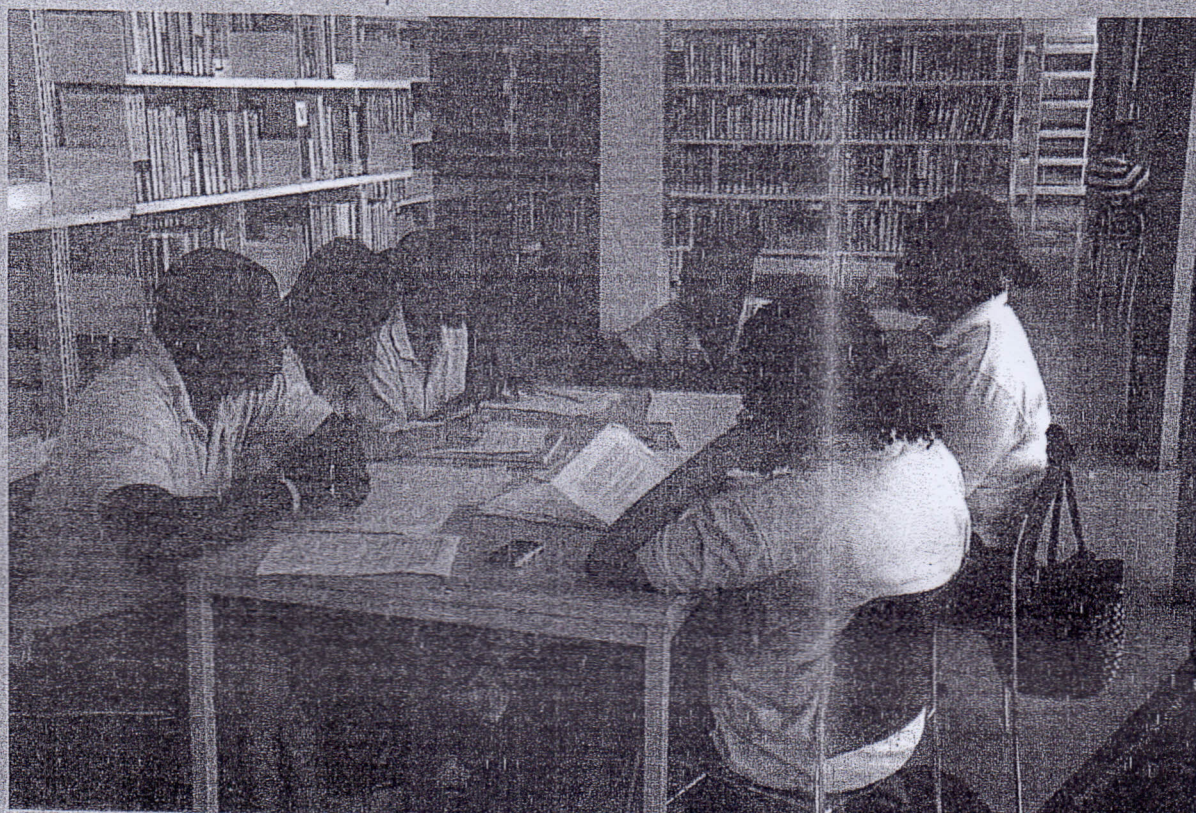


NIGERIA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION



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APPROACHES TO CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION FOR FUTURE LIBRARIES

By

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Abstract

The current challenges and uncertain information landscape, particularly as a result of the changes brought into libraries and library services through application of ICTs has provided the platform for libraries to be creative and innovative. Creativity and innovation are two different but interrelated concepts. Where creativity and innovation are lacking in libraries, it becomes a dull and lifeless environment and the staff working in such environment will also find their creativity being sapped with no room to create possibilities for future libraries to thrive. The paper highlights services/products and approaches which librarians in Nigeria, particularly those in academic, public and school libraries can implement to meet the ever changing needs of library users by providing insight into what obtains in some libraries in the United States, Australia and Uganda. This study uses a combination of reliance on observations and personal interaction through on site visit to some libraries in the United States in June 2012 and literature review of available evidence on personal experiences of some other authors.

Keywords: creativity, innovation, libraries

Background

"It is difficult to predict the future The best way to predict the future is to invent it (Alan Kay 1971) but to Abraham Lincoln, the best way to predict the future is to create it."

The English word innovation is derived from the Latin innovare which means to renew or alter. It refers to the implementation of new ideas to produce a new service or product (Martins and Terblanche, 2003). Innovation can also

be defined as modifying or improving on the existing services or products (Avlontis et al, 2001). On the other hand, creativity is bringing into existence a new idea that can be used to solve a problem (Burke, 1994). Creativity and innovations are different from each other, but they are interrelated in a way. In the library environment, more creativity and innovation should be seen because of the impact of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and users' expectations. The library is a service unit in any organization and this explanation will position the library as a platform for creativity and innovation.

To remain relevant, any institution including libraries, must evaluate its place and library professionals should understand the reasons for creativity and innovation in libraries, otherwise, it will be difficult for libraries to recognize this need and be adaptable in their quest to remain an integral part of the society's commitment to education, equity, and access to information.

Hendrix (2010) submits that although some individuals are pessimistic about the future of libraries, many envision future library services that incorporate new philosophies, new technologies and new spaces to meet the needs of users more effectively than ever before. These changes go beyond merely incorporating technological advances to include rethinking the very core of what defines a library—the sense of place, of service, and of community.

The key that opens the door for today's libraries and launches it into the clouds of future libraries is the word change. The import of this is that there is a need for libraries to be flexible, creative and innovative by ensuring a world of possibilities for creativity and innovation for the community they serve. This flexibility should be seen in the services rendered, the spaces provided and the ability to create specialized environments for particular library users. In doing this, Hendrix (2010) opines that creative and flexible spaces in future libraries will meet the needs of digital learners who multitask with a number of technologies and at the same time continue to accommodate the traditional user searching for a printed resource or quiet place to read.

Zaid and Oyelude (2012) opine that there have been developments in library and information services for a long time, but creativity seems to be neglected in the library and information science profession. This scenario cannot be generalized among libraries and librarians in developed and developing nations. This is because a lot of changes, innovations, improved services and latest technologies are seen in libraries in developed nations from the architectural design and aesthetics of the building to a space that all

Innovation from some Libraries in the United States

Shirlington Library in the Washington, Dc

Shirlington Library is a public library in Washington DC. It has the Teen's corner, Children's section and the Adults' area. It also organizes programs such as Technology Training classes where they teach issues such as computer fundamentals, operating systems, Facebook, e-reader, Google e-mail, online job searching, searching the Internet etc. They have outreach programs for children such as reading to the Dogs, Prose out Loud, Book Dating and Book Discussion.

The Flushing Branch – Queen's Borough Public Library, New York

This is the largest branch library in the New York City. It serves largely Asian population and retains extensive holdings in foreign languages. This library reaches out to local citizens and creates a center for activity and learning through the use of periodicals, films and books in foreign languages.

The New York Public Library

This library serves about 38,000 children for after school by creating after school programs for school children. Services offered include Technology training – free computer training, Literacy programs such as teaching English as a second language. There is also a great effort made by this Library to develop the Virtual Library by acquiring electronic contents such as e books.

The Sheridan Public Library, a village library in Indiana

The Sheridan Public Library is a village library in Indiana which provides community connections by using the Library as a “tool” to bring the community together. Some of these are:

1. Sheridan Historical Society – they do have monthly business meeting in the Library, Breaking Bread, jazz in the Park and lecture series
2. Children's programs such as Santa Claus visit, Easter bunny visit, Spooky Boo Halloween, weekly preschool story hour, and summer reading programs
3. Mid winter Annual show
4. Annual Christmas Tree show
5. Birthday parties, graduation parties, wedding or baby showers
6. Sheridan Business learning center etc
7. E-book program.
8. Wireless access to the internet, despite its location.

users to even have a cup of coffee in a section of the library or hold discussion to reading on comfy chairs and tables that depict the look of a sitting room. Some of the creativity and innovations as reported by Zaid and Oyelude (2012) in two Nigerian libraries are Electronic Reservation Service incorporating Web 2.0 tools; E resources Management Services; Virtual Learning Environment; Laptop Loan Service; 24 hours Library service; Instant Messaging and Provision of Research tools.

The aim of this paper is to highlight the services/products and approaches librarians in some other countries outside Nigeria are using and will serve as a platform for innovation in Nigerian libraries particularly academic, public and school libraries to meet the ever changing needs of library users to go beyond the curve and produce future libraries.

Methods

This paper uses a combination of reliance on observations, personal interaction through on site visit to some libraries in the United States in June 2012 under the auspices of the United States Consulate as an International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) award recipient. Literature review and available evidence on this topic was also done by analysis of documents and journals to get a deeper understanding of approaches other libraries are using.

Approaches to Creativity and Innovation in some Libraries Across the Globe

Personal interaction with William A. Mayer, former University Librarian at American University Washington, DC, revealed that there are four cardinal points that should serve as the driving force for future libraries as stated below:

1. Spaces: ability to lead with facilities and technology spaces
2. Partnership: interest in staff skills
3. Resources: how relevant are the collections? and;
4. Physical qualities students seek from the Libraries: clean, bright, comfortable, warm and well-lit, staffed by friendly people, have hours that fit their lifestyle, advertise services and provision of materials in all formats

9. Internet reading room (browsing, email, text editing)
10. IT Intensive Knowledge Commons
11. Music listening booths
12. Pickup of phone ordered books
13. Second hand IT/PC sale
14. Self check loans
15. Self service bar
16. Twenty four hour opening
17. Twenty four hour PC labs
18. Twenty four hour self issue and return
19. Wireless access by mobile users
20. Wireless Internet access

Information literacy innovations since 1995 as found out by Bundy (2000) are:

1. Appointment of Information Literacy Coordinator
2. Compulsory information literacy subjects
3. Electronic tutorials for databases
4. Establishment of library teaching and learning committee (TALC) to complement main university TALC
5. Faculty librarians involved in student lectures and course based assignments
6. Faculty librarians participate in Introduction to tertiary teaching programs
7. Generic Internet and database classes
8. Information literacy as a graduate quality
9. Information literacy program for indigenous adults
10. Information skills compulsory part of common unit program for undergraduates
11. Integration of information literacy into curriculum
12. Online tutorials for undergraduates
13. Organization of national conferences on information literacy
14. Organization of national workshop to develop information literacy competency standards for higher education and to establish a Australian Institute for Information Literacy
15. Outreach programs
16. Pre university info literacy programs

Indianapolis – Marion County Public Library

The architectural design and the aesthetics of this library are awesome. This library has the 'Learning curve', an ALA award winning space with areas dedicated to babies, children, and teens to enable them appreciate books using high technology in a very conducive environment. The Learning curve is the heart of this Library. It is a new library service to children, designed for the 21st century child. All the programs here help children to handle digital experiences by serving children from 0 – 18yrs. Some of the programs offered include teaching children how to use the mouse, laptop loan to children, playing with interactive cubes, the potholes and summer reading programs. Some of the strategies used for promoting reading include giving out a book, read away programs and visit to daycare centers to teach caregivers how to read to children. This library also has a section for emigrants and the adult community where they are taught free on computer skills, Internet classes. There is also a language class and they partner with companies to teach people on writing a Resume and Job search. This library also delivers books to the homes of those who cannot come to the Library.

Yorba Linda Public Library

This Library has a huge collection of old books and toys for sale in a bookshop setting to enable those who cannot buy new books possess a few collections and read at leisure. It has a beautiful story time theater for children and a multimedia room for children to watch movies and play games.

Innovations from Australian and New Zealand University and Technical and Further Education (TAFE) libraries

Bundy (2000) from a survey of all Australian and New Zealand University and Technical and Further Education (TAFE) libraries discovered the following innovations embarked upon by these libraries since 1995 as:

1. Campus wide delivery of books
2. Color copying
3. Computer information retrieval laboratory
4. Digital cameras for hire
5. Electronic scanning system
6. Fee based reservation service
7. Integrated library, university press, copy shop, multimedia team
8. Internet access via laptops

17. Web based support and teaching by librarians
18. Workshops on weekends for part time and external students

The innovations highlighted by Bundy ((2000) provides insight into a lot of ideas, services and programs that are workable in Nigerian libraries provided the librarians are proactive and are willing to accept the responsibility for change.

Innovations from Makerere University Library

Ilako and Ikoja- Odongo (2011) provide the approaches to creativity and innovation in Makerere University as listed below:

1. **Information Technology (IT) system in the Library** to support the acquisition, cataloguing and circulation of information materials.
2. The Uganda Scholarly Digital Library serves as the repository where staff can archive their scholarly works, use of e-resources and wireless connectivity etc and create efficiency.
3. **ICT Services for the disabled** in order to meet the needs of students with disability, the library allocated an equipped computer laboratory. The laboratory has computers with a Job Access with Sound (JAWS) software to enhance hearing, and Open Book software e.t.c. These facilities provide a reading environment for Persons with Disabilities.
4. **Incorporating Web 2.0 tools in the library** for creating blogs where librarians can interact with their users and also get feedback from them. In the blogs general information about the library are posted. This service is a new trend aimed to replacing the notice boards. When librarians interact with users, library management gets to know exactly what the users are saying about the library, hence create room for improvement.
5. **Research Commons** is space that is convenient for knowledge creation, intensive study and facilitates research for researchers and postgraduate students, The commons are equipped with 150 computer work stations that are fully connected to free Internet, a multimedia room where users can make Power Point (PP) presentations and group discussion rooms.
6. **Outreach activities have been created such as**
 1. **Publishing program.** The Library has successfully been engaged in a community outreach health Information program in which it publishes the *Uganda Health Information Digest*.

2. **Strengthening small libraries.** Makerere University librarians provide expert services to libraries, especially school libraries. For instance in 2010, the University librarians re-organized the collection (cataloguing, classifying, spine-label, shelf and prepared accession list, etc) for two secondary schools in Kampala.
3. **Capacity Building.** To provide professional service delivery in academic libraries in Uganda, Makerere University Library designs programs of capacity building for librarians outside the university library. The librarians are trained on the different aspects of the library, for instance e-resources, library automation etc. Such trainings are in form of refresher courses.
4. **Library cooperation.** Through the umbrella association Consortium of Uganda University Libraries (CUUL), Makerere University Library is playing the major role of introducing to other Universities a service for which it has expertise. This is using e-resources. It is involved in coordinating the subscription, training and guidance of other University Libraries. The advantage of this service is that libraries in the consortium pay for the e-resources at a subsidized price and the other bigger percentage paid by Makerere University Library with funding from SIDA/SAREC.

Recommendations for bringing about infinite possibilities in libraries

- Libraries in Nigeria should redesign and transform library spaces so as to meet the information needs of today's users
- Librarians should be more proactive in meeting the needs of the community they serve by designing programs and services that will enhance research, reading and writing skills of users particularly in terms of developing literacy skills of their users such as information literacy, digital literacy, Internet literacy and media literacy.

Other recommendations are drawn from Mayer (2012)'s submission in his address to IVLP delegates who are librarians and information professionals from different countries. These are his recommendations:

5. Libraries should have individual and collaboration learning environment with accessible and living room learning spaces in the library.
6. Ensuring best practices in libraries
7. Libraries should be an enabler of success for the entire community

8. Provision of array of resources in whatever format that support research
9. Partnering with Faculty (to facilitate teaching and learning)
10. making the library a place to go, a place to be by creating a clean, neat, conducive and fascinating environment for library users
11. gathering data regularly particularly on the use of the available resources in the library to be able to make decision in order to improve not just on the services of the library, but much more importantly what to do with the space.

Conclusion

It is really hard to predict the future hence it is difficult to predict the future of libraries as well. The ultimate goal for libraries in Nigeria to be among future libraries is to conform to the trend in other forward propelled libraries and be relevant in the future. Librarians must think creatively and innovatively from time to time to bring about the desired change that will make a library relevant in the future. Aside from technological innovations, this is the time for librarians and libraries to embrace change, since change is the only thing that is constant by creating new services and improve on existing ones. Nigerian libraries should also follow the trend by getting to know the latest technologies, best practices and skills required of future librarians in the global terrain. They can then adapt these new ideas and localize the context to bring out more advanced and satisfactory services to their clientele.