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Author 2	
Author 3	
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**RENTAL LIBRARY AND INFORMATION BROKERING IN
THE CONTEXT OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

BY

**DR NANCY ACHEBE
SCHOOL OF GENERAL STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA
ENUGU CAMPUS**

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IMPACT ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.**

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RENTAL LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION BROKERING IN THE CONTEXT OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

ABSTRACT.

In the library and information sector, there are two methods of service delivery namely the free service and fee-based service. Anyone of these methods can be operated by either public or private sector. Rental libraries and information centres promote information and national development. These are also places where the library and information professionals carry out private practice for skill development and financial improvement. The following issues are discussed: rental libraries as educational centres, conceptions of rental libraries and information centres, rationale for rental library, types and their service orientation, basic infrastructure for setting up rental libraries, feasibility study and contributions of rental libraries to national development.

KEY WORDS: *Rental libraries and information centres, fee-based library and information services. Information brokering.*

INTRODUCTION

In a true democratic process, governments give the people every opportunity to express their opinion. Part of this opportunity is that the government tries to communicate its plans, activities and progress to the people. Participatory governance in Nigeria means that the citizens should be able to contribute effectively to the determination of government objectives and are able to hold the government accountable for the delivery of these objectives. Participatory governance is people centred. It takes into account people's well being, access to education and information on public matters like gender and financial equality and basic human rights.

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGS)

Millennium Development goals (MDGS) are the universally accepted framework for measuring development progress anywhere in the world. Consequently, poverty alleviation is based on the attainment of the goals as follows: eradication of hunger, universal primary education for all, promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women, reduction of child mortality, combating HIV/AIDs, malaria and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability and developing a global partnership for development.

As a part of the millennium development Goals (MDGS) of the United Nations, the Federal government made effort to ensure even development at the grassroots by embarking on a number of reform programmes as contained in the National Economic Development Strategy (NEEDS). The NEEDS document describe strategies to solve the development challenges of Nigeria which include the following major areas: public service reform (eg capacity building or training of civil servants) which includes pension reforms, monetization, LGA reforms, police, prisons customs and immigration reforms, due-process and deregulation of the down stream petroleum sector, agricultural, food security, rural development and solid minerals reforms among others. In consideration of the current economic down turn of the public sector, and in new of the fact that it is difficult to achieve reform without changing the attitude of civil servants. SERVICOM which is civil service reform “Service Compact with all Nigerians” was introduced. SERVICON is an integral part of NEEDS. It is an attitudinal change needed to encourage public servants to be client friendly. SERVICON is a declaration by public officials to dedicate themselves to providing basic and essential services on time, in an effective, fair, honest, transparent and friendly manner.

Taking a clue from the federal government Millennium Goals, most state governments now embark on PRS and SEEDS. The Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) and State Economic Empowerment and Developments (SEEDS), are reforms that has positive impact on the life of people, especially on their attitude to information handling. Information and the provision of good library services are therefore, essential counterbalance to national poverty and illiteracy condition.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this paper is to indicate the value of rental library and information centres to national development. Specifically, the following issues are discussed: rental library and information centres as educational institutions, the concept of rental library and information centres, rationale for rental library, types and their service orientation, basic infrastructure for setting up rental libraries, feasibility study and contributions of rental libraries to national development.

RENTAL LIBRARY AS EDUCATIONAL CENTRES

As a reference library and institution, rental libraries and information centres provide the following information and knowledge to users:

Farmers can access information on proper irrigation techniques and variety of grains for farming. They can also access useful information on bio engineered cowpea and improved varieties which resist insect and disease pest. Engineers may wish to access information on modern techniques of assembling automobile machines and accessories. Librarians can access information on ICT use in the library. Medical practitioners may access information from books that deal on drugs and their mode of prescription. Also legal practitioners may desire to access current information on court proceedings and judgments.

These people apply the knowledge they acquired not only in their work but also for self and national development.

WHAT IS NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

National development is a multi-dimensional concept that expresses man's physical, political, economic and social environment (Nwosu: 1986). It is a process that is associated with continuous improvement in the capacity of the people and their society to control and manage their physical environment and themselves for their own benefit. The rental library and information centres as adjunct to access of humanistic scientific and technological knowledge are agencies for national development. The MDGs, NEEDs and SEEDs represent global and national economic empowerment of people which are communication and information oriented. However, the existing public information system may be handicapped in meeting required information delivery. Other methods of ensuring that information gets to the target audience are invariably required. This method can be the rental library and information centres. Literature indicates that this area has not been fully exploited (Umar: 2005). An analysis of participatory governance and people's need for participation led to the conclusion that the Rental library and information centres can be an adjunct as no other library can provide quick and efficient access to sources of information on the MDGs, NEEDs and SEEDs.

WHAT IS RENTAL LIBRARY?

This has been variously defined as library and information services that are fee-based (Umar: 2005). Freelance librarianship, information brokerage, library consultancy and a host of other names.

Whatever name given, it is an organization, that undertakes to search and provide information on demand for a fee (Bopp and Smith /2001). Operators of rental libraries recognize that users of their centres value their services and will pay for them.

RATIONALE FOR RENTAL LIBRARIES

Some library users have needs for research and information assistance that require more time than can be provided by the reference librarians in a public or private library without taking time and resources away from other users. The response to those who need special research assistance is payment of service fee. In public, academic special libraries, fee-based services serve the information needs of business and professionals who are willing to pay for 'extra services' such as extensive database searching, document delivery, compilation of bibliographies, expert consultation and trademarks and patent research. White (1980) and Heim (1984) in support of the rental library and information brokerage, note the ample opportunities available in the information industries and the fact that conventional library and information centres cannot cope because of information explosion and high demand from users as a result of information consciousness.

TYPES OF RENTAL LIBRARY AND INFORMATION BROKERAGE.

Rental libraries and information brokerage can be carried out in both public, private, academic and special/research libraries. Fee based operations in these libraries range from separate units to those with no separate unit. It can be established and run by one person or group of people. It can be private or public enterprise the important feature is that the operators charge fees for their services. The concern of this paper is private fee- based rental library and information centres:

Fee-based library and information services can be exciting and challenging for reference for the following reasons: fee is charged for every extra time spent in handling patron's information needs. This is because keeping long with one patron without attending to others can be time consuming.

As we all know, in any business setting, time is money and the entrepreneur is not usually disposed to time wasting a reason for charging fees for services rendered. Typical exchanges of rental libraries are few within the country but they are many in the developed world like United States of America, United Kingdom, France, Germany among others. In Germany for example, there is the popular 'SUBITO', rental library, which provides a variety of services viz document delivery, lending services within and outside the country. Its customers are National libraries, public libraries, University libraries and specialist libraries. Most often these libraries offer services on behalf of the library user.

Basic facilities for setting up rental library and information centre.

For purposes of setting up and running effective and efficient rental library the following facilities are required:

INFRASTRUCTURE:

Regular electricity supply, dedicated telephone line, regular water supply and good access road
 Plant and Equipment: complete computer set with printer and scanner, T.V and video cassette players and recorders, radio and cassette players and recorders, manual and electric typewriters, satellite dish, telephone and fax machines, digital camera/projector, GSM handset photocopying machine CD/DVD player and recorder film projector, generator set, air conditioners, fan, accounting and calculating machines as well as motor vehicles.

Cleaning Facilities: Brush, broom mop and bucket, cutlass hoe, shovel and rake

Furniture: Quality chairs and reading tables for adult and children, bulletin boards, book and audio-visual shelves, window valence, curtains for windows and rug or carpets for the floor.

Security and time keeping gadgets Alarm clock, (set at opening and closing hours.)• quality keys. Strong burglar proof for doors and windows.

HOW TO SET UP RENTAL LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CENTRE

Like any business, setting up a rental library requires careful plan and feasibility study, the following steps are recommended:

1. **Self Assessment:** The information broker should be able to weigh himself to see if he has the capability to provide services to satisfy patrons.
2. **Community Analysis:** effort should be made to assess the community information needs. This will determine the type of rental library to be set up. The analysis should aim at identifying potential target groups in the area the rental library is to be established. For example, the people in that area could be farmers, traders, drivers, tourists, artisans politicians, patients in hospitals among others, the information broker should always monitor the information trend and requirements of his/her target group and potential target too.
3. **Nature of Services to be Provided:** There are many services the rental library and information centre can provide. They are photocopying, typesetting, literature search, internet browsing, information on scholarship desktop publishing, space for general reading, book talks, film-show, teaching information skills, bibliotherapy and clinical therapy, space for meetings, advisory and guidance, group discussion, binding and lamination of documents, selective dissemination of information (SDI), job adverts, grants and tourism as well as referrals Services.

It is the duty of the information broker to identify services the patrons can afford and the promotional methods to influence patrons to develop favourable attitude to the services. This is can be done by providing a

business plan which contains all information required to start the business. The project plan is also useful in raising funds and obtaining other support to start and operate the rental library.

4. FUNDING

This involves determining the cost of the rental library and ways and means of financing it. The following ways can be exploited:

- a. Self finance
- b. Government assisted finance
- c. Grants from charity organizations, corporations NGOs, both National and International.
- d. Bank loan.
- e. Cooperative effort or joint partnership finance.

4. Location and sitting

Choosing the right location has a strong success factor on the rental library. Three major considerations can be taken for this purpose:

- (a) Availability of infrastructure eg. Electricity, water, good road and telephone are very essential for locating a rental library and information centre.
- (b) Economic factors in terms of the purchasing power of patrons, that is, the ability of patrons to pay for services rendered in the rental library for information brokerage.
- © Geographical factors to be considered are closeness to the users, accessibility to the site of the library.

5. MANAGEMENT OF RENTAL LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CENTRE:

Here, the information broker should consider selection and recruitment of personnel required to operate the library in terms of the skills, experience and qualifications the staff require to be able to work creditably in different aspects and unit of the library.

Specifically, an applicant who has management, advertising and communication skills is best suited for recruitment to run the centre.

6. **ECONOMIC VIABILITY:** The information broker has to determine how the library will contribute to the economic growth of the country. Part of this requirement is that the information broker should register the business with the Ministry for Corporate Affairs to avoid being harassed by the officials of this agency. Part of the gains of registering with the Corporate Affairs is that this agency helps to market the centre through their publications. Marketing is crucial aspect of the business which should not be underrated if the centre is to achieve sustainable growth and development.(Gana:2002).

SOURCES OF FUNDS IN RENTAL LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CENTRES.

Basic Sources Include:

Membership Fee: This can be categorized according users thus; individual, institutional eg NGOs, CBOs, Schools Professional associations etc.

Rental Fees: This should be charged on the resources taken outside the library such as books, CD/DVD, books, cost of running an errand or delivering messages or parcels etc.

Service Charge: This is the costing of library services in terms of duration eg. Cost of telephone in terms of calls per minute, word processing or typesetting and photocopying services in terms of number of pages typeset etc.

Contributions of Rental Library and Information Centres In National Development.

With ICT technology, many rental library and information centres are fast springing up. Majority of these centres aside from making money, they help to sustain the reading habits and literary interest of patrons.

They are path-finders to other areas of entrepreneurship in the country. How? The experiences brokers acquire from management of the centre may encourage other people to join the business. This in turn, has a multiplier effect on the country's economy. The attendant economic factors are growth and development of the market. With demographic increase in number of people interested in the business and the propensity to pay for services, all are essential factors to encourage this business and support the phenomenon of national development. With success stories being recorded in some part of the country, there is hope that the rental library and information brokerage will thrive.

Notable of these centres are the Rakat Reading Café at Lamido Mustapha Social Centre in Zaria (Umar: 2005), ABic Children's Reading Centre at Edozien street Uwani Enugu among others that are warming up. Rental libraries encourage users to keep abreast of information. This is an area of service the professional library and information scientists should explore for enhanced financial empowerment (Achebe: 2004).

CONCLUSION:

Rental library and information brokerage is a viable resource for people centred development. It can be a useful tool in the hands of information managers to contribute positively to the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Federal Government Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), the State Economic Empowerment and Developments (SEEDs), and the state Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS). As these programmes require the participation of everybody in the country, librarians and information brokers have no choice to contribute their skills. They are expected to lead the way because they provide useful information to people for their

personal development, through which they can contribute solution to problems in the society. The library and information professional should take the challenge and begin to establish rental library and information centres in their locality. Providing reference service through an information broker can be satisfying alternative career for librarians.

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