

CHAPTER ONE  
LIBRARY AND PROMOTION OF LITERACY AMONG STUDENTS OF TERTIARY  
INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

By

Raymond I. Davis, Ph.D.  
Department of library and Information Science  
University of Rochester  
Rochester  
New York City

And

Emmanuel OWUSHI, Ph.D.  
Department of Library and Information Science  
Faculty of Education  
University of Port Harcourt

ABSTRACT

*Libraries are the vanguards of literacy in Nigerian tertiary institutions, acting as catalysts for educational growth, personal empowerment, and societal progress. The significance of their role in promoting literacy among students cannot be overstated, as they provide the necessary foundations for academic achievement and life-long learning. The study analyzed library and promotion of literacy among students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. As Nigeria continues to advance in the global knowledge economy, the role of libraries in promoting literacy remains pivotal, serving as a beacon of enlightenment and empowerment for students and society as a whole. The study showed that as libraries play a pivotal role in promoting literacy among students in tertiary institutions by providing access to a wide range of resources and creating a conducive environment for learning. It was concluded that the promotion of literacy among students in Nigerian tertiary institutions through libraries is a vital and multifaceted endeavor with far-reaching implications. It has become evident that libraries are not passive repositories of books but dynamic hubs of learning and knowledge dissemination. One of the recommendations made was that libraries should invest in digital resources, e-books, and online databases to ensure students have access to a wide range of materials, especially in the digital age.*

**KEYWORD:** Library, Promotion, Literacy, Students, Tertiary Institutions and Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

Libraries have long been recognized as the cornerstone of education and the champions of literacy. In Nigeria, the role of libraries in promoting literacy among students in tertiary institutions is of immense significance. Literacy, the ability to read, write, and comprehend, is not only a fundamental life skill but also a gateway to academic success, critical thinking, and personal development. In a country as diverse and dynamic as Nigeria, libraries serve as invaluable hubs for nurturing literacy skills and expanding the horizons of knowledge for students in higher education. According to Lisedunetwork, (2023) library is a collection of books, magazines, newspapers, and other materials made available for people

to borrow or use for reference. Libraries have been around for thousands of years and are an essential part of society, providing everyone access to information and knowledge, regardless of their background or financial means. They serve as a hub for education, research, and leisure, allowing people to expand their horizons, explore new ideas, and connect with others who share their interests. Libraries offer services beyond just lending books, including computer access, community events, and educational programs. Libraries plays a pivotal role in promoting literacy among students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Literacy, the ability to read and write effectively, is a fundamental skill that underpins academic success, critical thinking, and personal development. In Nigeria, as in many other countries, libraries are not just repositories of books and knowledge but also dynamic centers for promoting literacy among students. According to Lindquist, (2015), Literacy in its broadest sense describes "particular ways of thinking about and doing reading and writing" with the purpose of understanding or expressing thoughts or ideas in written form in some specific context of use. In other words, humans in literate societies have sets of practices for producing and consuming writing, and they also have beliefs about these practices. Reading, in this view, is always reading something for some purpose; writing is always writing something for someone for some purpose. Beliefs about reading, writing and their value for society and for the individual always influence the ways literacy is taught, learned, and practiced.

## CONCEPT OF LIBRARY

According to Amiri, (2023) Library (from French "librairie"; Latin "liber" = book) is an organized collection of resources made accessible to a defined community for reference or borrowing. It provides physical or digital access to material, and may be a physical building or room, or a virtual space, or both. A library's collection can include books, periodicals, newspapers, manuscripts, films, maps, prints, documents, microform, CDs, cassettes, videotapes, DVDs, e-books, audiobooks, databases, and other formats. Francis et al (2023) states that Library, traditionally, is the collection of books used for reading or study, or the building or room in which such a collection is kept. The word derives from the Latin liber, "book," whereas a Latinized Greek word, bibliotheca, is the origin of the word for library in German, Russian, and the Romance languages. The word "library" seems to be used in so many different aspects now, from the brick-and-mortar public library to the digital library. Public libraries—and indeed, all libraries--are changing and dynamic places where librarians help people find the best source of information whether it's a book, a web site, or database entry (Eberhart, 2022).

A library is a collection of books, and possibly other materials and media that is accessible for use by its members and members of allied institutions. Libraries provide physical (hard copies) or digital access (soft copies) materials, and may be a physical location or a virtual space, or both. A library's collection normally includes printed materials which can be borrowed, and a reference section of publications which are not permitted to leave the library and can only be viewed inside the premises. There may be other physical resources in many formats, such as commercial releases of films, television programmes, other video recordings, radio, music and audio recordings on DVD, Blu-ray, CD and cassette, besides access to information, music or other content held on bibliographic databases (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia 2023). According to Lisedunetwork, (2023) library is a collection of books, magazines, newspapers, and other materials made available for people to borrow or use for reference. Libraries have been around for thousands of years and are an essential part of society, providing everyone access to information and knowledge, regardless of their background or financial means. They serve as a hub for education,

research, and leisure, allowing people to expand their horizons, explore new ideas, and connect with others who share their interests. Libraries offer services beyond just lending books, including computer access, community events, and educational programs. They are crucial in promoting literacy, intellectual freedom, and cultural diversity and are vital resources for individuals, communities, and society. A library is a place of knowledge and discovery where endless possibilities exist. When you walk through the doors of a library, you are greeted by shelves upon shelves of books, magazines, and newspapers, all waiting to be explored. The scent of paper and ink fills the air, and the peaceful silence creates an atmosphere perfect for reading, studying, or relaxing (Lisedunetwork 2014).

## CONCEPT OF LITERACY

According to UNESCO (2023) Literacy is now understood as a means of identification, understanding, interpretation, creation, and communication in an increasingly digital, text-mediated, information-rich and fast-changing world. Literacy is a continuum of learning and proficiency in reading, writing and using numbers throughout life and is part of a larger set of skills, which include digital skills, media literacy, education for sustainable development and global citizenship as well as job-specific skills. Alberta Education (2023) defines literacy as the ability, confidence and willingness to engage with language to acquire, construct and communicate meaning in all aspects of daily living. Language is explained as a socially and culturally constructed system of communication. Literacy is the ability to read, write, speak and listen in a way that lets us communicate effectively and make sense of the world (National Literacy Trust 2023).

According to Lindquist, (2015), Literacy in its broadest sense describes "particular ways of thinking about and doing reading and writing" with the purpose of understanding or expressing thoughts or ideas in written form in some specific context of use. In other words, humans in literate societies have sets of practices for producing and consuming writing, and they also have beliefs about these practices. Reading, in this view, is always reading something for some purpose; writing is always writing something for someone for some purpose. Beliefs about reading, writing and their value for society and for the individual always influence the ways literacy is taught, learned, and practiced. According to New World Encyclopedia (2023) Literacy is usually defined as the ability to read and write, or the ability to use language to read, write, listen, and speak. In modern contexts, the word refers to reading and writing at a level adequate for communication, or at a level that lets one understand and communicate ideas in a literate society, so as to take part in that society. Literacy can also refer to proficiency in a number of fields, such as art or physical activity. Literacy, capacity to communicate using inscribed, printed, or electronic signs or symbols for representing language. Literacy is customarily contrasted with orality (oral tradition), which encompasses a broad set of strategies for communicating through oral and aural media. In real world situations, however, literate and oral modes of communication coexist and interact, not only within the same culture but also within the very same individual. (For additional information on the history, forms, and uses of writing and literacy, see writing.) (Foley, 2023).

Encyclopedia.com (2019) states that Literacy is a process by which one expands one's knowledge of reading and writing in order to develop one's thinking and learning for the purpose of understanding oneself and the world. This process is fundamental to achieving competence in every educational subject. Since literacy is a necessary foundation for educational achievement and it has not always been legal for black people to be literate in the Americas, an understanding of historical approaches to literacy education for black children can elucidate larger relationships between individuals, communities, and the

world. In an effort to ensure children's success and ability to be self-determined in a largely literate society, approaches to literacy education have included multilingual, multicultural, and multimedia resources.

## TYPES OF LIBRARY

- **Academic Library:**

An academic library is a library that is attached to a higher education institution and serves two complementary purposes: to support the curriculum and the research of the university faculty and students. It is unknown how many academic libraries there are worldwide. An academic and research portal maintained by UNESCO links to 3,785 libraries. National Center for Education Statistics, estimated 3,700 academic libraries in the United States. In the past, the material for class readings, intended to supplement lectures as prescribed by the instructor, has been called reserves. Previously before the electronic appliances became available, the reserves were supplied as actual books or as photocopies of appropriate journal articles. Modern academic libraries generally also provide access to electronic resources. Academic libraries must determine a focus for collection development since comprehensive collections are not feasible. Librarians do this by identifying the needs of the faculty, student body, the mission and academic programs of the college or university. When there are particular areas of specialization in academic libraries, these are often referred to as niche collections. These collections are often the basis of a special collection department and they may include original papers, artwork, and artifacts written or created by a single author or about a specific subject.

Academic libraries are libraries that are hosted in post-secondary educational institutions, such as colleges and universities. Their main functions are to provide support in research, consultancy and resource linkage for students and faculty of the educational institution. Academic libraries house current, reliable and relevant information resources spread through all the disciplines which serve to assuage the information requirements of students and faculty. Academic libraries are generally located on college and university campuses and primarily serve the students and faculty of that and other academic institutions. Some academic libraries, especially those at public institutions, are accessible to members of the general public in whole or in part. Library services are sometimes extended to the general public at a fee; some academic libraries create such services in order to enhance literacy levels in their communities. Academic libraries offer workshops and courses outside of formal, graded coursework, which are meant to provide students with the tools necessary to succeed in their programs. These workshops may include help with citations, effective search techniques, journal databases, and electronic citation software. These workshops provide students with skills that can help them achieve success in their academic careers (and often, in their future occupations), which they may not learn inside the classroom (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia 2023).

- **National Library:**

A national or state library serves as a national repository of information, and has the right of legal deposit, which is a legal requirement that publishers in the country need to deposit a copy of each publication with the library. Unlike a public library, a national library rarely allows citizens to borrow books. Often, their collections include numerous rare, valuable, or significant works. There are wider definitions of a national library, putting less emphasis on the repository character. The first national libraries had their origins in the royal collections of the sovereign or some other supreme body of the state. A national library

is a library established by a government as a country's preeminent repository of information. Unlike public libraries, these rarely allow citizens to borrow books. Often, they include numerous rare, valuable, or significant works. A national library is that library which has the duty of collecting and preserving the literature of the nation within and outside the country. Thus, national libraries are those libraries whose community is the nation at large. Examples include the British Library in London, and the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris (Line et al 2011).

- **Special Library:**

A special library is a type of library that is accessed by only people from a very specific niche, which is where the name comes from. It caters to and helps people with gathering information from a very specific field or niche. However, this brings up the question 'what is the purpose of special libraries?' The answer to this is that special libraries only exist for fields where the information that pertains to it is so varied and vast that it warrants a library of its own. Examples of special libraries include medical libraries, law libraries, museum libraries, news libraries, and so on (Teachmint Technologies 2023). Special libraries are specialized information centers that cater to the specific needs of organizations, industries, or professions. These libraries are often found in corporations, government agencies, research institutions, law firms, medical facilities, and other specialized settings.

Special libraries curate collections tailored to the specific subject area or field, providing resources such as technical reports, industry publications, legal documents, medical literature, and other relevant materials. Librarians in special libraries possess deep knowledge of the specific industry or profession they serve, offering expert research assistance and information management support. These libraries play a vital role in supporting decision-making, promoting innovation, and facilitating knowledge dissemination within their respective organizations. Special libraries may also provide customized services such as competitive intelligence, patent searches, and information analysis. Special libraries serve as specialized information hubs and contribute to the efficiency, productivity, and success of the organizations they serve (Library and Information Science Network 2023).

- **Public Library:**

A public library also referred to as a circulating library, is a library that can be accessed by anyone from the public. It is generally funded through public tax money and sometimes even individual donations. Public libraries are run by government-appointed librarians and other related civil servants. It allows people of all ages to borrow books from them at a very low cost - all that is required is a membership to the library (Divyansh Bordia 2022). Public libraries serve the general public, "from cradle to grave" as more than one public librarian has been heard to say. Public libraries often have departments that focus on areas of service, such as youth, teens and adults (American Library Association 2023). Public libraries are now acknowledged to be an indispensable part of community life as promoters of literacy, providers of a wide range of reading for all ages, and centers for community information services. Yet, although the practice of opening libraries to the public has been known from ancient times, it was not without considerable opposition that the idea became accepted, in the 19th century, that a library's provision was a legitimate charge on public funds. It required legislation to enable local authorities to devote funds to this cause.

Public libraries now provide well-stocked reference libraries and wide-ranging loan services based on systems of branch libraries. They are further supplemented by traveling

libraries, which serve outlying districts. Special facilities may be provided for the old, the blind, the hearing-impaired, and others, and in many cases library services are organized for local schools, hospitals, and jails (Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. 2023).

- **Children's Library:**

Children's libraries are special collections of books intended for juvenile readers and usually kept in separate rooms of general public libraries. Some children's libraries have entire floors or wings dedicated to them in bigger libraries while smaller ones may have a separate room or area for children. They are an educational agency seeking to acquaint the young with the world's literature and to cultivate a love for reading. Their work supplements that of the public schools (Aarsgaard et al 2021). The Children's Library (CH) provides educational, recreational, and cultural resources for children aged 6 to 11. It has a large collection of picture books, story books, nonfictional books, and multimedia materials in several languages covering a wide range of subjects from art to zoology (Bibliotheca Alexandrina, 2023).

- **Public Lending Library:**

A public library provides services to the general public. If the library is part of a countywide library system, citizens with an active library card from around that county can use the library branches associated with the library system. A library can serve only their city, however, if they are not a member of the county public library system. Much of the materials located within a public library are available for borrowing. The library staff decides upon the number of items patrons are allowed to borrow, as well as the details of borrowing time allotted. Typically, libraries issue library cards to community members wishing to borrow books. Often visitors to a city are able to obtain a public library card. Many public libraries also serve as community organizations that provide free services and events to the public, such as reading groups and toddler story time. For many communities, the library is a source of connection to a vast world, obtainable knowledge and understanding, and entertainment. Public library services play a major role in fighting rising illiteracy rates among youths.

Public libraries are protected and funded by the public they serve. As the number of books in libraries have steadily increased since their inception, the need for compact storage and access with adequate lighting has grown. The stack system involves keeping a library's collection of books in a space separate from the reading room. This arrangement arose in the 19th century. Book stacks quickly evolved into a fairly standard form in which the cast iron and steel frameworks supporting the bookshelves also supported the floors, which often were built of translucent blocks to permit the passage of light (but were not transparent, for reasons of modesty). The introduction of electric lights had a huge impact on lighting in libraries. The use of glass floors was largely discontinued, though floors were still often composed of metal grating to allow air to circulate in multi-story stacks. As more space was needed, a method of moving shelves on tracks (compact shelving) was introduced to cut down on otherwise wasted aisle space. Despite the importance ascribed to public libraries, their budgets are often cut by legislatures. In some cases, funding has dwindled so much that libraries have been forced to cut their hours and release employees (Jaeger et al 2013).

- **Reference Libraries:**

A reference library does not lend books and other items; instead, they can only be

read at the library itself. Typically, such libraries are used for research purposes, for example at a university. Some items at reference libraries may be historical and even unique. Many lending libraries contain a "reference section", which holds books, such as dictionaries, which are common reference books, and are therefore not lent out. Such reference sections may be referred to as "reading rooms", which may also include newspapers and periodicals.

## ROLES OF LIBRARY IN PROMOTING LITERACY FOR STUDENT OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

Libraries play a pivotal role in promoting literacy among students in tertiary institutions by providing access to a wide range of resources and creating a conducive environment for learning. Here are some key roles of libraries in promoting literacy for tertiary students:

- **Access to a Diverse Collection of Books:**

Libraries house an extensive collection of books, covering various subjects and genres. Students can borrow, read, and study these books, which enhances their reading skills and knowledge. This access is essential for developing literacy.

- **Digital Resources:**

In the digital age, libraries provide access to e-books, academic journals, databases, and online resources. These digital materials expand students' reading opportunities and make it convenient to access information, fostering digital literacy (Lonsdale & Armstrong 2017).

- **Reference Services:**

Librarians assist students in finding appropriate reading materials and provide guidance on conducting research. They help students develop research and information literacy skills, which are essential for academic success

- **Information Literacy Instruction:**

Libraries offer information literacy instruction, teaching students how to critically evaluate information sources, cite references, and use research tools effectively. These skills contribute to overall literacy and academic success

- **Quiet Study Spaces:**

Libraries provide quiet and focused study environments, allowing students to read and concentrate on their studies. These spaces encourage reading and research, supporting literacy development.

- **Community Building:**

Libraries often serve as community hubs where students can engage in book clubs, discussion groups, and other literacy-promoting activities. These opportunities foster a sense of community and enthusiasm for reading (Conn away, et al 2011)

- **Special Collections and Archives:**

Many libraries have special collections and archives that contain rare and historical documents. Exploring these resources can enhance students' understanding of specific subjects and historical contexts, thereby promoting advanced literacy.

- **Interdisciplinary Learning:**

Libraries provide opportunities for interdisciplinary learning, as students can access resources from various academic fields. This exposure broadens their knowledge and encourages a multidisciplinary approach to literacy (Zhou, et al 2019).

Libraries are essential partners in promoting literacy among students in tertiary institutions. They offer a diverse range of resources, services, and environments that foster reading, research, and information literacy. These roles contribute significantly to students' academic success and lifelong learning.

## **CHALLENGES IN LITERACY PROMOTION BY LIBRARY TO TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS STUDENTS**

Promoting literacy in tertiary institutions through libraries is crucial for the academic success and personal development of students. However, there are several challenges that libraries face in this endeavor. Here are some common challenges in literacy promotion by libraries to tertiary institution students:

- **Limited Resources:**

Many libraries, especially in tertiary institutions, face budget constraints, which can affect their ability to provide an extensive collection of reading materials, access to digital resources, and literacy programs. This limitation hinders their efforts to promote literacy effectively.

- **Digital Divide:**

Not all students have equal access to digital resources or personal devices. The digital divide can result in unequal access to e-books, online journals, and other digital literacy resources, hindering the development of digital literacy skills.

- **Lack of Motivation:**

Tertiary students often have demanding academic schedules, leaving little time for leisure reading or engagement with library literacy programs. Many students prioritize their academic studies over recreational reading, making it challenging for libraries to motivate them to read for pleasure.

- **Diversity of Student Backgrounds:**

Tertiary institutions enroll students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Libraries may struggle to offer reading materials that cater to the varied interests and language preferences of their student populations.

- **Information Overload:**

In the digital age, students are bombarded with information from various sources. The challenge for libraries is to help students develop critical thinking skills and discern credible sources from the vast sea of information.

- **Outdated Collections:**

Libraries may struggle to keep their collections current and aligned with the interests of today's students. Outdated or irrelevant materials can deter students from using library resources for literacy promotion.



- **Competition from Alternative Learning Resources:**

Tertiary students have access to various online platforms, audiobooks, and alternative sources of information and entertainment. Libraries must compete with these options to attract and engage students in reading.

- **Faculty Support and Integration:**

Collaboration between libraries and academic faculty is essential for promoting literacy. Challenges arise when there is a lack of cooperation or faculty members are not aware of the resources and programs available in the library.

- **Limited Space and Facilities:**

Space constraints in libraries can limit the availability of reading areas, group study spaces, and the display of reading materials. Adequate facilities are essential to create a conducive environment for reading.

- **Assessment and Impact Evaluation:**

Measuring the impact of library literacy programs on student learning and academic success can be challenging. Libraries need to develop effective assessment strategies to demonstrate their value to the institution.

To address these challenges, libraries in tertiary institutions should adopt innovative strategies, collaborate with faculty, and adapt to changing student needs and preferences. Ongoing professional development and research can help libraries stay current and effective in promoting literacy among their student populations.

## CONCLUSION

The promotion of literacy among students in Nigerian tertiary institutions through libraries is a vital and multifaceted endeavor with far-reaching implications. It has become evident that libraries are not passive repositories of books but dynamic hubs of learning and knowledge dissemination. They offer students a rich tapestry of resources, both in print and digital formats, allowing them to explore the vast landscape of human understanding. In these spaces, students cultivate their reading and writing skills, expanding their horizons and embracing the intellectual challenges of higher education. The libraries of Nigerian tertiary institutions not only make these resources available but also actively engage in promoting literacy. They offer literacy workshops, information literacy programs, and guidance on academic writing, equipping students with the tools they need to navigate the complex academic landscape. In doing so, libraries contribute not only to academic success but also to the holistic development of individuals who are prepared to excel in their personal and professional lives.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following must be done to improve the development of literacy among students at Nigerian higher institutions through libraries:

- Libraries should invest in digital resources, e-books, and online databases to ensure students have access to a wide range of materials, especially in the digital age.
- Develop a variety of literacy programs that cater to different interests and skill levels, including book clubs, writing workshops, and information literacy sessions.
- Encourage collaboration between libraries, academic departments, and faculty to integrate information literacy into the curriculum and promote reading across disciplines.
- Create inclusive and comfortable spaces within libraries to accommodate students with diverse needs and learning preferences.
- Extend literacy initiatives beyond the campus by partnering with local schools and communities to promote a culture of reading and lifelong learning.
- Continuously evaluate the effectiveness of literacy programs and library resources to adapt to the evolving needs and preferences of students.

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