

Library Support and the Innovative Application of Indigenous Knowledge Systems

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ABSTRACT The purpose of the study was to identify the importance of the contemporary library services in the modern use of indigenous knowledge system in order to determine how it can best be managed in order to contribute progressively to the society. The importance of libraries in preserving and disseminating the indigenous knowledge was also discussed. The paper highlighted the indigenous knowledge method and procedures. It also established that with the indigenous knowledge stored in human mind, the knowledge is susceptible to be lost because when a person possessing that knowledge dies, she or she dies with the entire knowledge in abundance. The paper further examined that Indigenous knowledge is mostly understood in rural areas and that most of that knowledge is not documented. As a result, the libraries should device a means to collect, store and disseminate Indigenous Knowledge (IK). The study recommends that libraries should take full responsibility of collecting and developing Indigenous Knowledge for ease of storage and dissemination as well as access.

INTRODUCTION

The paper highlighted the function and responsibilities of libraries as a result of additional services as well as electronic resources; audio-visual aids, story hours, lectures, book display, book exhibitions, pictures, newsreels, films, etc. in the innovative application of Indigenous Knowledge. The oral system of knowledge is different from the written system. In African societies, much knowledge is learned, stored and disseminated through the oral tradition. It also established that with the indigenous knowledge stored in human mind, it can be easily lost when the person possessing that knowledge dies (Kathlee 2016; Huaman and Sriraman 2015).

The Concept of Indigenous Knowledge System

Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS) is also referred to as *“traditional knowledge, local knowledge, indigenous skill, indigenous technical knowledge, folk knowledge, peoples’ science, rural people’s knowledge, ethnoscience*

and cultural knowledge” (Chisenga 2002: 16-17). Moreover, Chisenga (2002: 16-17) defines IKS as *“a body of knowledge and beliefs built by a group of people, and handed down to generations through oral tradition, about the relationship between living beings and their environment and a system of self-management that governs resources use.”* It is the foundation for local-level decision making in agriculture, healthcare, food preparation, education, natural resource management and a congregation of other events in the rural societies (Owiny et al. 2014).

Naturally Indigenous Knowledge (IK) is implicit knowledge which is disseminated from generation to generation by means of face to face communication such as, storytelling, presentation and traditional ceremonies. IK is conveyed in the form of narratives, traditional morals, opinions, rites, native language, agricultural languages and resources, which is distributed and transmitted verbally. It becomes explicit only when it is documented in any format (Jain 2008).

Libraries were warehouses and excavations of knowledge, retained in books. Human attempt of numerous types, comprising education, research, creativity, enterprise and relaxation, has continuously been contingent to approximate degree on retrieval of information. Books in the libraries have been the vessels for carrying and conveying the information it contains. Books

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were established to be communication means for information in the form of writings, and libraries were established to preserve, manage, arrange as well as making them available in considerable amounts. The importance of libraries has frequently been determined by the extent of their collection; a number of books indicate a superior storage of books and extra extensiveness of coverage.

According to Shackleton et al. (2002), in Nigeria, pharmaceutical plant is the most important foundation of healthcare for approximately eighty percent of the inhabitants for their primary healthcare, for the reason that it is “culturally acceptable, affordable and accessible.” This supports Odukoya’s (2012) view who accounted that African Traditional Medicine (ATM) is the backbone of primary healthcare for the greater part of those who are living in the rural areas in Africa, while on the other hand, a small number of the privileged who lived in the cities used these African Traditional Medicine. Consequently, traditional treatment is of modern application, and it can assist rural societies to accomplish self-sufficiency in their primary healthcare essentials (Ebijuwa and Mabawonku 2015).

Libraries in Support of Indigenous Knowledge

Despite the clear association with heritage and cultural tradition, indigenous knowledge is very much at the cutting edge. Libraries are at times faced with the challenge of extracting information from individuals or communities who may be unwilling to share their actual knowledge with outsiders. Libraries must put up with the challenge of developing strategies that would enable them to extract such knowledge. Libraries are also facing competition with community structures such as tele-centres which are becoming important platforms for capturing, transferring and giving access to indigenous knowledge.

“IK is usually passed from generation to generation through socialization processes by elders of indigenous communities. Documented literature of IK is limited in Africa and libraries cannot effectively perform their functions of acquiring, processing, organizing, preserving and giving access. In recognition of this fact, this paper looks at how libraries can facilitate access to indigenous knowledge in the developing countries in general and Nige-

ria in particular. The word library is derived from the Latin word ‘liber’ which means book. A library is conventionally defined as a storehouse of knowledge” (Okore et al. 2009: 4).

This is for the reason that in the past libraries were known for accommodating books utilised for documentation of knowledge and were preserved and utilised. Nowadays, libraries and information centres are access station organisations to worldwide information that is appropriate in education, research as well as national development (Omekwu and Ugwuanyi 2009).

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Mchombu and Cadbury (2011) opined that the majority of library service locations are situated in urban areas, eliminating the massive majority of the rural inhabitants existing in scattered communities. These obstacles avoid rural populations from accessing library resources even when they are locally available. With underprivileged infrastructure and short of a functioning finances, numerous African libraries do not have enough money to pay the cost of documentation, preservation, and dissemination of indigenous knowledge. Moreover, East African libraries and information centers regularly do not have enough money to pay the cost of sustaining digital resources and, as a result, cannot make a meaningful contribution to the digital environment. Okore et al. (in Chisita 2011) indicated that indigenous knowledge in developing countries is in abundance nonetheless, there is the scarcity of an environment in which the concepts can disseminate amongst community members. Moreover, Okore et al. (in Chisita 2011) recommended that libraries establish the surroundings that permits societies to come together and exchange opinions concerning agriculture, medical care, ecosystems, and farmer-to-farmer collaborations. In Africa, libraries function in separation and strive to endure as a result of insufficient finance from the governments that do not recognise the significance of locally produced knowledge in contrast with the developed countries with well-supported library.

The library can also play a crucial role in an area by arranging outreach workstations or

booths in community locations such as stores, supermarkets, arcades, colleges, institutes, as well as the house of worship, as a consequence making available the channel to retrieve the databases in which indigenous knowledge is deposited to the native inhabitants (UNESCO 1997).

Moreover, libraries and other information systems can also make use of social media and communication technologies accessible in a certain population to announce audio feeds or videos of indigenous knowledge. For example, radios can be used in most rural areas to disseminate information on agricultural information on how to plant and use native indigenous fruits and vegetables. This might be showcased on a local radio program making use of the local language of that area (Owiny et al. 2014).

METHODOLOGY

The method used for this paper was a comprehensive literature review in which a mixture of the background and theoretical review approaches were utilized. A thorough and well-informed review of appropriate literature enabled the researcher in composing this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Libraries have a history of promoting users' and creators' rights and negotiating copyright issues in a library setting and discuss with local communities questions about individual or communal rights. The copyright and intellectual property rights issues that are included in the United Nations Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 2007) can be addressed in a library setting. Lor (2004), Kathlee (2016), and Huaman and Sriraman (2015) are of the opinion that libraries can help out with the invention and documentation of knowledge, systematise it for utilisation, as well as support its gratitude, incorporating reverence for the societies that yielded the knowledge.

"As far as the preservation and protection of knowledge is concerned, libraries have responsibilities, through their outreach programs, to provide accurate information about not only desirable cultural practices but practices that may have negative consequences for people and the environments in which they live"(Owiny et al. 2014: 242).

Libraries also have a role to play in repeatedly involving with and assembling societies and people by means of contribution in traditional occasions, get-togethers, gatherings, displays, craft workshops, festivals, as well as other events that play a part in fruitful documentation and preservation of indigenous knowledge (Owiny et al. 2014).

The library is also important in preserving knowledge (Indigenous knowledge) for future use by generations and generations in the society. According to Gonzales et al. (2002), IK is presently being missing at a frightening degree and its conservation as an existing growing body of knowledge can be transmitted out by means of documentation, registries or databases. Lwoga (2011) pronounced that libraries have not been predominantly operational in as far as documenting IK is concerned. Langton (2005), Kathlee (2016) and Huaman and Sriraman (2015) affirmed that libraries must take into consideration IK as both part of an ancient documentation, as well as a modern body of applicable knowledge.

Moreover, Onyemaizu (2015) indicated that the library can support the use of IK by:

- Documenting these stories by way of recording them into audio tapes or even videos.
- Indigenous knowledge within communities can be collected by the library and published into books or journals as the case may be.
- Materials that cannot be preserved by the library through documentation can be converted to artefacts as a way of preservation.
- Libraries can provide a current awareness service by way of mass education whereby sons and daughters of a community can be taught knowledge of their forefathers indigenous to their community.

There are indispensable functions and responsibilities of libraries as a result of additional services as well as electronic resources; audio-visual aids, story hours, lectures, book display, book exhibitions, pictures, newsreels, films, etc. for use by all. The library provides good storage, preservation, organisation and ease of access to information collected.

Moreover, libraries should not concentrate on developing the contemporary collections which is relevant to the elites only, but also be able to cater for people living in the rural areas by introducing the services that are more appro-

appropriate to native populations. Were (2015) maintained that libraries who are supposed to be the forerunner in as far as managing knowledge is concerned, are being downgraded in the contemporary 'open data revolution'. Furthermore, she stressed that investigating subjects of co-operation between the AHPs and libraries will be the solution in addressing the problem. Consequently, libraries should inspire and promote tight cooperation including the AHPs in order to improve the organised administration of IK. Okorafor (2010) recommended that the latest responsibility of libraries is in the 'documentation, storage and dissemination' of IK in their own societies and this is viewed as indispensable for advancement.

For appropriate administration of IK, it is of paramount importance to start an operational affiliation involving the libraries, librarians as well as the AHPs. Roy (2007) maintained that the libraries play a social role in the society in enabling and providing "a sense of individual and group pride and identity" for native inhabitants. It is important to consider enabling the reading and writing of the AHPs, for IK management. Kaniki and Mphahlele (2002) indicated that absence of education in IK has made "bibliographic" control in traditional knowledge impossible.

Libraries should help the IK to acquire copyright. This will bring about assurance and belief in AHPs. Moreover, libraries should make certain that investigators submit their research works concerning IK to the library and information centres. For easy retrieval of IK information, after gathering information, it must be appropriately catalogued and classified making use of international standards. Displays and expositions can then be staged to make the community aware of the knowledge that is accessible (Ebijuwa 2015).

CONCLUSION

Indigenous knowledge is an overwhelming, comprehensive and shared viewpoints and regulations concerning the tangible resource, social standards, health, ecosystem, traditions, and means of support of the communities who interrelate with the surroundings in rural as well as in the urban backgrounds. IKS has taken place as the foundation for indigenous final resolution in as far as agriculture, healthcare, food preparation and education is concerned.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Libraries can also support competitions on textual indigenous technology, customary songs as well as traditional outfit. People can enter the competition through audio, video or print design. Awards can be provided to the top three competitors and comfort awards be provided to the remainder. A collection of indigenous knowledge should be made during such events and should be administered and made approachable to clients of the library.

Information products established on indigenous knowledge should be generated and be made available by libraries. This information can be repackaged in various languages in order to make that information comprehensible to a large number of citizens.

A memorandum of understanding should be developed involving the possessors of indigenous knowledge and the Western world, specifically concerning the knowledge of the society that has profitmaking importance.

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