THE IMPORTANCE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARY TO NIGERIAN STUDENTS

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INTRODUCTION

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

A library is the mirror of the society and its state of development. Libraries can be defined as media resource, information and cultural centres. They constitute social institutions which exist for the collection, preservation and transmission of human intellectual experience and culture (Aje 1977).

Blakely (1959) ably describes it as:

an instrument for all purposes of other institutions and agencies. It is also an institution in its own right in the community. It is close to the people; it is there to help them, it is also an active and skillful agent to promote cause which exemplifies – education for individual fulfillment on the one hand and the general welfare of society on the other.

In modern times, a library is generally regarded as a repository of information in the sense that it contains both books and non-book materials systematically organized for easy flow of information for those who require them. Information service is designed to provide clients with appropriate educational, vocational and personal-social data needed to understand themselves and their environment. Information service will not only impart information but will also stimulate the students to critically appraise ideas, conditions and trends in order to device personal meanings and implications for both the present and the future.

Libraries specifically aim at:-

1. promoting the education process in the society
2. accelerating the translation of knowledge into social action
3. enabling the individual to obtain spiritual, inspirational and recreational activity through reading and therefore the opportunity of interacting with the society’s wealth of accumulated knowledge

4. Preserving the cultural heritage and effecting the transfer of knowledge from one generation to the next (Okedara 1982).

The object of information service according to Ayoola (1992) are:-

- to help develop a broad view of life’s opportunities and problems at all levels of training
- to help inculcate planned or matured behaviour
- to enhance in the individual skills necessary for proper self appraisal. Knowledge of self development leads to positive images and encourages individuality while lack of knowledge about self- development frequently leads to failure and frustration.

From the above, we can see that libraries occupy a central position in education and as such can be regarded as an important aspect of the educative process and they are essential to the success of all educational programmes. It is little wondered then that Aguola(1990) sees libraries as “collection of records of human culture in diverse formats and languages, preserved, organized and interpreted to meet broad and varying needs of individuals for information, knowledge, recreation and aesthetic enjoyment”.

**LIBRARY SERVICES**

The development of education requires the establishment of a network of supporting libraries to provide the necessary information service. Libraries
as an ally of education can play a vital role in character building and formation, in the development of abilities as well as providing necessary weapons for combating social and economic problems.

A good library service helps the students to turn to inspirational books which may ennoble their lives. Libraries have indeed an important role to play in balanced, integrated, social and economic development. It is an essential tool in providing opportunities for personal advancement and development. They relieve individual frustration and act as a unifying force in the society. Libraries viewed in this perspective could be seen in a sense as a form of insurance against social disintegration and decay and not only the intellectual centre it serves. The library is a training centre for children and adults’ alike coming from different home background. It provides opportunities for self-study and self–discipline and observance of and obedience to set rules and regulations as well as giving them a sense of social responsibilities.

CORE LIBRARY SERVICES

The following services have been identified by IFLA and UNESCO (2000) as the core library services and they are essential to the development of literacy, information literacy, teaching, learning and culture. The services are:-

- Supporting and enhancing educational goals as outlined in the schools mission and curriculum
- Developing and sustaining in students the habits and enjoyment of reading and learning, and the use of libraries throughout their lives
- Offering opportunities for experiences in creating and using information for knowledge, understanding, imagination and enjoyment
• Supporting all students in learning and practicing skills for evaluating and using information regardless of communication within the communities

• Proving access to local, state, national and global resources and opportunities that expose learners to diverse ideas, experiences and opinions

• Organizing activities that encourage cultural and social awareness and sensitivity

• Working with students, teachers, administrators and parent to achieve the mission of the school

• Proclaiming the concept that intellectual freedom and access to information are essential to effective and responsible citizenship and participation in a democracy and

• Promoting reading and the resources and services of the institutional library to the whole community and even beyond

    The library is a vital part of the big working machine that is the school. It is an indispensable element of the life of the school system whose products eventually live in and influence society whose product are the builders of the nation.

**IMPORTANCE OF LIBRARIES TO STUDENT**

• Libraries help to educate people, accelerate progress and provide the data required for the solution of increasingly complex economic, social, educational, cultural, political and scientific problems

• Libraries aids independent students in their investigations

• It provides a lot of opportunities to researchers in their research endeavours
- The library no doubt have exercised a major influence on the learning process, providing the individual with opportunity of learning how to learn, how to discover through self directed study

- It is equally important for the library to refill and update one’s knowledge to reassure people of even what we know, to learn new facts and ideas and to fulfill a particular need (Olorunyomi, 1994)

- The library is an informer, a consultant, a companion and a place of resort to an individual waxing his way to success and development (Olorunyomi, 1991)

- According to Ojo and Olorunyomi (1990), the library by all indications is as important as electricity, water post office, hospitals and other infrastructural facilities that plays an indispensable role in the life of the society

  As a centre of communication, libraries are agencies through which Librarians can best serve the noble cause of education as maintained by Penna (1970) Libraries as an ally of education can play a significant role in character building and formation, in the development of abilities as well as providing necessary weapons for combating social and economic problems. In providing opportunities for personal advancement and development, libraries relieve individuals’ frustration and act as a unifying force in the society. Libraries have special role to play in educating a generation of younger people capable of thinking for themselves and willing to accept and promote innovation.
The importance of library was further highlighted by Ojo and Olorunyomi (1990) while quoting Emerson Greenway – the president of American Library Association 1958-1959 that:

The word of books is the most remarkable creation of man. Nothing else he builds ever last. Movement fall, nations perished, civilization grow old and consequently die out, and after an era of darkness, new races build others. But in the world of books are volumes that have seen this happen and happen again, and yet live on still young, still as fresh as the day they were written, still freshens men’s heart of the hearts of men centuries dead.

This consequently show the great importance of libraries in the preservation of knowledge. Viewed globally therefore, the library is in a sense, a form of insurance against social disintegration and decay and not only the intellectual centre it serves. The library is the hub-nob of learning activities; it is always a bee-hive of intellectual activities. It is instrumental to the achievement of effective and maximum learning function of any educational system.

Libraries provides opportunity for self-study and self discipline and observance and obedience to set rules and regulations as well as giving students a sense of responsibility. Even to the disadvantaged, libraries can help in the removal of language barriers, reduction in corruption, nepotism and tribalism in the society. Libraries can provide materials and machineries to combat illiteracy both total and functional and make it easier too for the physically handicapped by furnishing them with materials for rehabilitation. It is important that a library that is educationally based, trains student field of specialization. Through the library the students recognizes that there are various shades of opinions and different points of views that he must
evaluate, discriminate or weigh one opinion against another before making a final judgment.

Generally speaking, libraries facilitate the planning and implementation of learning programmes that will equip students with the skills necessary to succeed in a constantly changing social and economic environment.

Since libraries have long been recognized as the ‘hearts’ of the institutions, they no doubt help fulfill their mission of supporting the educational objectives of their parent bodies, which include teaching, learning, research and cultural development.

CONCLUSION

Libraries are the centre of learning and the treasure house of knowledge. Libraries are mainly service-oriented organizations. In fact, they play a very significant role in the overall development of the nation.

The central role of the library is to help students learn when they are away from their teachers which reflect in the library’s dedication to the selection, organization, preservation, socialization and making available for use the information and essential knowledge of earlier generation to the latter one.

Thus, a well-stocked, well-staffed and up-to-date library is a prerequisite in the way of higher education.
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