CATALOGUING AND CLASSIFICATION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS IN LIBRARIES OF KANO STATE, NORTHWESTERN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS.

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Abstract

This paper focuses on organization of library materials which helps to deliver effective services effectively and efficiently. Poor organization in the library causes difficulty in identifying relevant materials despite its presence in the library collections. Nowadays librarians are no longer interested in cataloguing and classification units due to its tedious nature, people naturally like to avoid work. This is what affects the technical department of all libraries in Kano state. The paper highlights some of the challenges and prospects, then offered suggestions on how to minimize the challenges or do away with them completely.

Introduction

Cataloguing and Classification are two technical activities used to organize library materials which saves time and provides maximum satisfaction. In this era there is need to identify the strengths and weaknesses of these activities so as to prepare for future. Organization of library materials is very vital in running its services. The organization is not limited only to materials, it includes organizing its staff, building into departments, sections, and units. In this regard, the paper is going to discuss issues in challenges and prospects of cataloguing and classification.

Historical Development

According Egwim (2006), during and immediately after colonial government our libraries were managed by foreigners (1920 – 1963). Gradually, qualified indigenous librarians took over because since 1940s consideration was given to the need to train local library personnel. From 1950s education for librarianship received greater impetus; there was an increase in the type of training given to library workers. The UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) seminar of 1953 which was organized and hosted at the then university College Ibadan, marked another epoch in the evolution of library education in Nigeria (UNESCO, 1954).

Nevertheless, other Federal universities like the First and Second generation universities introduced the courses of library and information science. These universities include Bayero University Kano (B.U.K.) of which the department of library and information science was established, in order to promote library and librarianship in Northern Nigeria. Later, other schools sprang up, such as College of Education Kumbotso, now Sa'adutu Rimi College of Education, Federal College of Education Kano, Kano State Polytechnic, Northwest University, now Yusuf Maitama Sule University and Kano State University of Science and Technology Wudil respectively.

Definition of library

Ancient definition of library; it was described as a building, house or room where information materials are kept. In medieval time, library was little bittygrown into an institution where print and non-print materials are selected, organized, stored, retrieved and disseminated for use. Gradually it became more complex with departments, sections and units and also the co-opting and application of information and telecommunication technology plus internet into library, information services have changed from closed to open access. You can access the library services from remote area with unlimited time as far as you are connected. It keeps on developing from print to audiovisual, e-resources, computerized, to digital libraries.

The concept of cataloguing

Ordinarily, catalogue means to list down, usually in alphabetical order, while technically, in library and information science perspective; "it is the arrangement of bibliographical data in systematical order from rules or codes: (AACR2 and ALA code) put in forms of card, book,

sheaf, microform, computerized etc. with access point/headings for retrieval or searching, through author, title subject, series etc.), sometimes with help of see and see also references". According to Esther (2004), cataloguing is "the process of describing library materials by using its bibliographical data in logical and systematical order of cataloguing tools such as AACR2".

While, Classification in a lay man's language means "the act of forming into a class or classes. It also means a distribution into groups, as classes, orders, families etc., according to some common relations or attributes (Esther, 2004). Also, she defines classification as "the process of grouping library materials by its subject contents which help to group the same subject together and separate the one that differs and bring those which they have relation closer". Classification is the logical and systematical arrangement of library documents usually by subject content by their likeness and classification scheme. In other words, it is the process of putting together similar library materials according to their subject content.

Dakurand Esther (2014) stated that "Cataloguing and Classification are processes by which library documents are systematically organized to facilitate use by library users." It serves as bridge between the users' information needs and the materials in the collection.

Who are the Staff of Cataloguing and Classification?

The efficiency of any library and information centre depends on the caliber of its staff (Adomi and Nwalo, 2003). The library has different staff which includes: Professional; is one who has possessed degree in Library Science, Information science, Documentation or any equivalent field of study (LRCN,2018). Para Professional; is one with National Certificate of Education (NCE), National Diploma (ND), Diploma in library and information science or any equivalent certificate. Nonprofessionals are Library Assistant and Library Attendant; those with secondary school certificates or equivalent. Supporting Staff are those who work with library but are supporting the smooth running of its services, such as administrators' accountants, securities etc., they can possess any certificate on other field of knowledge not library and information science (Kumar, P.131: 2009).

In Cataloguing and Classification unit, professional staff are those staff responsible for carrying out the cataloguing and classification routines. While para professional and nonprofessional staff are those carrying out the end-processing routines in the unit. The success of cataloguing and classification staff depends on the availability of adequate trained and experienced personnel to discharge the pedagogical responsibilities. Most of the Libraries and Information Science Departments in Nigerian tertiary institutions were run by few academic staff. These available staff were over burdened with too much workload which negatively affect the teaching and learning, hence, produced half-baked students (Egwin, 2006). Librarians are working in a setting where the resource and tools of the trade are always involving cataloguers and classifiers, they are engaged in the technical aspect of library work and therefore need to possess adequate knowledge and skills to perform their tasks. Cataloguers currently process materials in both print and electronic formats and deploy

both printed and electronic tools in cataloguing. The resources cataloguing and classification tools use for cataloguer and classifier therefore needs to continuously update his profession knowledge and skills through relevant staff training and development programmes (Adomi, 2012).

Tools needed in Cataloguing and Classification

Classifier has to consult the following before he classifies;

1. Classification Index
2. Schedule
3. Area tables

Catalogers tend to consult three sources of information when cataloguing the library materials:

1. A rule book defining national code standards (A.L.A. Code or AACR2)
2. A subject headings guide book (LCC Subject Headings or Sears List of Subject Headings)
3. A materials classification system (NWLS, 2014).
4. Container of the bibliographical information.

Some of the Challenges in cataloguing and classification

1. Low patronage due to increase, availability and use of information and communication technology. Most of the library users disregard the use of catalogue and classification on searching/retrieval of information in the library. It has been observed by the writer that, most of them prefer to ask library staff than to consult catalogue cabinet, or to log-in in their handsets or PCs. These affect the use of Catalog in the library.
2. Some local printers and indigenous publishers do not abide by the guideline of providing all necessary bibliographical data of books they published. This gives a cataloguer or classifier difficulty in carrying out the work.
3. Non immediate financial benefit: In general, library and information science is service oriented course not profit making profession. People nowadays who are more conversant with the get rich quickly syndrome prefer to go for white collar jobs than to go for services to humanity. As it is evident that library pave way for the development of society.
4. Inconsistency in subject headings and assignment of class notation: Inconsistency, lack of uniformity and lack of standardization in cataloguing and classification make library user to be frustrated, and abandon the patronage of catalogue and classification notation. They mostly go straight to shelves and browse the book with or without knowledge of how to retrieve information on shelves, these persistent changes in headings and notation usually confuse layman in search/retrieving of information in the library.
5. Over admission of students: almost every department of library and information science in Kano state do admit high number of prospective candidates, and they are facing shortage of staff, and unavailability of cataloguing and classification tools. Ideally, tools are to be provided to students; one (1) tool per ten (10) students, but none of the institution within Kano state meets this requirement.

6.   Lack of awareness, guidance and counselling of the course library and information science: Most of the students studying Library and Information Science were given the course not because they are interested. To some, it is a second choice; in nutshell, majority do not know what the course is all about, talk more of having interest on it. Some do accept the course because they want to be in school, they did not want to be redundant. Therefore, right from the beginning they do not have interest up to the end; it may not yield anything good.

7.   Job professionalism: Some of the library professionals leave their work at the hand of para professionals. To them, they are too big to carry out such routines. They carry out the work with a lot of mistakes and no proper cross supervision from the professionals. In addition, no commitment and dedication to work.

8.   Unavailability of C.I.P. (Cataloguing In Publication): This is the data prepared before publication by National Library. Normally it appears on the verso of the book's title page. but in case of Nigeria in general and Kano state in particular neither Kano State Library Board nor National library, Kano branch make any effort to prioritize book production in Kano with C.I.P., sometimes if correction were made in title or content of works it affect the C.I.P., which may mislead the cataloguer and classifier.

9.   Neglect from Political Leaders: Political leaders are more interested in building structures, it is pertinent to observe that while building is important, the working items are also of great importance; their attention should be drawn on providing books and other equipment that will help in teaching and learning.

In similar writing conducted by Dakur and Esther (2004), they enumerated some of the challenges encountered by librarians and libraries in organizing knowledge as follows:

1.   Attitudes of staff towards shelf reading and supervision: The library staff in charge of shelving books do not carry out their duties of shelving serious if proper shelving and shelf reading are not well done. The staff who are assigned, coupled with lack of supervision, it becomes a big challenge when this is done wrongly.

2.   Lack of motivation: Motivation goes a long way in helping any staff toward delivering professional development, and if it's absent, it weakens the mind of workers and frustrates them, and this will lead to poor delivery of services. Librarians need promotion, training, retraining and commendation.

3.   Inadequate reading materials: There is the challenge of shortage of reading materials in libraries which could cause readers to hide those available, especially if they are in high demand. Some users disregard the rule, do not return books to the shelves, instead they hide them in inappropriate position. This is the reason why most often one can find Physics text books in History shelves and vice versa, or Accounting in Biology. The aim of the user in removing books from one subject area on the shelves to another is to monopolize the use of the book and prevent other users from having access.

4.   Shortage of staff: Some libraries in Nigeria are under staffed being it public, academic, national, school, or special library. Consequently, the few staff available are usually over stretched with the strenuous task of packing, sorting, shelving and service delivery. Since the workload is heavy on them, they resort to shelving the books anyhow anywhere such scenario causes unnecessary delay in retrieving documents and disseminating

information. Often, many materials even though available in the library are not traceable due to wrong shelving. This makes the library staff helpless in meeting the needs of patrons.

5.   Inadequate orientation: Some newly employed library staff are ignorant of how library materials are organized in the library, those employed as library attendant or assistant are secondary school leavers who have no knowledge of classification or knowledge organization. Consequently, they arrange library materials haphazardly on the shelves because no adequate library orientation is given to those new employees on ground. It is often found that most of the new employees are even unaware of the existence talk less of their significance in organizing knowledge.

6.   Users no longer have to physically visit the library to retrieve information: The ability to access full-text resource electronically from within the institution or from any PC (Personal Computer) provides the user with convenient and immediate access to information, and reduce the patronage of cataloguing and classification services.

Suggestions

1.   Cooperative cataloguing: There is need to have a centre where cataloguers and classifiers meet in order to share professionalism, skills and experience.

2.   Vibrant publicity/sensitization campaign from grassroots i.e. secondary schools should be the target. Since they are the preparatory candidate to move to tertiary institutions in come up time. The librarians have to prepare their mind and develop the interest of choosing library science as a career for life.

3.   Seminar/in-house training for newly employed staff in order to know how to do some common library routine properly such as end processing, filling, sorting, etc.

4.   Orientation/library education to publishers and printer on how to make their work meet standard. Most of the books published locally are filled with typographic errors, missing pages, blockage of lines, missing-up pages, missing bibliographic data, etc. Our publishers today are roadside publishers, which most of them do not attend any school/course on publishing talk less of having any knowledge on guideline for publishing standard books. Orientation/library education will help to improve the quality of their products.

5.   Most of the cataloguing and classification tools are foreign, not made in Africa, but for Africans. That is the reason why they are difficult to understand, we only modify them to suit our environment. Due to that, there is inconsistency from library to library. Therefore, there is need for us to develop our own tools that may suit our environment.

6.   Political leaders: library associations, library managers etc. should have good rapport with political actors in order to pave way for development which leads to achieve dividends of democracy and other political programmes/policies that may develop library and librarians.

7.   Manageable number of students should be admitted into the Library and Information Science departments. Most of the schools have limited staff, inadequate teaching materials and laboratory for practical, in order to produce effective and efficient ambassadors. Over admission resulted to half-baked student, who perform poorly at their various fields

8.   Admission should be given based on request by student as first choice. This shows the level of interest and willingness to pursue the course. Interest is the backbone of any academic journey.

9.   Low financial reward and motivation also result in reducing librarian's effort from giving technical service. Incentives in cash or in kind may encourage librarians into cataloguing and classification.

10.   There is need to translate cataloguing and classification tools into vernacular (Hausa) for indigenous people to understand them well, it will help to facilitate better technical services.

Conclusion

Organization of library materials is very vital in searching/retrieval of information in library. It saves time of users and makes service delivery very smooth. Librarian is like medical doctor; s/he prescribes medicine to the patient after explaining his/her worries, the same with librarians after you explain your information needs, s/he directs, or lays users hand on the relevant information. There is need for librarians to engage in technical services despite the rigorous nature of the work. It is through sacrifice that we can move our society forward.

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