Every Book Its Reader No Matter the Gender

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ABSTRACT: *Reading is a vital factor affecting intellectual and emotional growth. Readers come for their information needs in the library. Librarians provide them and make them leave the library satisfied and fulfilled because libraries are welcoming. Reading is to the mind as exercise is to the body. It keeps the brain active, healthy and productive. Reading is one of the best ways to keep learning, growing and impacting the world around us. I Tim 4:13, summaries the importance of reading when Apostle Paul told Timothy his spiritual son "till I come, give attention to reading." Along with books and librarians, a reader is an important component in a library and information system. This paper therefore, dwells on the third law of library science, the position of libraries and librarians in providing access to information resources and services to readers, challenges encountered and recommendations were also made.*

KEYWORDS: books, libraries, librarians, reader, readership promotion

INTRODUCTION

The term, 'reader' had been extensively used in library literature for a long time, but has now been replaced with probably a more comprehensive term "user". The readers come in all sizes and shapes: the clergy, the uniformed, the learned, the illiterate, the healthy, the challenged, the rich, the poor, the young and the old.

There are a number of terms used as synonyms or near synonyms with "reader". These include such terms as patron, client, customer, user, and member. Some of them seem to have been borrowed from the field of business management). However, "user" is still considered as the preferred term. In this lecture, "reader" and "user" will be used interchangeably to mean a person:

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- who comes to the library for consuming information resources of their interest;
- who uses one or more library services;
- who needs information which can be provided by specific library services;
- who is known to have the intention of using certain information services from the library; and
- who derives a measurable advantage from information service?

A reader/user is a person who visits the library for one or more of the following purposes:

i.   to browse through a collection of the latest arrivals in the library, current journals and similar other documents;

ii.   to seek a particular document for consultation or study in the library or borrow the same;

iii.   to obtain the current references on a specific topic orbibliography of references over a period;

iv.   to obtain factual information on a topic, event, activity etc, through reference source; and

v.   to obtain a photocopy of a journal article, a conference paper or a technical report; and so on.

Characteristics of a Library User

Some of the characteristics of a library user, at an individual level, may be listed but these may not necessarily relate to the information seeking behaviour of the user.

1.   **Age*:* It is one such characteristic that could explain the reading ability or use of information by a user or a user group.

2.   **Personality*:* This is another important characteristic of a user determining their reading ability or use of information.

3.   **Motivation*:* It also determines the information seeking and use as to how a user is motivated to put the information to a better purpose.

Types of Library Users

Even though users of the library differ from library to library, the basic purpose of visiting the libraries remain the same. In all the libraries, the following can be identified.

1.   **The Fresher:** The fresher, or the freshman, is the new member of the library. They should be initiated to the library and introduced to the world of books, and how to find them depending on their reading interest. This is particularly applicable to the academic library.

2.   **Ordinary Readers:** They are ordinary persons with demand for ordinary books, and ordinary services from the library.

3.   **Specialist Readers*:* They are users who specialize in a subject field. Their demand for books will also be specific and research-oriented.

4.   **Special Readers*:* The users placed in this group are those having special information needs needing some special library services. Those are physically challenged such as the visually-impaired and other disabilities.

5.   **Non-Reading Users*:* These are made up of sub-groups who make use of library materials that are not reading materials. A user who comes to the library to borrow a video is an example of a non-reading user.

6.   **Potential User***:* This refers to the user who needs information but may not be able to express them properly, hence it can be provided by specific library services oriented to them.
7.   **Expected User***:* This is the type who is known to have the intention of using certain information services.
8.   **Actual User***:* It is the one who actually uses an information service regardless of whether they derive any advantage from it or not.
9.   **Beneficiary User***:* This is the one who derives a measurable advantage from information services provided by the library.
10.   **General Readers***:* These are assorted groups of users who are not included in any of the above user groups.
Recently the following types of users had been added to the library literature for the sake of ICT services in libraries (Anyira, 2011). They are:
•   **Unskilled user/computer illiterate user:** Interaction between the librarian and users will require the use of ICT in the 21stcentury. The unskilled library user will not even be able to ask the librarian for guidance without the use of ICT or use the library for lack of ICT skill. The unskilled library users are those who use the library services or products through a third party.
•   **Semi-Skilled/Semi-Literate User:** This category of users can use technological devices to access the library services with little or no support. They can effectively use the basic search engines but cannot effectively use the advanced search engine features and operators which have the capacity to retrieve only relevant information from the library's collections.
•   **Skilled User/Computer Literate User:** This category of users consists of those who have undergone ICT training and have acquired relative experiences in the use of technological innovation as they relate to information retrieval. They are able to break information needs into searchable units, translate them into keywords, search for them using basic or advanced search technologies, and retrieve up-to-date, relevant and adequate information.
•   **Abuse Users:** These are unauthorized users. They are very crafty in gaining illegitimate access to library resources online. They are hackers and most times possessors of virus software with which they carry out illegal and malicious acts. It is unfortunate that they too, use the library, but illegally.

Every Book Its Reader: The Third Law of Library Science
 This law advocates easy access to information materials and one way to do it is by putting people together with what they require. Putting information materials in the hands of people who do not necessarily know what they need is at the heart of this third law. Libraries are launching virtual enquiry services through their websites. The emphasis on this law is the book. This implies each book in the library must find a reader. It means each book in the library must appeal to a reader who finds it useful and relevant. It calls for proper and appropriate selection of books in such a way that each book in the library will have a higher probability of getting a reader. Reference service is another way libraries ensure that a book finds a reader. This places on the librarians the burden to bring the readers in contact with the book, especially by drawing attention of the readers to those valuable books which lie unused for a long time and prompt publicity to new arrivals. Proper arrangement of books on the shelves is a sure way o making books attracted to their readers.

The Implications of this Law for Libraries and Librarians in the Contemporary Era
The implications of the third law for libraries and librarians are to conduct user education, performing activities that take library products and services to the users: publicizing the values and benefits, promotional campaigns, and to help users avoid misinformation, disinformation and mal-information.

1: *User Education:* User education is a continuous process of educating the library user for effective utilization of the library resource and its services, especially having the knowledge of the information resources so that every book can be accessed by its reader. It is therefore the process whereby users of information are aware of the value of the library and its information resources. It is the instruction given to readers to help them make the best use of the library. It is the process of providing knowledge and skills to the users of the library regarding the resources, facilities processes, procedures and different techniques of using the library resources. In user education, readers are also trained in gaining skills of using information that will make them capable of carrying out the learning process themselves throughout their lifetime on their own. According to Gardner (1981), the objective; of the user education, which are still relevant today include:
i. Making users aware of the location of the library, its resources procedures and services;
ii. Promoting love for books and reading;
iii. Providing basic skills for collecting information i.e current, retrospective, data, or facts;
iv. Making users skilled in information search techniques for searching information from secondary and tertiary journals, reference sources, and other databases available online and offline; and.
v. Providing strong foundation for the continued and life-time self-education.

Types of User Education
a. *User Awareness Programme***:** The user awareness programme is about making the user community aware of the existence and location of a library, its resources, and services available for the users. This is done through marketing media and techniques such as exhibition, cultural activities, seminars and library visits.
b. *Library Orientation Programme*: This programme involves activities through which users are given basic skills of using the library and its resources. For example, when the library catalogue of a library is automated, then users are instructed about the use of Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), etc. The main objectives of this programme are;
(i) general orientation of available facilities and resources within the library,
(ii) teaching of basic skills and strategies to find required information from the resources of a particular library,
(iii) teaching of organization of the literature in various disciplines and basic reference tools in each discipline, and
(iv) informing users about search tools such as card catalogue, serial list, OPAC, etc.
c. *Interest Profiling Programme*: Interest profiling programme is an activity to create the profile of an individual or a group of individuals working on a project or conducting research. A profile consists of keywords that collectively characterize the subject interests of the individual or

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a group of researchers. In the process, users are given proforma (profile card) that is filled and returned to the library. On the basis of this card, the library creates users' profiles. This profiling provides the basis for bibliographic instruction programme.

d.   *Bibliographic Instruction Programme*: This programme is meant for advanced users for serious study. It is a programme of educating users in the systematic use of information resources. It helps the users in taking maximum advantage of library resources to meet their information needs. Bibliographic instruction is the instruction to a user about the information resources available in a particular subject discipline, and the techniques of making use of those resources.

METHODS OF USER EDUCATION

User education can be provided through the following methods:
i.   Library tour or visit
ii.   Lecture method
iii.   Workshop - about specialized collection, electric resources, online services
iv.   Demonstration
v.   Book exhibition
vi.   Display of new arrivals
vii.   Social media

2.   *Publicity/Propaganda*: This implication for the third law deals with the advertisement about the library and information resources. This can be done through the newspaper, radio, television, and social media. It helps to make the users aware of the holdings of the library.

3.   *Promotional Campaign:* Promotional campaign can be done through book fairs and exhibition. Reading and study circles can be formed where persons and common interest may be brought together to a reading circle. Every reading/study circle will be given necessary information resources, which they may have not come in contact with.

4: Guard against Misinformation, Disinformation and Mal-information (Infodemic and Weaponization of Information)

In the selection of information materials for libraries, librarians are guided by certain criteria which include the author's reputation and qualification, the literacy level of the readers, the physical format of the material, the content of the material, the publisher's reputation, and the cost of the material. As gateway and gatekeepers, libraries ensure an authentic record of knowledge created. As a result of the growing concern the world over about the increasing prevalence of fake news and the consequences; libraries are doing their best to stop the spread. To this end, all books in the library are free from fake news (misinformation, disinformation and mal-information) which have been promoted by social media (Unagha, 2021).

a: *Misinformation* is false information that is spread without the intention of causing harm. It is the mistaken or inadvertent spread of wrong information. Misinformation can be as:
•   **False Connection:** When headlines, visual, or captions do not support the content, this is an example of false connection.. The most common example of this type of content is *clickbait*

headlines. In Nigeria, bloggers and even some journalists increasingly have to write headlines to attract click; even when people read the article they feel that they have been deceived. This can also happen when visuals or captions are used, particularly on social media platforms to give a certain impression, which is not backed up by the text. These misleading visuals and captions can be especially deceptive.

- **Misleading Content:** This type of content is when there is a misleading use of information to frame issues or individuals in certain ways by cropping or choosing quotes or statistics selectively. Visuals are particularly powerful vehicles for disseminating misleading information, as our brains are less likely to be critical of visuals paid adverts that mimic editorial content also fall into this category when it is insufficiently identified as sponsored. Another example is when information is shared among students that examination would begin at a particular date when the examination time table is not out.

b: *Disinformation* is information that is false and the person disseminating it know it is false. It is a deliberate and intentional lie to cause harm. It is false, inaccurate and misleading information designed, presented and promoted to intentionally cause harm to individuals or the public. For example, a false article claiming that the president is preparing to marry another wife and the post of a wedding card. It comes in forms of deceptive advertising (in business and government), doctored photographs, forged documents, fake websites and manipulated information. When people are misled about important dates, investment opportunities, medical treatments or political candidates, it causes serious emotional, financial and even physical harm (Fallies, 2009).

c*: Mal-information* is information based on reality but used to inflict harm on a person, organization or country. It is genuine information deliberately shared to cause harm, especially by moving information designed to be private into the public space. An example is the report that reveals a person's sexual orientation without public interest justification.

Another example is the public outcry when the picture of the new Nigerian e-passport came out with features of a herdsman and his cattle. Some people seized the opportunity to claim that it is a proof of islamization of Nigeria by President Mohammadu Buhari. They forgot to point out that other pages of the same passport have the cultural peculiarities of other ethnic groups in the country, such as the picture of Eyo Masquerade of the Yoruba festival, a picture of bronze sculpture from the ancient Benin Kingdom and even the Efik/Ibibio costumes of their dance troupes (Agozie, 2019).

The Position of Libraries and Librarians in Readership Promotion
The role of the libraries and the librarians in the fight against misinformation, disinformation and mal-information is that before librarians select and disseminate information to users, they trust the content of the information. They check the authority of the information. They also verify the source to know if the information is reliable and free from prejudices and bias. This is the quality that makes libraries unique and stands out from other information providers, such as the Internet, the social media, and the mass media (radio and television). This is why it is usually stated that if one is in doubt of any information, one should use the library.

The need to promote effective reading habits among the general populace ofNigeria has been receiving attention from organizations such as the National Library of Nigeria, the Reading Association of Nigeria and the Nigerian Book Development Council. The National Library of Nigeria has been sponsoring readership promotion campaign in the country. This is done as part of the strategies to ginger up the reading culture in Nigeria. In the selection of information resources for libraries, librarians are guided by certain criteria which include the author's reputation and qualification, the literacy level of the readers, the physical format of the material, the content of the material, the publisher's reputation, and the cost of the material.

As gateway and gatekeepers, libraries and librarians are ensuring that books in the library are free from fake news such as misinformation, disinformation and mal-information. The position of the library and the librarian in the fight against misinformation, disinformation and mal-information is that before librarians select and disseminate information to users, they trust the content of the information. They check the authority of the information. They also verify the source to know if the information is reliable and free from prejudices and bias (Unagha, 2021).

Libraries provide access to reading materials through which individuals can gain and improve their skills. Libraries and librarians help introduce the use of reading for information, pleasure, passing examinations, and personal growth through lifelong learning. Voluntary reading helps develop reading skills and mastery of language, extends individuals' knowledge, and assists them in their academic work. Individuals who read are likely to have background knowledge, familiarity with new topics or subjects, and thus, find learning easier and interesting (Aina, Ogunbeni, Adigun & Ogundipe, 2011).

The position of the libraries and librarians in promoting reading is crucial in developing scientific, reflective thinking and creativity. Librarians can help develop critical and independent thinking through their exposure to a wide variety of instructional resources and learning opportunities. Apart from the development of creative and critical thought, the position of the library in the promotion of reading culture can be seen in the readers' development of values, attitudes, and appreciation.

Libraries and librarians are the custodian of local and international culture. The past generation lives on by the reading of their stored life event. Right from the medieval period up to today, libraries have been very helpful in publicity, assisting in publication and in promoting education, history and peaceful coexistence. Through invention of internet libraries have succeeded in bridging the gap between countries with information plenty and those with lesser information access and create an open society called an information society.

Challenges
The challenges facing readership promotion include:
- **Poor Funding**: Fund is a serious challenge affecting the development of education and libraries. The government does not fund the library adequately and this has caused a lot of

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problems. It hinders effective and efficient service delivery. This problem can be likened to lack of political will; and this has resulted to government negligence to fund library properly. Insufficient fund has led to inadequate provision of current and relevant library materials such as books, magazines, charts, transparencies; photographic slides, and computer instructional packages. Concerted effort should be made by the appropriate supervisory body to monitor effective utilization of funds allocated to the library.

- **Dearth of Libraries**: Libraries and Librarians play an important role in the promotion of reading habits. However, these libraries such as school and public are either non-existent or not playing their expected role. State and local government and proprietors of schools (government and individuals) have not complied with library provisions in the National Policy on Education (NPE). Public libraries are not being established where they are needed. The few existing public libraries are neither adequately funded nor stocked with reading resources that can affect the lives of citizens.

- **Poor Provision and Access to Books**: Poor provision of a varied collection of enjoyable and information-rich books is another challenge facing the library towards reading promotion. Non availability and accessibility of instructional and pleasurable books stimulate poor development of reading and attainment of permanent illiteracy. Libraries are the principal source of books for supplementary instructional resources and voluntary reading. It must, however, be pointed out that many schools do not have libraries at all. Where they exist, the stock in these libraries is grossly insufficient to play the expected role.

- **Lack of Encouragement of Library Usage**: Teachers are not encouraging maximum use of the library and its resources because they are not giving pupils/students assignments/projects that would necessitate frequent visits to the library.

- **Lack of Appropriate Legislation**: The National Policy on Education (NPE) statements on the provision of libraries have not been implemented by the stakeholders. Non-implementation stems from the absence of appropriate legislation. The legislation should act as a road map to library programmes.

Recommendations

Reading of books has declined drastically over the past years as a result of adverse effects of economic, educational and political situations. Poor reading culture has equally led to poor perception and patronage of libraries by the citizenry. Imbibing the culture of reading can assist in finding solutions to socio-economic and political problems. Some of the ways to ameliorate the situation include:

- **Improved Funding**: Fund is crucial to the development of education and libraries; it is a *sine qua none* of performance. Therefore, the Nigerian government has to improve its funding of the education sector, by increasing funds allocated to libraries. This would affect provision of library services. Funds should be earmarked for establishing, equipping and maintenance of libraries. Sufficient fund should be provided to acquire adequate, current and relevant library materials-books, magazines, charts, transparencies; photographic slides, and computer instructional packages. Concerted effort should be made by the appropriate supervisory body to monitor effective utilization of funds allocated to the library.

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- **Establishment of Libraries**: Efforts must be made by government at different levels to establish more libraries in their schools and for the private, club, communities, Religious bodies, organizations (NGOs and CBOs), Old Students Associations, professional bodies, and individuals should be encouraged to assist in the promotion of reading by establishing libraries or supporting already established school and public libraries. This can be done through stocking libraries with good reading materials that can impact on the lives of Nigerians. These libraries should also be provided with professionally qualified personnel to render services to the users.

- **Continued Provision and Access to Books**: provision of a varied collection of enjoyable and information-rich books is a major contribution of the library towards reading promotion. Availability and accessibility of instructional and pleasurable books stimulate development of reading and attainment of permanent literacy. It has been found out that school libraries are the principal source of books for supplementary instructional resources and voluntary reading. It must, however, be pointed out that many schools do not have libraries at all. Where they exist, the stock in these libraries is grossly insufficient to play the expected role.

- **Encouragement of Library Usage**: Teachers should encourage maximum use of the library and its resources by giving pupils/students assignments/projects that would necessitate frequent visits to the library. Such assignments/projects must be practical. They may entail reading a novel and summarizing it, or using the library resources to solve an environmental problem.

- **Appropriate Legislation**: It has earlier been pointed out that the National Policy on Education NPE statements on the provision of libraries has not been implemented by the stakeholders. Non-implementation stems from the absence of appropriate legislation to back up these statements. It is, therefore, been suggested that appropriate legislation be enacted to enforce compliance with the policy statements. Such legislation should stipulate stiffer penalties such as closure of school(s), for non-compliance with the policy statements.

CONCLUSION

Library been the nerve centre of any academic institution, is charged with the responsibility of acquiring and providing access to a variety of instructional and information-rich materials in different formats. The library continues to discharge this responsibility and employ other strategies that can promote reading culture. The habit of reading should begin at an early stage and should be imbibed throughout one's lifetime. The complementary role of the libraries and librarians in inculcating and promoting reading culture in Nigerians should be appreciated. The library becomes increasingly important in the new teaching, for not only does it supply enactment materials in all areas; it also supply materials at all levels of difficulties.

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