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THE ROLES OF LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIANS IN PRESERVING AND PROMOTING THE NIGERIAN CULTURE

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Abstract
The paper examines the roles of libraries and librarians in the preservation and promotion of the Nigerian culture. It argues that they play a vital role in ensuring that culture is preserved. It also discusses the imperatives for preservation and promotion of the Nigerian culture. Furthermore, it reviews the various strategies employed by libraries and other stakeholders to foster an environment where diverse cultural expressions are encouraged, valued, shared, and protected in the Nigerian society. The Nigerian government and library authorities should address the challenges facing the libraries in this regard with a view to enhance their roles in preserving Nigeria's culture.
Keywords: *Library, Librarian, Preservation, Culture*

Introduction

Globally, libraries and librarians play vital roles in a nation by preserving its cultural heritage. In the modern age with the abundance of information, libraries assist society by maintaining and disseminating relevant information as at when required. Librarians and libraries have been playing vital roles in Nigerian society as Centers for imparting knowledge, as hubs for human interaction and will continue to be relevant in the present-day Nigeria as a means of dissemination of valuable information that will enhance the development of our cultural heritage, economically, socially and otherwise. Libraries in Nigeria have been at the forefront of our community. The library is the heart of the community where they reach out to all the citizens in person and online. It connects people to the entire world of ideas and information in the areas of their desire (Umar, 2018).

Libraries are major sources of information for society and they serve as guardians to the public access to information. Oghenekaro in Unegbu and Amanze (2016) stated that it is the duty of librarians to ensure that users access the information they need regardless of age, education, ethnicity, language, economic

status, physical limitations or geographical barriers as the digital world continues to evolve.

Nigeria as a society has long recognized the important place of culture and the country is passionate and committed to the preservation and promotion of her cultural heritage, as it is well established that for a society to be societal it must ensure that her cultural heritage is preserved for future generation. Oyegbade (2019) agreed that the culture and tradition of the people are their identities as it affords them due recognition. Societies in the whole world have various and divergent cultures which they cherish, and practice and would do everything possible within their reach to ensure that such cultures are preserved and promoted for generations yet unborn because the loss of their culture and language is the loss of identity.

To ascertain the importance of culture as the totality of the way of life evolved by the people in their attempts to meet the challenges of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms and modes of organization thus distinguishing the people from their neighbors. The Federal Government of Nigeria launched a cultural policy for Nigeria in 1988. This specifically spelled out some of the objectives as follows:

1. The policy shall serve to mobilize and motivate the people by disseminating and propagating ideas which promote national pride, solidarity and consciousness.
2. To promote an educational system that motivates and stimulates creativity and draws largely on our tradition and values, namely: respect for humanity and human dignity, for legitimate authority and the dignity of labour, and respect for positive Nigerian moral and religious values.
3. The policy shall promote creativity in the fields of arts, science and technology, to ensure the continuity of traditional skills and sports and their progressive updates to serve modern development needs as our contribution to world growth of culture and ideas.
4. That States shall recognize that libraries play a crucial role in the promotion of cultural heritage etc.

The fact that Nigeria as a country is experiencing a loss of her cultural values; moral laxity among our youths; violence; delinquent behavior; disruption of traditional political systems; sex abuses; kidnapping among others has become the order of day as a result of infiltration of foreign cultures, technological advancement, religious beliefs and political economy into Nigeria after its independence in 1960. According to Nigerian Tribune (2021) becomes major banes

in its social systems is alien to our cherish culture. The major reason for preservation practice is to hand over the society's civilization to another generation. Therefore, transmission of the cultural heritage of a people is vital to the libraries and librarians. According to Banjo in Ezeani and Ezema (2009) noted that culture which is way of life of the people in a broader sense is their traditional behavior, including the ideas, acts and artifacts which are passed on from one generation to another needs to be preserved for reference or historical purposes for the coming generations to enable them know about their past events and to compare the way of life of the present generation with the past. Ibrahim (1984), is against this backdrop that the paper seeks to discuss the roles of librarians and libraries in preservation and promotion of the Nigerian culture. Hence there are forces militating against her that needs an urgent attention to avoid Nigeria's culture going extinction.

Conceptual Review of Related Literature

Library

In a world without libraries would be difficult to advance research and human knowledge or preserve the world's cumulative knowledge and heritage for the future generation WIPO magazine (2012) states that libraries represent different things to different people. It is seen as a place where mothers can take toddlers to read their first stories and students can study, it allows anyone to borrow a book, access the internet or do research. Libraries offer a means by which we can gain access to knowledge. According to Ashikuzzaman in LIS Education Network (2023) defined library as a collection of books, magazines, newspapers, and materials made available for people to borrow or use for reverence purpose. He argued that libraries offer services beyond just lending books, including computer access and provide crucial services in promoting literacy and cultural diversity and vital resources for individuals, communities, and society. Dahunsi in Unegbu (2019) defined Libraries as a repository of recorded knowledge and a Centre where information resources are selected, acquired, organized preserved and disseminated. It is a reservoir of information to all institutions from where both staffs and students tap to survive mentally, physically, socially and spiritually.

Librarian

A librarian according to Wikipedia (2020) is a person who works personally in a library, providing access to information and sometimes social or technical programming to users. Traditionally, a librarian is associated with collections of books and non-materials. It stressed the role of a librarian as continually evolving

to meet social and technological needs. A modern librarian may deal with provision and maintenance of information in many formats including books, electronic resources, magazines, newspapers, audio and video recordings, maps, manuscripts etc. Esther George A in Unegbu, (2019) defined a Librarian as person trained in Library and information service and is engaged in Library services and operations to provide access to information as well as to render other assistance to library users. As the services of libraries vary, especially in a modern era, so are the types of librarians who work in the library. Lastly, Aina (2004) opined that a librarian is the professional who is concerned with the collection, storage, processing and dissemination of recorded knowledge in a library.

Culture

Researchers and scholars from different fields have different definitions of culture. Louis and Wapmuk (2020) noted that culture is as old as mankind, yet its meaning has remained a subject of debate among scholars. Culture is a complex concept which influences virtually every aspect of our lives. It comprises of elements such as history, religion, language, traditions, values, beliefs and customs. It is instilled early in life but is constantly evolving. Zimmermann, (2017) defined culture as encompasses religion, food, what we wear, how we wear it, our language, marriage, music, what we believe is right or wrong, how we sit at the table, how we greet visitors, how we behave with loved ones, and a million other things. On the other hand, Ali, (2003) noted that culture is an instrument of diplomacy which can be utilized to promote and propagate Nigeria interest and ensure the liberation of African which is the Centre peace of Nigeria's foreign policy. Culture is an effective tool for building and enhancing friendly relationship with other countries, it also promotes peace and positive image of the country.

Preservation

Preservation encompasses a wide variety of interrelated activities designed to prolong the usable life of books, archives manuscripts and artifact. Alegbeleye (2009) stated that preservation is an essential or core function of the librarian, archivist or information professional. She argued that preservation is an umbrella term of many of the policies and options for action including conservation treatment. Conway in Alegbeleye (2009) defined preservation as the acquisition, organization and distribution of resources to prevent further deterioration or renew the usability of selected groups of materials. Aina (2004) opined that preservation is the maintenance of library materials so that they can be close to the original condition as much as possible.

The Imperative for Preservation and Promotion of the Nigeria Culture

The need for the preservation and promotion of Nigeria culture cannot be overemphasized. Oyetimi, Busari and Gbenga-Ogundare (2020) argued that

culture is a key part of national consciousness of the people which should not be discarded for whatever reasons because successful democracies are said to be built on historical experiences that are peculiar to individual nation. The fact that Nigeria's culture is gradually going on extinction is no longer a hidden fact, every well-meaning and patriotic Nigerians are lamenting that something urgent should be done to revive the Cultural heritage of the country. Scholars and researchers of different category are already worried of what is happening to our cherished and rich culture. Nwegbu, et al in Nwaolikpe (2013) argued that the dominance of Western products in country possess a threat to our cultural identity. Similarly, Ibrahim in Anyaoku (2012) opined that globalization is having a devastating effect on Africa and indeed Nigerian culture, which has already been subjected to decades of desecration. Activities of Western explorers, missionaries, traders and colonial administrators have resulted in the loss of respect for our traditional institutions and heritage. He stressed that in the time past there was joy in communal living in village settings with culturally rich entertainment, with our talking drums and other musical instruments but today it has been replaced by piano and so on. Nwaolikpe (2013) concord that globalization in some ways has affected the culture of our states as a result of the creation of International free market. He stated categorically that globalization has a devastating effect on African and indeed Nigerian culture on the basis that our youths only focus more on the Internet and telecommunication for entertainment than our cultural values. Our youths are gradually rejecting our foods, music, art and language, even the pronunciation of words, communal lifestyle, eating together, sharing problems together, relating collectively, some rich cultural heritage such as marriage rites, burial rites, dressing, greetings, folklore, religion, are not only gradually fading away but have died due to Western cultural influence. Lamenting on the decline Babawale the former boss of Centre for Black and African Arts and Centre expressed his concern over the incursion of Western culture and its rape of the African and Nigeria's cultural values.

Discussing further, the extinction of our culture Chimeziem and Samuel (2009) stated that Nigeria's Culture is related to languages gradually giving way to English, French, German, Arabic and even Chinese to the detriment of our local languages, this is based on the fact that language remains the most important traditional value which people are identified with and even respected for, and very important vehicle for the Promotion of culture. In this same vein, scholars and researchers like Ohiri-Aniche (2020) and Nwajiuba (2019) poured out their heartbreaking that culture and language are intertwined and closely related as one cannot be separated from each other; hence language reflects the culture of its speaker. Once a particular culture is being regarded as outdated, the language begins to decline. According to Chimeziem and Samuel (2009) argued that Promotion of culture entails providing avenues to ensure cultural education, consciousness and development as the culture is disseminated in its bid to allow public accessibility through various strategies such as films/videos, theatre,

music, food, dressing, exhibition, sports, seminars, workshops and publications. Promotion of our culture in the international arena can be a powerful tool for development, with community wide, social, economic and environmental benefits. Oscar, (2016) asserted that culture ensure unity during crisis, influences identity, peace and reconciliation. He stressed that culture is one of the main pillars to development and sustenance of communities and no society can progress in its absence.

Furthermore, cultural diversity is a tool for development, as development has no single strategy for any particular country or culture in achieving her developmental policies. In line with the present reality and governments efforts in diversifying the Nigerian economy and promotion of non-oil sector of the economy as dependence on oil can no longer sustain the economy, we have to turn to our tourism, cultural industry to develop and promote market and generally leverage the country's arts and crafts sector to enhance Nigeria, achieve optimal empowerment for her people especially the rural populace. And will also enhance a source of high revenue generation to the country. Lastly, Promotion of Nigeria cultural heritage abroad will boost the economy; create employment for our teaming youths in sports, dance and entertainments etc.

The Roles of Libraries and Librarians in the Promotion and Preservation of the Nigerian Culture

Libraries and librarians are concerned with the generation of information, its acquisition; organization and dissemination of information materials which are inform of Manuscripts, books, journals reports, films, audio-visuals discs, tapes, graphics etc. They mediate between these materials and all categories of users who vary from the most specialized scholars or research scientist, student's patrons and general public. According to Nwakoby (1985) stated that the need to give the public access to the increasing volume of information emphasizes the legal reasons for the establishment of any library. It is on this bases that the paper want to summarize the major roles of the libraries. Librarians under the following sub headings and thereafter discuss the various strategies for the preservation and promotion.

Acquisition or Collection of Historical Documents

The first and foremost role of libraries and librarians in promotion of our culture is ensure they acquire or collect all relevant materials related to various cultural heritage of different ethnics groups in Nigeria into their individual libraries. This simply means that librarians should be focused on the collecting cultural and artistic materials in their communities from their obas, chiefs, emirs, traditional rulers/institution and other agencies that are in custody of cultural records, artifacts and archival materials for proper documentation in their holdings for proper preservation and dissemination of such to general public.

Organization of all Library Materials

Organization of library materials is the core role of any library, without it the materials will not be accessed and retrieved for use. To ensure that the information materials acquired are made available to users the librarian use some unique tools such as subject headings, cataloguing tools, classification schemes, filing rules, etc. to arrange them in an orderly manner for easy access and retrieval.

Preservation of Information Materials

The care of library materials should begin with the care of the library itself because, what affects one affects the other. Preserving the library and the materials is paramount to the librarian hence the objectives of the library cannot be achieved if the information materials are loss as a result of miss handling, the cost of replacing them when they are damage may be impossible. Considering the danger of acquiring or replacing the materials if they are destroyed the librarian must device a means to protect and preserve both the building and materials. In ensuring that adequate measure is taken to preserve the materials Bamidele, (2011), suggests that the librarian should adopt the following methods; regular maintenance and repairs; regular cleaning of the library environment; proper handling of materials, just to mention but a few.

Librarians and Strategies for the Preservation and Promotion of the Nigerian Culture

Having established the roles of libraries and librarians there is a need to look at practical strategies that they can employ to preserve and promote Nigerian culture both within and outside Nigeria.

Pre-school Education

There is a popular saying that goes thus, "catch them young" this according to the Holy Bible 'train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it". Going by this statement which means the responsibility of educating the children about their cultural values should begin from their childhood. The parents has a vital role to play in ensuring that they impact into their children cultural values, norms, which will begin from first of all teaching or talking to them with their mother tongue ensuring that they understand their own language, how to greet, respect the elders in the society and their traditions

The Role of a Teacher Librarian

Teachers are the next to the children after their parents. They spend most of their time with the teachers and as a result they understand the place of the society where they are. The role of teachers in promoting cultural diversities is immeasurable as their primary target is to impact into the children and youths under their domain, the need to preserve and promote the fundamental acceptable national cultural values, attitudes and model behaviour that will

enhance good relationship. This they do through a well-structured and designed classroom instructional strategy for sensitizing cultural awareness in the learner. According to Dan (2008) the strategies include field trips, the process where the teachers will carry the students out for visitations to other parts of the country to see areas of interest's resources and culture available in other parts of Nigeria. They can also emphasis on cultural studies by exploring the enrichment of their instruction with Nigeria's cultural values, ethics, histories and philosophies. Teachers engage students in cultural activities by allowing them to organize cultural exhibitions, which will show case different Nigeria's cultures in terms of food types, dressing, dancing, social activities and crafts. The teacher-librarian should introduce a 'Library Hour' in school curriculum. This is process of allowing any hour within the school time-table to enable the children to use the library class by class, under the supervision of the teacher-librarian. In the way other subjects are allocated some hours during the school period should be assigned for library use to enable the children discover facts for themselves through the use of library materials on cultural values and other areas.

Creation of a Cultural Section

Libraries can create a cultural section for children in the library where they can be provided with books, some indoor games like toys and jigsaw, puzzles, storytelling. These devices will be providing opportunities for their creative and recreational urge**.**

Exhibition of Cultural Heritage

Exhibition is an essential tool with which the librarians uses to advertise and showcase their services and resources. The display includes book fair of local authors, disk, video tapes, cassette, films of various cultural activities in their custody to draw the attention of the community, stakeholders, members, researchers, students and general public are given the awareness of the country's cultural heritage

Organize Talks, Lectures, Seminars, Conference and Workshop.

They organize lectures, seminars, conferences and workshop for people from various walks of life, to impress on them the need to preserve our culture. The librarian needs to brainstorm regularly using the medium to create awareness among the youths and children in order to make them cherish our rich culture. They educate the citizens especially the youths and children from time to time as this will be the quickest means of creating awareness and awaking the youths and promoting our culture. They also carryout sensitization programmes in their communities

Digitization of Cultural Heritage

The libraries of all type should be aiming to digitize their materials. As no

library can remain relevant in the present dispensations if their materials are not digitize. Digitization will allow the general public, students, researchers and youths all over the world to have unrestricted access to our rich cultural diversity in our libraries in Nigeria anytime anywhere. It will also enable librarians preserve promote and allow access to our culture through various platforms on social media handles.

Other strategies librarians can employ includes collaboration with relevant bodies such as government agencies like Ministry Information and Culture, National Festival of Arts Culture(NAFEST), National Council of Arts and Culture (NCAC), International Arts and Crafts (INAC), National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO), Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAA), Traditional Rulers, Ambassadors,

Nigerians in Diaspora, Media Houses etc. librarians and these stakeholders can work together to work out appropriate programmes, including actions and measures, that would foster the preservation and promoting the scourge against the social vices fighting our culture. The above mentioned agencies and stakeholders plays a critical role in preserving and promotion of Nigeria culture as their core mandates is to ensure they keep Nigeria culture alive hence their statutory goal and objectives is to holds seminars, conferences, workshops, public lectures, exhibition, annual festivals etc. which is geared towards creating public awareness among Nigerians and non-Nigerians to market the beauty of Nigeria's cultural diversities among the youths, students, stakeholders, prominent Nigerians , foreign diplomats from time to time to foster peaceful co-existence and sustainable development in the country.

These agencies have been involved in activities and programmes that promote the overall image of black African peoples and culture to be appreciated globally. For instance, NICO, NACA, NAFEST etc. held programmes that was targeted towards the youths, children, students in secondary schools and tertiary institutions called cultural clubs to foster cross-cultural interaction among the youths to appreciates, encourage Nigeria languages, dress, cuisines, cultural dances to discover and expose young talents cultural and creative arts.

They also organize festivals like the Argungu Fishing festival which has grown to become a global cultural events and carnival e.g. Calabar Carnival and others has become a major tourist attraction in Nigeria drawing participants from all over the world. Another example as reported by Wale (2021) stated that one of the events organized by INACA and NAFEST expo was used to launch the International diplomacy for peace between Nigeria, Trinidad and Tabago where the ambassador dressed in Nigerian (Northern) attire making him to look like someone from Sokoto State.

Apart from the above, the librarians can liaise with Nigerian Ambassadors and Nigerians in diaspora to promote her culture. Ambassadors are true representatives of their country. They play a vital role in preservation and promotion of their cultural activities through the mode of their dressing. When

they dress in cultural attire, decorate their offices environment with various artifacts representing ethnic cultures of the country to portraits the Nigeria image.

Other strategies include organizing seminars, competition, and workshops, volunteer to teach Nigeria languages at the local schools, collaborate with librarians to translate their local languages in the countries where they are serving. On the other hand, librarians encourage Nigerian in diaspora to organize programmes and activities such as cultural days, events, exhibitions and write up that showcase Nigeria cultural heritage. According to Asobele (2002) asserted that the greatest cultural ambassadors of any country are its citizen, Nigerian businessmen, artists, writers, government, functionaries, performance, musicians, athletes, professors, students etc. all have a vital role to play in promoting our culture abroad.

Challenges facing Librarians in Preserving and Promoting Nigerian Culture

Libraries and librarians in ensuring to carry out their roles in preserving and promoting Nigeria's culture are not without challenges. Among the various problems they face are; poor funding, lack of adequate support by government, harsh economic situation, lack of training among library personnel, high cost of infrastructure etc.

Conclusion

The need for the preservation and promotion of Nigerian culture within and outside the country cannot be over emphasized, without culture and language our identity will be lost. It is very important we promote Nigerian culture more especially among the youths in the global world to avoid Nigeria's culture going on extinction. Promoting our culture will also create employment opportunities for the youths, boost our economy and thereby enhance peace and unity.

Finally, the main goal for preserving and promoting our cherished culture is to ensure that young and coming generations of Nigerians take pride in their language, culture and tradition. This will make them desist from thinking that the foreign culture is more superior to ours. We therefore, need to go back to the path of holding our culture in high esteem and great honour.

The Way Forward

1. To ensure that Nigeria's culture doesn't go on extinction there should be an urgent need to revive the dying minority languages because of their importance to the cultural value of Nigeria.
2. Our leaders and policy makers must wake up from their slumber by ensuring and supporting the preservation and Promotion of cultural heritage whether of concrete or non- concrete nature, past or present, written or orally, relating to values for facts of history.

3. The federal government must "awake" the national language policy to prevent the minority language from going extinction and encourage parents to educate their children in their indigenous language.
4. The government should implement the Cultural Policy of Nigeria (1988) which was meant to prevent the sweeping away of our rich cultural heritage. That may result in disorderly change and societal instability and eventually creation of a people completely cut off from their cultural roots.
5. The Federal Government should adequately fund libraries to enable it acquire relevant materials on our cultural activities and allow librarians equip the libraries with new computer soft and hardware that enable them digitize the materials.
6. In order to make our libraries more effective than the way they are now, the ministry of Education in the various States of the federation should make it compulsory for all schools to have libraries no matter how small they may be.
7. Finally, librarians should look outside the box for private partnership and donor agents within and outside the country.

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