PROVIDING INFORMATION SERVICES FOR RURAL MOBILISATION IN SPECIAL LIBRARIES FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Special library services are indispensable in the process of effective rural mobilisation for national development in Nigeria. Result of a study of Nigerian special libraries revealed features of the libraries and showed that available services in the libraries are too sophisticated for rural Nigerians. Information services for rural mobilisation as well as specialized information needs of rural Nigerians are discussed. Extension services of the Nigerian special libraries at the community or grassroot level identified as community information service is proposed as suitable for presenting specialized information to the rural Nigerians.

BACKGROUND

The provision of modern library service is a recent phenomenon in Nigeria. Apart from private collections, the first known library with any kind of official or institutional support was a special library. The first Nigerian special library was the Law Library of the Federal Ministry of Justice in Lagos. It was created in 1900 for the bibliographic control of the growing colonial legal documents. Other special libraries were set up by the colonial government for its economic development. The economic activities of the colonial government were concerned with the utilization of the basic natural resources of water, soil and land. Therefore, most of the activities were agricultural, including "water supplies (domestic, industrial and irrigational), fishery, forestry, land use and soil conservation, animal husbandry and production......" [3].

Thus, there is evidence of employment of special library services during the colonial period of exploitation of natural resources in Nigeria. It is believed that successful implementation of the rural development programme in the present administration and realisation of the objectives of the MAMSER Programme would require a new approach for information dissemination which only special libraries can provide if properly restructured. An examination of the MAMSER handbook shows elaborate arrangement for extending information to rural communities at the grassroot level without any mention of the special library in spite of its well known potential for specialized information service. Perhaps, Nigerian special libraries have retrogressed in the services they provided during the colonial period.

It is necessary to ascertain the reason for the
lack of recognition of the role of a special library in rural development programme in Nigeria. Therefore, an investigation is conducted of the Nigerian special libraries and of the available services to examine their relevance for rural mobilisation for national development.

METHODOLOGY

The investigation was limited to the study of special libraries in the government supported institutions because they are a larger group of special libraries in Nigeria. 45 major Nigerian special libraries [4, 5, 6, 7] were selected for nation-wide investigation.

Questionnaire method was used to collect information from the special libraries. This was supplemented and verified by the personal interviews with the chief librarians or documented records, particularly the annual reports of the institutions.

The questionnaires were administered personally and the interviews were conducted directly with 32 chief librarians. The remaining 13 chief librarians of special libraries, widely scattered throughout the country, were sent the questionnaires by mail. The 45 special libraries were classified into 10 categories as shown in Table 2.

Table 1.

Geographical Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Locations</th>
<th>Number of Libraries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Lagos</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ibadan</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Zaria</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Enugu</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Kaduna</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Kuru</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>New Bussa</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.

Subject Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Libraries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Agricultural</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Socio-Economic</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Industrial/Scientific Res.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ANALYSIS OF DATA

The results of the analysis of the information obtained from the respondents are presented and discussed as follows.

Geographical Distribution

Table 1 shows that 45 special libraries are clustered in seven towns and their environs. These towns are not well dispersed within the vast area of the country.

There are 27 special libraries (more than half) in Lagos and its environs, eight in Ibadan, two each in Enugu and Kaduna. Others are four in Zeria and one each in Kuru and New Bussa. Lagos was the federal capital of Nigeria, while Enugu, Ibadan and Kaduna were the seats of the three former regional governments of Nigeria. Thus the rural areas where most of the populace live are not included in the provision of special library services in Nigeria.

Subject Categories

The categorisation of the special libraries given in Table 2 shows that there are 11 agricultural, 8 management and 26 other libraries.

Most of the management or administrative libraries are located at the seats of various administrations including the colonial administration.

Subject Coverage

Nigerian special libraries were established as the supporting units to the programme of their parent institutions. The acquisitions and documentation activities, are therefore, determined by the objectives of their parent institutions. Thus, each special library specializes in a particular narrow subject area most relevant to the needs of its parent organisation.

Services

There are 14 types of documentation services available in the 45 Nigerian special libraries. 38 (84.44%) special libraries are offering reference service. Circulation of books and dissemination of currently published information (SDI service) by publishing library bulletins or accession lists are offered by 36 (80%) special libraries. SDI by personal notification, compilation of bibliographies and information services are offered by 32 (71.11%) libraries. Literature search is offered by 27 (60%) while files of information are maintained by 22 (48.89%) special libraries.

Routing of periodicals is done by 20 (44.44%), filing and indexing of internal reports by 18 (40%), indexing and abstracting services by 14 (31.11%), maintenance of special subject references with indexes by 13 (28.89%), editorial assistance for publication by 12 (26.67%), and translation services by 10 (22.22%) special libraries.

INFORMATION SERVICES FOR RURAL MOBILISATION

Aboyade [8] has shown the need of the Nigerian residents in the rural areas for specialized information. But the available information services in Nigerian special libraries are too sophisticated for the estimated 80 percent of the over 110 million Nigerians residing in the rural areas. More than 75 percent of the rural Nigerians are engaged in agriculture and related activities such as livestock, fishery, forestry, etc. The rural Nigerians are mostly illiterate and the information which would be most valuable to them is of the type which is closest to the point of application, set out in a manner which shows the advantages of application and presented in their local languages. There is the need, therefore, for the Nigerian special libraries to evolve new information services specifically designed to meet the specialized information needs of the rural Nigerians.

SPECIALIZED INFORMATION NEEDS OF RURAL NIGERIAN

The specialized information needs of rural Nigerians are associated with various models of integrated rural development categorized by Idachaba [9] as practised in Nigeria. They include information on measures to ensure increase in farm productivity and income. This requires provision of information on fertilizers, seeds, pesticides, farm equipment and machinery, availability of agricultural extension staff and their role as a link between agricultural researchers and the rural farmers, government programmes for provision of rural infrastructures such as feeder roads for access to both farm inputs and

Vol 40 No 1 March 1993

3
outputs, agricultural credit facilities and the con-
tribution of the rural Nigerians themselves which
would enhance successful implementation of
government programme of rural development.

The rural Nigerians also require specialized
information regarding social amenities such as
water supply, health and medical care,
education, telecommunications, rural electrifi-
cation schemes, etc. to enhance the quality of
rural life. Other specialized information needs are
about government programmes to mobilize rural
Nigerians for increased political and social par-
ticipation from local to the national level as
enunciated in the MAMSER, better life for rural
women and other similar programmes. The aim
is to raise their political, economic and social
awareness, ensure active representation of rural
interests on the national scene, particularly
ensuring their involvement on matters and deci-
sions affecting their well being.

It would enable them to benefit more from the
government and the voluntary agencies develop-
ment programmes and reduce the present human
migration to the urban areas. Appropriate
information services to the rural Nigerians would
enlighten them to aspire for better life.

EXTENSION SERVICES OF NIGERIAN SPECIAL
LIBRARIES

Extension services of the special libraries at the
community or grassroot level, identified as com-
munity information services, appears to be a
viable option to satisfy the specialized informa-
tion needs of the rural Nigerians. Community
Information Centres should be established in rural areas, with the objectives to provide
specialized information at the grassroot level.
These centres would constitute the primary level of
the planned integrated functional nation-wide
special library service.

It would ensure that required information is avail-
able in appropriate form at the grassroot level
throughout the country.

CONCLUSION

A multi-level system of special library service in
Nigeria will ensure adequate provision of special-
ized information throughout the country at all
societal levels. At the primary level, community
information centres to be established in every
community would provide specialized informa-
tion needs of each community in the most useful
form.

The community information service would reflect
the main occupation in each community; provide
information to enlighten the residents on the
political and social situation in the country as
well as support rural development programmes
of Nigerian government and other voluntary agen-
cies. If properly implemented, community infor-
mation service would provide the opportunity for
Nigerian special libraries and the rural Nigerians
to contribute meaningfully to the programme of
rural mobilisation for national development.

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