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## A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF TRADITIONAL AND MODERN LIBRARIES

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### ABSTRACT

*People use the library for various reasons and to satisfy different needs. Some use the virtual library specifically to read; others use it for research; and still others use it to communicate and share information. The 21st century library, therefore, emphasizes access rather than ownership. In this vein, the library user needs to take more responsibility in locating and retrieving information from the library's collections than they have done in the traditional library enterprise. It was discovered in this paper that the traditional library has been replaced with an expanded vision of itself, one that encompasses traditional values and features but extends outward to include the vastness of free and licensed digital resources as well as spaces and services that are entirely people-focused. It is universally agreed that every individual, whether literate or not, has an information need. It was generally concluded in this paper that no matter what people use the library for, the fundamental truth is that it is information-related. The modern library saves the time of the library professional and the end user and makes the library service smooth and effective. But without a traditional library, there would be no modern library, no concise phrase that captures our past, and no thumbnail of our future. One of the recommendations made in this paper was that in this our 21<sup>st</sup> century it pertinent to create replace the traditional libraries with the modern ones where an application of ICTs in libraries is made paramount because it facilitates effective control in libraries over the collection, in-house work flow and delivery of user services through Integrated Library Management System (ILM's).*

**KEYWORDS:** Library, Modern Library and Library Users.

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### Introduction

Man's quest for knowledge has led to the creation and accumulation of tremendous amount of information. This search for knowledge knows no bounds and limits, and is never satisfied. It has continued since the dawn of civilization to the modern age. This hard-earned knowledge and information is valuable for the entire mankind and therefore liable to be preserved. With the invention of paper man has been able to convey this knowledge to others by writing books. Thousands of manuscripts have been written by the wise men of the earlier times but many of them were destroyed due to lack of proper means of preservation. With the invention of printing press, it became easier to preserve the knowledge in the form of printed documents. This led to the generation of a large number of books. The need for the preservation and dissemination of information led to the establishment of libraries. Knowledge can be recorded for posterity. It is recorded in different formats – books (an improvement from scroll, vellum, parchment, tablet, etc.), Compact Disc Read-Only-Memory (CD-ROM), Cassettes (Video and Audio), Films, Graphs, Drawings, Maps, Atlases, USB Drive, Internet, etc. It is these media

of information that need to be organized for easy accessibility by intending users. Thus libraries acquired a great importance in the civilized society for education and research.

Libraries play a vital role in the development of any society by enhancing the cause of education and academic research. They cater to the information needs of thousands of people (Osarome, 2011). People who seek and use the information provided in a library to meet their information needs are library users. The 21st century has virtually turned everything virtual, hence the modern library users. The application of computers and other technologies to the acquisition, organization, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information have made it much easier. The computers are used to process and store data, while telecommunications technology provides information communication tools, which make it possible for users to access databases and link them to other computer networks at different locations. With such development, library modern users no longer need to visit a traditional library in order to have access to books, but information could be accessed over the internet through telecommunications gadgets. Application of ICTs in libraries is beneficial because it facilitates effective control in libraries over the collection, in-house work flow and delivery of user services through Integrated Library Management System (ILM's). It also provides speedy, round the clock and easy access to information in digital formats to users.

### **Concept of Library**

Library has been defined variously, taking its root from Latin word “liberarium” meaning ‘book’. The library means different things to different people and institutions. To some it is a place where books and non-book materials are preserved for the purpose of dissemination of information and knowledge and for the benefit of the society it is meant to serve. To others, the library is an institution where books and other information resources are collected, processed, stored, retrieved and disseminated.

Library is a collection of resources, sources, and services or the structure in which the collections is housed. Libraries are agencies through which sources of information of accumulated knowledge and experiences are selected, acquired, organized, preserved and disseminated to those who need them. A Library consists of books, brains and a building which means stock, staff/user and accommodation. A library is a collection of materials organized to provide physical bibliographical and intellectual access to group with a staff that is trained to provide services and program related to information needs of the target group. (American Library Association (ALA))

UNESCO also defines Library as, “any organized collection of printed books and periodical or any other graphic or audio-visual materials with a staff to provide and facilitate the use of such materials as are required to meet the informational research, educational and recreational needs of users.” Harrods librarian’s glossary and reference book define Library as:

A collection of books and other literary material kept for reading, study and consultation; a place, building, rooms, set apart for the keeping and use of a collection of books etc.

A learned institution equipped with treasures of knowledge maintained, organized, and managed by trained personnel to educate the children, men and women continuously and

assist in their self-improvement through an effective and prompt dissemination of information embodied in the resources. An enabling factor to obtain spiritual, inspirational, and recreational activities through reading, and therefore the opportunity of interacting with the society's wealth and accumulated knowledge.

An instrument of self-education; a means of knowledge and factual information, a centre of intellectual recreation, and a beacon of enlightenment that provides accumulated preserved knowledge of civilization which consequently enriches one's mental vision, and dignifies his habit behaviour, character, taste, attitude, conduct, and outlook on life.

A place in which literary and artistic materials, such as books, periodicals newspapers, pamphlets, prints, records, and tapes, are kept for reading, reference, or lending. In a digital sense, a library may be more than a building that houses a collection of books and other materials as the Internet has opened up an avalanche of online and electronic resources for accessing documents on various fields of interest. A collection of texts, images, etc, encoded so as to be stored, retrieved, and read by computer denotes a library.

### **Concept of Library Resources**

Library resources are those materials, both print and non-print, found in school libraries which support curricular and personal information needs. Print items include books, magazines, newspapers, pamphlets, microfiche or microfilm. Non-print items include films, disc records, filmstrips, slides, prints, audiotapes, videotapes, compact discs, and computer software. Library resources could also be referred to as information resources as it seeks to meet the information need of its users. According to Olowu (2004), library and information resources include such materials as books, periodicals and audio visual materials that are provided for use by the people. These materials are usually housed in a building systematically arranged for easy retrieval. Libraries all over the world regardless of type, public, academic and special are considered to be store house of knowledge of published and unpublished information resources that are basic to continued survival, development and progress of mankind. Example of published information resources include books, journals, magazines and newspapers, while the unpublished materials include project, thesis, conference papers, workshop papers and seminar papers.

There is hardly any possible development of knowledge in the field of human endeavor today without library books and various types of information materials, which exist in the libraries as information resources. The objective of a library is to utilize and maximize the exposure of the user to the library resources. The library should also be organized to utilize the effort required by users to access the needed information as soon as possible when the need arises. Public libraries should be involved in the provision of all kinds of information resources for the use of their client because they play a vital role in transmission of knowledge that could be impacted because it is a way of providing the users with a total information environment with the development of science and technology. The record of man's achievement come in a wide varieties of forms each equally varied, each capable of giving information in its own unique way and even complementing the other. Normally, it is information that the library client looks for and not the library building.

## Concept of Library User

Nwalo (2003) defined a library user as anybody who visits the library with the purpose of exploiting its resources to satisfy his information need. The word "visits" as used in the 21st century, include remote access to the library portal or website. Aina (2004) sees the term "user" to include all those who avail themselves of the services offered by a library. The term encompasses various terms such as patrons, clients, information users, information seekers, consumers, readers, etc. these terms can be used interchangeably, because they all apply to those seeking the services of a library. In other words, they are the different category of people that come to use library resources in order to satisfy their quest for different types of information. These individuals constitute a significant percentage within the library. They are people who make use of the services offered by the library, they include, researchers, academic staff, and the support services staff.

Like the traditional library, users have also evolved as have the ingredients for defining who a library user is. In the traditional library setting, library users are easily identifiable because they appear in the library physically most of the times. A physically-challenged user is seen. Child and adult users are identified. In online environment, it is not easy to identify these things. However, people are identifiable by their ICT skills irrespective of their age or physical challenges. Traditionally, library users have been classified into groups. Whitakers (1993) classified them into general readers, subject readers, special readers, and nonreading users. Similarly, Nwalo (2003) grouped them into specialists, students, disadvantaged majority, and the indisposed. In addition, Aina (2004) grouped users into children, pupils, students, adults, professionals, researchers, policy-makers, artisans, hearing and visually handicapped, and physically handicapped.

## Concept of Traditional Library

The traditional library is a physical library: a building constructed first and foremost to house print collections; people are secondary. This characterization of the traditional library has become a touchstone against which librarians at every point in our ongoing journey into electronic media can evaluate, assess, and use to reassure themselves that they are, indeed, moving the field forward into the future. traditional library' is one that selects, collects, and gives access to all the forms of recorded knowledge and information that are relevant to its mission and to the needs of the community it serves, and assists and instructs in the use of those resources (Farkas, 2013). Librarians make frequent reference to "the traditional library" yet there is no accepted definition of the term. The "traditional library" is so deeply rooted a concept that even those who object to it can't avoid using the term. It is a baseline against which we compare our progress, the tick marks on the wall against which we measure our growth. Without a traditional library there can be no modern library, no concise phrase that captures our past, and no thumbnail of our future.

## The Features of Traditional Library

A traditional library is an institution with the following traits: Emphasis on storage and preservation of physical items, particularly books and periodicals. Cataloguing at a high level rather than one of detail, e.g., author and subject indexes as opposed to full text. The traditional

library has been replaced with an expanded vision of itself, one that encompasses traditional values and features but extends outward to include the vastness of free and licensed digital resources as well as spaces and services that are entirely people-focused. Traditional library has also been used as a counterpoint to discussion of the “digital” or “online” library. While traditional libraries are limited by storage space. Traditionally, pattern of library service was based on a relative immobility of users and of materials and on a political system that looked to local sources of support for social services of all kinds.

According to this perspective, the traditional library is equivalent to the physical library: it is driven by a focus on physical items and physical spaces. The priority in such a library, as reflected in traditional library building design, is the housing and protection of the current and future print collection. “Most library buildings were, and still are, large, intimidating, and frequently unwelcoming” (Latimer & Niegaard, 2008). Traditionally, libraries were collections of books, manuscripts, journals, and other sources of recorded information. In a traditional library, the catalogue is used to find traditional library materials (Ogunsola, 2011).

### **Concept of Modern Library**

Unlike the traditional libraries, where user cannot easily locate a piece of information and have to spend more time in searching information. The modern library in this age of Information Communication Technology (ICT), makes use of computers for day to day housekeeping activities of the libraries, to read and download of texts of articles, reports and other materials. Thus, it saves the time of the library professional and end user and makes the library service smooth and effective. The 21st century library (which is virtual) is defined by Reitz (2005) as a “library without walls” in which the collections do not exist on paper, microform, or other tangible form at a physical location, but are electronically accessible in digital format via computer networks. From the definition above, the library users require 21st century technologies to access library collections, as access is no longer restricted to the user paying a visit to the library (building) physically. The 21st century library therefore, emphasizes access rather than ownership. In this vein, the library user needs to take more responsibility in locating and retrieving information from the library’s collections more than they have done in the traditional library enterprise. Modern libraries have a social function in making knowledge publicly available. They play two pivotal roles, firstly, to serve as a local centre of information and knowledge and secondly, to be a local gateway to national and global knowledge. They also serve as gateways to the world of knowledge for children by offering a wide spectrum of books to ignite their minds. They endeavour to cultivate reading habits among the children at an early age. The contemporary library, in contrast to the traditional library, resides online, teaches, reaches out and asserts its value across its community.

### **The Features of Modern Library**

Modern library:

- selects, procures, organizes and delivers the widest possible range of current and quality information resources to its heterogeneous user population as and when it needs it.

- is a member of some regional or national network in order to cater to the information needs of its users, as, at times, information resources available with it may be inadequate to meet users' needs.
- maintains an accessible website and relies upon technologies for enhancing its services.
- makes concerted efforts to provide services as and when users need, besides providing place based services.
- provides reference and user education programmes on a regular basis. It also conducts information literacy programmes for its users.
- communicates and connects with the users on a regular basis, telling about its resources in order to attract them and ensure maximum usage of the resources.
- offers free Internet access, high speed broadband, Wi-Fi facilities which are required by students, and research scholars for writing term paper, research activities, searching jobs, etc.
- provides space to students and users for organizing exhibitions and community meetings. It offers "quiet zones" and spaces for group discussions.
- is accessible and friendly to users with physical disabilities. It has an Assistive Technology Centre to enable visually- challenged users to access computer and Internet resources. It also provides information resources in alternate formats in order to help the users with print disabilities.

## Conclusion

The traditional library has been replaced with an expanded vision of itself, one that encompasses traditional values and features but extends outward to include the vastness of free and licensed digital resources as well as spaces and services that are entirely people-focused. It is universally agreed that every individual whether literate or not, has information need. No matter what people use the library for, the fundamental truth is that it is information related. The modern library saves the time of the library professional and end user and makes the library service smooth and effective. But without a traditional library there can be no modern library, no concise phrase that captures our past, and no thumbnail of our future.

## Recommendations

1. In this our 21<sup>st</sup> century it pertinent to create replace the traditional libraries with the modern ones where an application of ICTs in libraries is made paramount because it facilitates effective control in libraries over the collection, in-house work flow and delivery of user services through Integrated Library Management System (ILM's).
2. The library should be well organized to utilize the effort required by users to access the needed information as soon as possible when the need arises.

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