance throughout the school curriculum (Shaibu, 1997). For a school library to be functionally effective its holding must be such that will satisfy the users' information requirements and this can only be achieved through a proper collection development process which include selection. Selection is the process of deciding which informations should be added to a library collection. According to Adomi (2006), selection is an essential and inevitable element in collection development and management. This is true for several reasons which include the fact that it is not possible to acquire all available information resources due to lack of funds, continued exponential growth in knowledge and published materials.

An effective selection process may not sufficiently translate to an efficient library system without proper attention to how the selected and acquired information resources are organized. According to Edoka (2000) organization of library collections are achieved through assembling, maintaining and extending the collections of the library. For selection and organization of information resources in school library to be effective it must satisfy the five laws of library science as formulated by S. R. Ranganathan.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Over the years Selection and organization of information resources in school libraries has been a contentious issue for librarians and the library community. The quality or efficiency of a library is determined by its ability to effectively service the target community, but the prevalent situation of inadequate funding of libraries in Nigeria has posed great challenges for libraries to satisfy its statutory responsibilities especially in the area of acquisition of information resources. In a bid to cope with this weak financial situation, there is need for libraries to manage the meager funds allocated to it in the course of selection of information resources to acquire.

Adequate selection of information resources alone will not guarantee the efficacy of a library, hence the need for effective organization of these acquired resources so as to maximize their accessibility and use by patrons. In a bid to address this situation, the paper explores the link between the selection and organization of information resources in school libraries and Ranganathan's five laws of library science as a prerequisite in ensuring effective selection and organization of information resources in school library.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study is on effective selection and organization of information resources in school library. The specific objectives are to:

- i. examine the implication of Ranganathan's Law on the selection and organization of information resources in school libraries;
- ii. itemize criteria for effective selection and organization of information resources in school libraries;
- iii. identify selection tools necessary for effective selection of information resources in school libraries; and
- iv. point out the qualities a selector must possess for effective selection of information resources in school libraries.

### **Implication of Ranganathan's Law in the Selection and Organization of Information Resources**

The Five laws of library science is a theory proposed by S. R. Ranganathan in 1931, detailing the principles of operating a library system. Many librarians worldwide accept them as the foundations of their philosophy (Koehler, 2000).

These laws are (Ranganathan, 1931):

1. Books are for use.
2. Every reader his or her book.
3. Every book its reader.
4. Save the time of the reader.
5. The library is a growing organism.

These five laws are related to selection of library resources as follows:

**Books are for use:** Abiding to this principle will ensure that librarians select and acquire books that are useful to the user community. The selector must ensure that only materials that are useful will be selected and acquired.

According to Koren (2000), too often books and materials are taken off the shelves for children's protection a process which contradicts this principle and results in a breach of the library's goal of intellectual freedom and equal access. Not only are books being taken off the shelves, librarians frequently disregard the organization of children's information materials or categorize items in a way that hinders children from finding the material. Thomson (2004) calls this common practice of librarians, "self-censorship."

**Every user his book:** Abiding to this principle will ensure that in the process of selection of information materials, the selector will be able to select for all members of the community by placing emphases on the characteristics (preference or demand and population distribution) of the user. By so doing it becomes possible to meet the needs of both current and potential users.

According to Feinberg & Keller (2010), what is "great" for one generation of teenagers may be "horrible" for the next. This holds for both selection and how information materials are organized. In considering materials to be selected and how they are organized, three types of needs comes into play (Evans, 2008): *Normative needs* "are materials that experts or teachers, think the students should read"; *Felt needs* "what the students want"; and *Comparative needs* "what is obtainable in other school libraries".

By understanding the needs of the students and other stakeholders the school library can create a useful and inviting environment. Learning to recognize teen behavior, needs, likes and dislikes, is essential in understanding what is necessary and appropriate for youngsters (Bolan, 2009). It is essential that the needs of the students be met if the school library is to be a successful asset to the school.

**Every book its user:** This principle is closely related to the second law but it focuses on the item itself, suggesting that each item in a library has an individual or individuals who would find that item useful. Ranganathan argued that the library could devise many methods to ensure that each item finds it appropriate reader. One method involved the basic rules for access to the collection, most notably the need for open shelving (Rubin, 2004). According to Braxton (2002), kids don't choose books that look like they have "don't touch me" signs on them... Kids choose books that scream "Choose me!" and show off the glorious colors on their covers. Versions of material resources that show off beautiful colours and comics should be selected.

Books and other information resources should be organized in a colourful comical manner that will attract children to it.

Students know what they like and what they need; they should be involved in arranging the library holdings and spaces in order to ensure that an ideal shelving and library space is created for teen use. Shelving must be placed in such a way as to define but not enclose the area and the library materials (Weinberg, 2009).

This principle also guarantees that the selector applies criteria for selection of resources that will ensure that information resources selected are the ones needed by the users. This can be achieved by carrying out a need analysis of the student community.

**Do not waste the time of the library user:** As far as libraries are stocked with relevant materials readers will be able to easily and quickly locate needed information materials. This law recognizes that part of the excellence of library service, is its ability to meet the needs of the library user efficiently. To this end, Ranganathan observed that centralizing the library collection in one location provided distinct advantages.

A school library with irrelevant and poorly organized resources often ends up as a facility where the function follows form, where the pace of services is limited by a dictated poor selection and arrangement of its holdings (Erikson, 2007).

Koren (2000), observed that children information resources are the least organized and difficult to locate in libraries. Catalogues are too frequently created with the adult patron in mind so children have no way to search to see the depth of the library's materials. Children have the same rights as adult library patrons to information access. Every library and librarian should strive to keep the library resources organized and housed in such a way that they would be quickly findable and accessible.

**The library is a growing organism:** This law focused more on the need for internal change that allows the library to accommodate growth in shelving, reading areas, the physical collection, patron use etc. It likened the library to a growing organism and as such selection activity is a continuous process that must take into consideration current and potential readers. Organization of library materials must be specified in such a way as to accommodate this anticipated growth (Bolan, 2009).

### **Selection Criteria**

All information resources, whether purchased or donated, are considered in terms of the institution's laid down criteria. An item need not meet all of these standards in order to be added to the collection. Some of the common criteria are as listed below;

- Popular interest
- Contemporary significance or permanent value
- Currency of information
- Accuracy
- Local emphasis
- Readability or ability to sustain interest

- Treatment of subject to age of intended audience
- Reputation of author, publisher, producer or illustrator
- Creative, literary or technical quality
- Critical assessments in a variety of journals
- Format and ease of use
- Circulation as monitored through the automated system
- Cost and availability
- Relationship to existing materials in collection
- Relationship to materials in other area libraries

### **Selection Tools**

To facilitate an effective selection, the need for the appropriate tools for selection of material resources in school libraries cannot be overemphasized. Among the common selection tools used by librarians (Adomi, 2006) are professional library journals, trade journals, subject bibliographies, publishers' promotional materials, and reviews from reputable sources. Librarians should also be aware of holdings of similar libraries, materials reviewed in national newspapers and magazines, local publications, the broadcast media, and from reputable sources available via the Internet.

### **Qualities of a selector**

To guarantee an effective selection of library and information materials for a school library requires a qualified selector who is expected to possess some qualities that will enable him to select materials that will result in balanced collection in the library. These qualities are as follows (Adomi 2006):

- The selector must be abreast with the happenings in the publishing and book trade.
- He must have a good understanding of the reader community.
- He must possess a good knowledge of books.
- He must have a thorough knowledge of the library collection.
- He must be well informed with a good, impartial and an unbiased sense of judgment that will enable him to easily choose or reject an information material.
- He must be ICT literate.

### **CONCLUSION**

For selection and organization of material resources to make a difference in school libraries, it has to be widely accepted, all encompassing, standardized and applied in a routine fashion. Libraries and librarians have an important role to play in the development of a fundamental selection and organization pattern that will be acceptable. Without these school libraries will

continue to be a “no go area” for all parties, from children users to adult patrons. By understanding the needs of the students, teachers, current and anticipated users, the school library can create a useful and inviting environment. No doubt, learning to recognize teen behavior, their needs, likes and dislikes, is essential in understanding what is necessary and appropriate for them.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Selection and organization of material resources in school library especially when it conforms to standards and takes into consideration all categories of stakeholders in the community offers the needed tool for the advancement of knowledge as well as meeting the library’s main objective of making available a collection that satisfies the informational, cultural, and recreational reading needs and potentials of the younger folks from primary through secondary school age. The way forward in achieving these goals in school libraries in Nigeria are captured in the following recommendations;

- Titles to be selected should include those which meet the general demands of the majority of children as well as titles with special qualities that make them valuable to children with special needs, talents, problems or interests.
- There is need for titles of interest to parents and other adults working with children to be considered during selection.
- Textbooks should be selected for acquisition only when they supply information in areas in which they may be the best or only source.
- Students know what they like and what they need hence should be involved in arranging the library spaces. It is essential that the needs of the students in terms of pattern of arrangement be met if the school library is to be a successful asset to the school.
- Versions of information materials selected should be those with or be organize in colorful comic display that can affect the students desire to use them.
- Children must be accorded same rights to information access as adult library patrons.
- Information materials should be housed or keep within findable and accessible reach.
- Information materials should be organized or categorized in a way that is comprehensible to children.
- Books should be arranged in a way that will make them easy to browse through by children.
- There is need to inculcate best practice in terms of organization of materials so as to impact early knowledge of the importance organization of materials on youngsters.

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