



## Information Literacy and Sustainable Development Goals Implementation: The Role of Libraries and Librarians

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### ABSTRACT

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This paper is an exploratory investigation on Information Literacy and Sustainable Development Goals Implementation: The Role of Libraries and Librarians. It is imperative to note that libraries and librarians can help streamline services that encourage the participation and acceptance of stakeholders through its sharing, collaboration and facilitation platforms and services. The familiarity of users to their respective libraries avails the library the opportunity to sensitize, recognize and make visible prospects and challenges recorded with the implementation of SDGs. As it was pointed out that every sector depends on the library, it could be concluded that the library has all that is required to support the sustainable development goals to be achieve because of its characteristic dependability and inclusiveness. This paper recommended that management of libraries should not see the libraries as avenue of enriching themselves as there have been situations where fund released by government has been misappropriated and embezzled at the detriment of effective service provision. There should be in a existence a body with integrity whose responsibility should be to monitor and audit every library project and anyone found culpable punished accordingly. Furthermore, librarians and libraries should get involve in advocacy programmes such as road-walk, distribution of informative flyers, radio jingles and social media campaign with a view to intimating the public on the SDGs.

### KEYWORDS:

Information, Information Literacy, SDGs, Libraries, Librarians

### INTRODUCTION

It is no longer a new phenomenon that the world has moved from industrial age into information age. A man's desire and quest for knowledge has led to the creation and accumulation of tremendous amount of information. The world today boasts of a knowledge based society and the quest for knowledge knows no bounds and limits and is never satisfied. Information has been defined by many scholars in various ways. To some, it is news, data, facts, while others see it as communication of ideas. According to Nnadozie and Unagha (2015), information is viewed as answers to questions that begin with such words as who, what, where, when and how many. This indicates that it could be knowledge one gets about someone or something as well as factors or details about a subject.

Diffen (2016) sees information as data processed, organized, structured and presented in a given context so as to make it useful.

Generally, information literacy stands for how a person utilizes information and how he acquires information through several information sources. Information literacy (IL) skill means possessing knowledge as to which type of information is required, what types of resources are available for that information, have the knowledge how to find the information and how to communicate the findings with others. Information literacy is quite different from the aforementioned types of literacy. It is the combination of all these concepts but goes beyond it. Information literacy, according to UNESCO (2013), is a set of competencies that empowers citizens to access, retrieve, understand, evaluate and use, to create as well as share information and media content in all formats, using various tools, in a critical, ethical and effective way, in order to participate and engage in personal, professional and societal activities. Information literacy has to do with knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner (CILIP, 2012). The skills

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that are required to be an information literate person calls for understanding of a need for information, the resources available, how to find information, the need to evaluate results, how to work or exploit results, how to communicate or share your findings and how to manage your findings. Information literate people are those who have learned how to learn. They know how to learn because they know how information is organized, how to find information and how to use information in such a way that others can learn from them.

Information for all Programme (IFAP, 2008) has defined information literacy as: the capacity of people to recognize their information needs, locate and evaluate the quality, store and retrieve information, make effective and ethical use of information and apply information to create and communicate knowledge. Information literacy as a concept helps people to interpret and make informed judgments. It is a prerequisite for participating effectively in the information society and part of the basic human rights of lifelong learning. Munshi and Nagar (2016), state that information literacy is an intellectual framework for recognizing the need for understanding, finding, evaluating, and using information. These are activities which may be supported in part by fluency with information technology, in part by sound investigative methods, but most importantly through critical discernment and reasoning. Information literacy initiates, sustains, and extends lifelong learning through abilities that may use technologies but are ultimately independent of them. According to American Library Association (2000), information literacy objectives are identified as follows; information literacy forms the basis for lifelong learning; it is common to all disciplines; to all learning environments; and to all levels of education. It enables learners to master content and extend their investigations, become more self-directed, and assume greater control over their own learning. An information literate individual is able to;

- determine the extent of information needed;
- provide access the needed information effectively and efficiently;
- evaluate information and its sources critically;
- incorporate selected information into one's knowledge base;
- use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose; and
- understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and access and use information ethically and legally.

In this age of ICT, the users have the facility to fulfill all these need with the help of the innovative technologies. It is because of these technologies that provide the new ways to improve the knowledge about the use of all these techniques and the information literacy as well. This is a learning process which will continue throughout the life. Bruce (2003) identifies the seven faces of information literacy as;

- information technology conception-using information technology for information retrieval and communication;
- information sources conception-finding information;
- information process conception-executing a process;
- information control conception-controlling information;
- knowledge construction conception-building up a personal knowledge base in a new area of interest;
- knowledge extension conception-working with knowledge and personal perspectives adopted in such a way that novel insights are gained; and
- wisdom conception-using information wisely for the benefit of others.

However, information literacy competency extends learning beyond formal classroom settings and provides practice with self-directed investigations as individuals move into internships, first professional positions, and increasing responsibilities in all areas of life (Babu, 2008).

### Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): A Concept

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were formulated by the United Nations Organisation and were adopted at the Sustainable Development Summit on 25th September, 2015 by the United Nations member states. It is now referred to as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which, according to Abdulrahan, Ape and Egbe (2019), includes a set of 17 Sustainable Development goals (SDGs) aimed at ending poverty, fighting inequality and justice, tackling climate change by 2030.

The SDGs are built on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which was adopted in 2000, aimed at reducing poverty, hunger, disease, gender inequality and improved access to water and sanitation. Though the MDGs made enormous progress, despite the success, the indignity of poverty, hunger and other anti-poverty has not ended particularly in Africa and most especially in Nigeria. The MDGs made progress in several areas, such as income, poverty reduction, access to improved water sources, primary school enrolment, and child mortality among others. The SDGs, according to Galyuon (2016) are as follows:

1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere;
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture;
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages;
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunity for all;
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls;
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all;
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all;

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8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all;
9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation;
10. Reduced inequality within and among countries;
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable;
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns;
13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts;
14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development;
15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss;
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels; and
17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

The 17 SDGs covered various aspects of human welfare, prosperity and climate change and sustainable industrialization. For the goals to be achieved, everyone needs to key into the agenda. Libraries are not an exception.

### The Role of Libraries and Librarians in the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals

The presence of libraries and librarians in different environment and the target they serve is a clear indication that libraries have significant roles to play in supporting sustainable development goals whose actors and targets are also diversified. Libraries and librarians can support SDGs through the following activities:

- **Ensuring Research Visibility:** Librarians are trained information scouts to provide direction for the use of unsure publications, and to exposes resources ordinarily not popular. This act of exposure makes research work visible and inclusive, significantly is that it help to bridge communication gaps. Therefore, librarians should not be not thwart effort of close coordinating and collaboration which makes exposing the visible content of other works and attracting Gani, Kasa and Allahmagani. (2016).
- **Policy Formulation:** The library which is the storehouse of information should improve the quality of its services by making it more attractive, efficient and value-based. Librarians should embark on projects that will provide information for information users across all sectors and departments. There should be something for everyone in the library from the local farmer, pupil, doctor, public officials etc. Librarians should

actively participate in making policies that help bridge the digital divide in local communities. Internet connectivity, computers, electricity, network, servers etc should be made available in the libraries. Librarians should participate and conduct ICT training for the general public. The SDGs are a universal agenda for transforming our world and to achieve this transformation, librarians must not fold their arms and act aloof. To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, all hands must be on deck. Every person must be brought on board- from the doctor to the engineer, from the woman who sells at a local store to the child in primary school, from the lawyer who fights for justice to you as librarians.

- **Advocacy and Awareness programmes:** Librarians can develop advocacy programmes and engage in lobbying to achieve these Global Goals. Librarians should speak on behalf of the vulnerable and disadvantaged to major stakeholders to take actions that will drive towards the advancement of these goals. They can also organize outreaches, rallies to educate the general public on the Global Goals and their importance. They should also educate the public on topics ranging from climate change, gender equality, education, human rights, health and youth empowerment. This could be carried out through both online and onsite activities using social media as a tool. Most people both young and old are on social media and use it daily. It has been proven to be one of the fastest and most effective ways of disseminating information in this information era. Other media such as billboards, radio broadcasts and television programmes can also be used. Much importance should be given to the grass-root level-the far-to-reach, illiterates, unemployed etc. Sharing these activities on different platforms will make people more aware and stimulate their interest in advancing the SDGs. It would increase the visibility of librarianship as a noble profession. It would also give room for partnerships among librarians and even other professionals across different industries. Partnership is a key in achieving Global Goals.

- **Collaboration with NGOs and other Public Sector:** NGOs are fast and successful driving force to meeting the local needs of the inhabitants of a particular area. Libraries can partner with the above group for fund raising, capacity building and enhancing economic and social wellbeing of the less privilege Nigerian

- **Formal and Informal Training:** The position of the library on the issue of formal and informal training cannot be questioned, however, the capability to distinguish individuals within the two strata is important for librarians so that they can provide service that are not “just-in-case to “right-on-time” adjudging from the resource request and information carrying capacities of a client. The library during the support facilitates education and continuous training of these categories of client who are also relied upon to actualize the SDGs.

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- **Promoting Open Access Initiatives:** Specialize information gathering by librarians open to all on SDGs would make scholarly publications on SDGs available to the public. This could influence researcher and other stakeholders to take advantage to populate benefits of subscription and supporting the agenda. The benefits of engaging libraries to support scholarly publications on SDGs to include, gain visibility, network and collaborate with others.

- **Improving Literacy of Citizen:** The library will forever be duty bound to improve literacy, this is also numerously repeated as the goal of SDGs. The library and librarian are therefore saddled to continue to support literacy campaigns, implementation and support by pooling together relevant resources to supporting education and training targeted at formal or informal sectors.

- **Motivation:** Patrons who have distinguished themselves through publications on SDGs, needs support and encouragement to motivate them. This can be done during media charts, road shows and sponsorship of the programmes. The library exhibitions and specialize information provision platforms could be leverage upon to showcase the gains of subscribing to the SDGs. Other forms of appreciation are gestures; making referral to, giving out awards and making public appreciation.

- **Evaluation:** It is not enough to collate, exhibit and support for the cause of SDGs, it is required that time-to-time there should be an ongoing process consisting of several methods of assessing and analysing the progress of SDG programme promoted by the library. The evaluation shall be based on the set objective and mission, what prospects has been gained when clearly weighted alongside its achievements.

### Challenges of Information Literacy in Nigeria

The challenges of information literacy in Nigeria can be attributed to the following;

1. The relative newness of and inadequate exposure of library users to information literacy, which include awareness, ability to locate and recognize information.
2. Lack of skills to explore the different information systems available, which include information seeking strategies
3. Poor reading culture of vast number of Nigerians. The low level of reading habits are caused by multi-varied factors and these factors include: change in Nigerian value system, economic hardship which is prevalent in many homes, astronomical prices of books and other information materials as well as cost of publishing books, which is very high today.
4. Paucity of libraries and information centres at the state and local levels to educate and promote literacy programmes through provision of adequate and relevant information materials that will meet the information needs of their users.

5. Another challenge is the distraction by the fallout from technological innovation in the world today, such as the easy availability of the entertainment media, games and gambling, inadequate funding of educational institutions including funding of libraries, laboratories, workshop and computer units. The list also includes poor economy and low standard of living, the quest for money by parents who use their children to hawk consumer items, prevalence of examination malpractices as well as increasing cost of publishing making it difficult for school pupils to have access to books, magazines, journals and news-papers. Others include inadequate number of bookshops and the use of handouts instead of textbooks for students learning by many teachers in the institutions

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Librarians and libraries are in strategic position in the realization of SDGs agenda. For librarians and libraries to perform optimally as information hub for the implantation of the SDGs, the following recommendations were proffered:

- It is a globally established fact that no project or institution succeeds in isolation of adequate funding and libraries are not exception. The call is that if the government and organizations want libraries to function optimally, there is the need, for the government to adequately fund libraries regardless of type to enable them provide the required services. Government should collaborate with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private sectors and rich individuals to raise fund for libraries through which, necessary operational tools, equipment, desired information materials and related information and communication technologies tools will be acquired. A situation where government sees library project as political project is laughable and should be frowned at. Rather, let it be known, that every library project is a step towards elevating the life of the people because a nation that not well informed is bound to remain poor.

- In line with the above, library management should start thinking outside the box. The era of waiting for the government to provide everything is gone. Libraries today have become profit oriented venture therefore library management should be innovative and creative as to developing means through which funds could be raise for proper running of the libraries. Librarians should deviate from the assumption of 'as it was in the beginning' and start doing things differently in an era where information has become power and money yielding.

- Management of libraries should not see the libraries as avenue of enriching themselves as there have been situations where fund released by government has been misappropriated and embezzled at the detriment of effective service provision. There should be in a existence a body with integrity whose responsibility



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should be to monitor and audit every library project and anyone found culpable punished accordingly.

- It has become a re-occurring decimal that anytime one talks of challenges

facing any library, the first thing you hear apart from inadequate funding is lack of trained personnel. Library management should understand that the hood does not make the monk. So, in the case of the library, it is not just the collections and buildings that make the library but rather, the caliber and crop of personnel in these libraries. It behooves therefore the library management to ensure that only the best hands are employed thus should avoid sentiment while hiring personnel.

- Capacity building involves training and re-training in line with the changes

in our environment. The argument is that library management should develop annual schedule for training and re-training of librarians so as to meet up with the dynamic society. These trainings may be in the form of attending workshops, seminars and conferences. It may even be by granting scholarship to some personnel to obtain higher qualifications in their areas of specialty. The success story in Romania came as a result of the training obtained by over 1000 librarians under the auspice of biblionet. We can replicate this in our country.

- In line with the SDGs, librarians and libraries should enhance community

engagements through providing specialized information services (considering the information needs of the concerned community), capacity building through the organization of workshops and do-it-yourself training programmes and encouraging the people to cultivate a reading culture.

- Furthermore, librarians and libraries should get involve in advocacy

programmes such as road-walk, distribution of informative flyers, radio jingles and social media campaign with a view to intimating the public on the SDGs.

- As a way of being innovation and creative as earlier mentioned, librarians

should think of re-packaging information of all sorts more so, in areas of health, heritage and culture, agriculture, education and economic information. This re-packaging should come in different formats and where possible, in local languages.

- The strength of any army depends on her weaponry and strategies. This is to

say, for libraries to fully contribute their full quota to the realization of the SDGs; they must be well equipped with the required SDGs information and materials for the public in a suitable and easy-to-access format like audio-visual for those rural dwellers with little or no formal education. The crown-glory is that the librarians should be well tutored on these goal as not to be found wanting.

## CONCLUSION

The SDGs have a framework called the 5 P's which are the People, Planet, Peace, Prosperity and Partnerships. Librarians, need to actively work together to end poverty, protect the planet and make sure humanity lives in peace and prosperity. Doing all these will not only make lives better but also secures a brighter future for the unborn generations. Librarians are pivotal in attaining Sustainable Development Goals, while some see ICT as a threat to the profession, librarians should view it as an opportunity for more creativity and innovation. ICT has greatly improved our jobs and should be leveraged to contribute to sustainable global development.

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