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## Globalization and African Libraries: The Challenge of Self-Discovery in a Digital World

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### **Abstract**

*This paper examines the extent to which globalization as a development framework has affected or otherwise library development in Africa. Using Nigerian as a reference point, an assessment of the extent to which globalization has affected Library in the country was carried out in addition to an empirical survey of challenges affecting the development of libraries in the country. Findings show that government frequent policy summersault about library development, funding inadequacy which has affected capacity to sustain subscription to information resources and weak national information infrastructures are among all other factors responsible for the underdeveloped nature of most libraries in the country and by inference the continent. It was accordingly concluded that most libraries in Africa seem unaffected by globalization and its driving information technologies. It was further concluded that African Libraries journey to the 21<sup>st</sup> century is still a long and tortuous one that is full of bumps and hiccups. How soon the identified challenges are addressed will be an index of the libraries' journey to self-discovery to becoming borderless libraries.*

### **Introduction**

Libraries according to Buckland (1992) are “to provide a service: access to information”. The performance of this role is thus contingent on the management (collection, processing, dissemination and preservation for posterity) of the collective intellectual heritage of societies, communities and institutions. These heritages, most of

which are tangible are in the form of books, journals, arts, music scores, to mention a few. The management of these resources underscores the nature of library as an organic system that does not only grow in terms of quality and quantum of materials and service delivery, but also as a system that is constantly undergoing transformations induced by developments in its immediate and remote environment. By extension therefore, the Library is an organic system that is daily being confronted with challenges that are rooted in its surrounding. This forms the basis of Witten and Bainbridge's (2003) conclusion that the existence of Libraries for the past 25 centuries with most of them flourishing during the renaissance era was attributable to the invention of printing technology. This was especially true of societies with written culture.

In Africa, and more importantly in its pre-colonial contact era, the notion of the Library was essentially oral. Unlike the chained monastic and private libraries of Europe, and the Chinese engraved stone Steles or slab, the idea of library in Africa was biological. Individuals were designated as the custodians of the collective memories of their various communities. According to Banjo (1998) the “Pool of traditional intellectuals: elders, clan heads, priests, historians and story tellers” including musicians constituted or functioned as libraries and librarians in their local domains. The designated individuals were formally recognized and accorded respect by the entire communities. Among the Wollof ethnic group of West Africa individuals so designated were called ‘*griots*’ and among the Hausa speaking community of Nigeria, the official title of such individuals is ‘*Dan-Masanin*’ which literarily means the “learned”. They are usually high chiefs in the courts and palaces of the emirs. Also among the Yoruba speaking people of Nigeria they are known as ‘*arokin*’ or ‘*olupitan*’ which means custodian of knowledge or in a literal sense the story teller.

At public events the views of such individuals on matters affecting the community were regarded as statement of facts and were accordingly held in high esteem. The challenges of this system were very obvious as not everybody in the community could have access to the individuals at will just like patrons can access public libraries. There is also the challenge of incorrect rendition of events due to selective secrecy, natural bias, amnesia arising from old age and illness. There was also the natural challenge of death and the consequent loss of the entire community heritage more so in the absence of any

‘formal hand over’. It is in this connection that one appreciates a Kenyan saying on the DSTV Africa Movie Magic Channel that “the death of an elder is like a burning library.” As a by-product of colonialism in Africa, the western model of libraries was gradually embraced. Physical structures were built and stocked with books and other reading materials for the patrons most of whom were government functionaries (Dosunmu, 2001). Activities like selection and acquisition of materials, their processing were performed overseas with most of the collections reflecting the cultures of the colonial masters.

In contemporary time however, the idea of a library has been altered by the notion of globalization. As an idea, it has generated so much affections and hatred among scholars and technocrats (Stiglitz, 2002; Zeleza, 2003). The ensuing arguments as to its merits and demerits are however not within the purview of this paper. It suffices to say that globalization is a pervasive enigma that is daily impacting on societies and institutions. In the word of Zeleza (2003:1) “globalization seems to be everywhere, as rhetoric and reality, as process and project.” As a process, its prevalence has been reinforced by the development in the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) which is the driving force. In the context of the library, globalization has brought about a paradigm shift in the conceptual understanding of what a library is and how it is operated.

In the pre-globalization era, the library was location bound in terms of provision of physical structure or building, reading tables and chairs and row of stacks. Service delivery was more by readers’ physical presence in the library and personal interactions between the librarian and reader. The issues of space, distance, and variation in time zones constituted challenges in this context. In modern time in which most libraries now apply ICT to their operations and services, access to the library is increasingly becoming anonymous and impersonal as patrons now interact with machines instead of human beings. This is so because instead of the rows of book shelves, information now resides in hardware that can be remotely accessed by readers. It is in this context that one appreciates the relevance of the following anonymous quotation:

I am the Library  
I am neither wall nor shelves  
Nor even the books that stand in row

I am the wisdom of the universe captured and arrange for you.  
I am an open door.  
Enter.

The application of technologies to library operations or activities has so much changed the performance of routine chores with relative ease. Information can now be repackaged and delivered much easier than ever before. Readers can now conduct a federated search of libraries without leaving the comfort of their locations. The bottom-line of all these possibilities is that the notion of boundary bound library's service has given way to borderless service. This development which is more prevalent in developed economies, however has thrown up some downside challenges for library management and service delivery. The African library situation however is an entirely different picture. Most libraries on the continent have not been able to take advantage of some of the gains of globalization and the converging powers of information technologies to improve on their service delivery capacity. This is not unconnected to a number of challenges. Thus to what extent have libraries in Africa been affected by globalization? Are there challenges inhibiting libraries in Africa from becoming globalized? If there are challenges, what are their nature and how can they be mitigated? The objective therefore is to study the extent to which libraries in Africa have been affected or unaffected by globalization in the context of its nature, ramifications, and challenges including their mitigation.

The paper is divided into seven sections starting with the introduction. This is followed by the section on globalization and African library. Next to this is the section on theoretical framework for the paper. The methodology for the study is contained in the fourth section while data analysis is in section five. Section six discusses the findings of the study. The last section covers with the conclusion of the paper.

### **Globalization and African Library**

The library is an integral component of a nation's national information system. It is established for the purpose of meeting the nation's information needs in the academia, governance and in the industry. This role imposes the need for continuous acquisition information materials. Unfortunately, in the last couple of years, libraries in Africa have been dependent on external assistance as the knowledge industry (academia, publishing and printing sector, and libraries) at the level of most of the nations seems to be crumbling or moribund (Zeleza, 2003). The ruling class perhaps through deliberate policy

of neglect with regard to budgetary allocation and fund disbursement allowed infrastructure and facilities for knowledge creation and dissemination to degenerate thereby making the ideals of globalization an unattainable distant utopia. This is because globalization thrives on unfettered access to current and relevant information. To typify the vibrancy of the publishing industry in Europe, Zeleza (2003) reported that on an annual basis about 800 book titles are published per one million people compared with 20 titles for the same number of people in Africa. The contradiction is that inspite of the clamor for development by nations in Africa, governments have on the other hand neglected those institutions and infrastructure that can leapfrog the countries into a tolerable level of development. This is more so that development is all about access to current and relevant information of which the library occupies a central position in knowledge creation and innovation. To resolve the paucity of books and other reading materials in all the nations, libraries have to embark on books importation including journal subscription. On the other hand, those that can not afford importation due to funding constraint, have to depend on donor agencies from overseas who on annual basis ship in volumes of books to libraries in Africa. This has the attendant implication of fostering the idea of globalization as one way communication system with Africa always receiving and nothing to give in return.

The issue of funding inadequacy or the lack of it for most libraries on the continent is a major inhibition to their membership of the mainstream global libraries. The attendant implication is the further widening of the digital divide between Africa and the rest of the world. Most of these libraries are under-funded as much as budgetary disbursements are irregular. The consequent result of this state of affair is that most of the libraries are unable to discharge their obligations to their patrons in a most effective and efficient manner due to low capacity to package and disseminate information beyond their physical boundary. This is attested to by many university libraries past attempts at deploying ICT to manage their resources without appreciable success. This explains why both the MacArthur and Carnegie Foundations in the past eight years have embarked on library strengthening support which includes automation and personnel capacity building for ICT application for six university libraries in Nigeria. In terms of collection development, with probable exception of some libraries in Southern Africa, most library

collections be it in academic or public libraries are way off the threshold of globalization. This is traceable to long years of government neglect vis a vis funding support for library development. This has inevitably resulted in the existence of huge gaps in the book and journal holdings of most libraries due to the inability to sustain annual subscriptions. In school or college libraries the situation seems to be more pathetic as libraries in this category according to Oladele (2004) “exist in theory, but in reality are no more than a mix grill of textbooks and donated soft reading materials” most of which are obsolete. The public libraries and again perhaps with the exception of those in South Africa are not in any way better as access to public library system is still at a very low level. In this regard, Mchombu (1991) study of access to public libraries in some selected countries is still relevant 17 years after the study. The study findings revealed that Botswana had achieved 7.5% access rate compared with 2.3% for Kenya, 1.2% for Tanzania and <1% for Nigeria. These findings were later on corroborated by Raseroka (1994) who described public library systems in Africa as mere reading rooms for secondary school students. Further still, Banjo (1998) observed that the performance level of public libraries in Africa has been further whittled down “in recent years as they have been obliged to reduce their acquisition of new books to largely what they can get from donor agencies, as a result of dwindling subventions, the high cost of books and scarce foreign exchange”, One cannot therefore agree less with Sturges and Neil (1990) apt submission that libraries in Africa “are almost without exception the last places that serious researcher would visit in order to find information concerning Africa”. This assertion, perhaps with a few exceptions, is a pointer to the dearth of information in most African libraries and the disorganized nature of some of information materials where they exist.

The adoption and use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) as tools for library management in most libraries in Africa is still at a rudimentary stage when compared with what obtains in the countries of Europe, Americas and Asia. This state of affairs perhaps with the exception of South Africa, Mauritius and Botswana can be linked to the poor level of development of national information infrastructures (NII) at the level of countries. The infrastructures consist of public policy on the adoption and development of ICT, communication systems, bandwidth management, national databases linked together by network of systems and hardware (Wilson 111, 1997). In

some countries and particularly in Nigeria, erratic electricity supply serves to inhibit early adoption of technology to information management. The lack of these infrastructures has in turn affected the ability and capacity of most libraries to put and to retrieve information from the world wide network. Closely related to this is the issue of bandwidth astronomical cost which puts the technology beyond most libraries particularly those in the universities. From the forgoing, it can be said that a very large proportion of African libraries are involuntarily unaffected by the many possibilities presented by globalization and its driving technologies. This state of affair however cannot be dissociated from the overall ICT infrastructure deficiency of the African environment. After all, a library is as good or robust in-terms of resources and service delivery as its environment. African countries capacity to meet the MDG targets is an index of how close or distant they are from the threshold of globalization.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Globalization is a concept as much as it is a theory. As a concept, it has been variously defined with every definition reflecting application context of. According to Robertson (1992:8) globalization is a tool for “the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole” into a single entity in which territorial boundaries have in a sense been eliminated. This is seen as given no option of choice or a sort of *fait accompli* to all countries. In the view of Meyer et al (1997), embedded in this compression, is the stratification or restructuring and placement of nations in accordance to their level of development. Nations at the lowest level of the stratification seem to be more at the receiving end of the downside risks of globalization which Wallerstein (1998:32) sees as a vehicle to further spread capitalism which he also sees as nothing new but a “Seven Song of our historical System”. In this entity, every actor (nation as well as institution) is allowed to play its own game in accordance with its level of consciousness and economic development. This conceptualization view of globalization agrees with that of Ouattara (1997) who defines globalization as “the integration of economics throughout the world through trade, financial flows, the exchange of technology and information and the movement of people across international boundaries”. One cannot but adopt for this paper the definitions by both Robertson and Ouattara.

The underlying elements of the two definitions are continuous integration among nations of the world with this integration being engendered by the ever converging power of information and communication technologies (ICTs). This has in turn impacted positively on nations, institutions and individual's capacity to generate information or knowledge which can instantaneously be shared across the globe regardless of distance, physical barriers and variations in time zones. This possibility is evidence of cultural diffusion.

From the perspective of theory, globalization thrives on the role of technology. The assumption is that through technology nations as well as individuals are interacting between and among themselves more than ever before, with such interactions impacting on socio-economic development of nations and their systems. In other words, a development in one country is assumed to have a reverberating effect on another one and this informs the adoption of the world culture theory as a framework of analysis for this paper.

The world culture theory attempts to explain the process by which human beings in any society are awakened to a new consciousness that allows them to be active participants in the interactive process of nation building and integration into a single global entity (Lechner, 2008). The theoretical assumption is that the level of consciousness of world view exhibited by citizens of any nation or region is a measure of the level of integration of such a nation into the global whole. By extension therefore, consciousness of globalization is an index of the level of participation in the development processes of the world. According to Lechner (2008) the theory explains how countries are connected, how the consciousness of the citizenry is awakened and stimulated in a way that “the autonomy of actors and practices in contemporary world order” give way to globalizing initiatives and influences. In other word, the theory explains how human beings react to the promptings of globalizing realities with respect to the socio-economic development of countries without the actors (countries) losing their unique identities. It is in this regard that Lechner (2008:4) describes the theory as “causally agnostic” and an open-ended process. The theory as explained by Lechner (2008:3) has five characteristics that are not necessarily mutually exclusive and these are relativism, emulation, glocalization, Interpenetration and contestation

The idea of relativism assumes that every country of the world determines the form, scope and directions of its development processes from standards that have been formulated and accepted as universal. In other words, countries of the world are expected to domesticate these standards to sooth their local conditions and needs. An example of these common or universal standards are the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) formulated by the United Nations in 2000. Emulation as a characteristic allows countries in a globalizing environment to pursue their individual development agenda while at the same time using the universal standards to compare notes and share experiences in a proactive fashion. This is unlike glocalization which shares closer affinity with relativism at least from the perspective of domestication of some common universal standards. In other words, as explained by Lechner (2008) universal ideals of globalization “are interpreted and absorbed differently according to the vintage point and history of particular groups” or nations. In essence the personal experiences of nations, institutions and systems like libraries go to determine how the common standards of globalization will be absorbed and domesticated. It seems that most libraries on the continent have not been able to domesticate some common library ICT based standards for their common practice. This has the implication of drawing them back from the mainstream international librarianship. Interpenetration as a characteristic is a platform for the interconnectedness of universalistic and particularistic experiences of actors in the global arena with respect to the comparison of achievements. The end result of such comparison is the provision of feedback into the global process for further refinement of the system. This characteristic naturally dovetails into contestation of globalization as a contemporary worldwide phenomenon. In the contestation process, conscious effort is made to separate from each other particularistic and universalistic vehicles so as to arrive at a seemingly objective assessment of the phenomenon.

For analytical purpose, the theory provides a-four-attribute framework which Robertson (1992) encapsulated as “global-human circumstance”. The attributes are the state of societies, the systems that run the societies, individuals and their roles as well as humanity. In this regard, the library is conceived as one of the systems created by the society with the responsibility for contributing to the development of the society or nation. This system however works to the extent it is supported by the society and there

are individuals or professionals who run the system. The individuals in this regard are the Librarians and information workers. One can not but recourse to this theoretical framework to analyze the extent to which globalization has affected the development of library services in Africa in regard to the emerging challenges and how they can be mitigated within the context of proactive policies and strategic plans.

### **Methodology**

For the purpose of data collection, the author developed and administered a twenty-eight point structured questionnaire tagged “Library Challenges Questionnaire”. The questionnaire is appended to this paper. The respondents are librarians in practice and in academia. The instrument is divided into three sections with section one capturing data on respondents’ libraries. The second section is a 14 point inventory of challenges. Respondents were required to select by ticking ( ✓ ) multiple points as may be considered applicable. The third section of the questionnaire is another multiple selection menu containing a nine point mitigation items. To widen the study’s perspectives, the views of 13 practicing Librarians from Africa (5 Nigerians, 3 Ghanaians, 1 Kenyan, 2 Congolese, one each from Cameroon and Uganda) who were on a study program at the USA were all sought through the administration of a modified version of the primary instrument. This was achieved through the assistance of a colleague of the researcher who was also on the same program at the time of the study.

To administer the primary questionnaire in Nigeria, a number of factors were taken into consideration. These included the six geo-political zones of the country and the widespread of libraries and Library schools in the zones. Samples for the study were drawn from the six geo-political zones so as to ensure a widespread of views. For the purpose of data management, libraries were broadly categorized into academic/research (University, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education, Research Institutes’ Libraries), Public Libraries, Schools Libraries and Library Schools. In each of the zones samples were purposively selected based on known contact persons and addresses, and personal knowledge of the zones by the author. Questionnaire were administered directly to respondents or sent to their email boxes. The conference attendance databases of Nigerian Library Association and NLA blogging Forum were used to select respondents. The choice of the number of samples per zone as shown in table 1.1 is informed by the

population of Libraries in each zone. There are 36 States in the Country with an average of 5 states per zone. Each state has a public Library System and this translates into 36 Public Library Systems.

**Table 1.1: Zonal Distribution of Questionnaire**

<b>Zones</b>	<b>Academic/Research</b>	<b>Public</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Library School</b>
North West	10	3	-	3
North East	10	3	-	1
North Central	20	3	-	3
South West	30	3	3	5
South East	20	3	2	4
South-South	15	2	1	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>19</b>

The questionnaire was administered either directly on respondents or through the e-mailing system. A total of 166 questionnaires were administered out of which 150 returns were recorded and analyzed. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS) using frequency and percentage counts statistics. Data were also discussed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. To deepen the understanding of the data, all of the variables (challenges and mitigations) were cross-tabulated by the type of libraries respondents come from. The chi-Square of the tabulation was calculated using Pearson Chi-Square test. The calculation formed the basis for determining the level of significance of the variables at .05 level of significance.

### **Data Analysis**

The frequency distribution of respondents' libraries shows that 104 or 69.3% of the 150 analyzed returns were librarians or information workers in academic and research types of libraries. This is followed by respondents from the public libraries including the National Library of Nigeria who constituted 30 or 20% of the total respondents. Other types of respondents consisting of 7 (4.7%) and 9 (6%) are from school libraries and faculty from library schools respectively.

The frequency distribution of respondents' scores of the challenges confronting libraries in the country are in Table 1.2.

**Table 1.2: Inventory of Challenges**

	Yes	%	No	%	X <sup>2</sup>	Df	Sig.
Paucity of Print Reading Materials	62	41.3	88	57.7	2.777	3	.427
Government Policy pronouncement and Budgetary Allocation Mismatch	83	55.3	67	44.7	4.898	3	.179
Weak National Information Infrastructure	76	50.7	74	49.3	11.224	3	.011
Increasing Digital divide between Africa and the rest of the World	78	52.0	72	48.0	1.039	3	.651
High Cost of Bandwidth	64	42.7	86	57.3	2.780	3	.427
Absence of Common Standards for Library Practices	88	58.7	62	41.3	2.742	3	.433
Increasing Complexity of Copyright Laws	42	28.0	108	72.0	9.180	3	.027
High Cost of ICT Hardware/Software	108	72.0	42	28.0	1.781	3	.619
Quick Turnover in the emergence of new of ICT Products and Services	56	37.3	94	62.7	2.026	3	.567
Poor Quality of Library/Information Professionals	57	38.0	93	62.0	8.443	3	.038
Subscription to E-resources sustainability	81	54.0	69	46.0	5.078	3	.166
Readers Access to E-resources	86	57.3	64	42.7	2.329	3	.507
Sustainability of Pan-Publishers (HINARI, TEEAL, AJOL, ALUKA, elFL-net, INASP etc) Service Initiatives	49	32.7	101	67.3	12.225	3	.007

On the average, most of the respondents agreed to the fact that the inventory of challenges in the questionnaire are major issues affecting smooth delivery of library Services in the country. This finding is also corroborated by a cross-section of African Librarians on study program in the US who confirmed similarity of challenges in their countries

It is equally important to note that while 72% of respondents consider the high cost of hardware and software as a challenge to library automation, the same number of respondents do not see increasing complexity in the management of copyright laws as a challenge to libraries in the country. About 57% of respondents do not agree that high bandwidth cost is a challenge to electronic based library services delivery. It is equally important to note that 57.7% of the respondents do not agree that paucity of print reading materials is a challenge to libraries in the country. On the other hand however, over 50% of respondents agreed that sustainability of subscription to e-resources, readers access to

electronic resources, absence of common library practice standards, weak national information infrastructure and mismatch between government policies on libraries and budgetary allocation all constitute challenges to library development on the country. Reaction to the poor quality of library professionals as a challenge to library service delivery in the country seems evenly spread among the respondents. The respondents' reactions to how the identified challenges can be mitigated are shown in Table 1.3

**Table 1.3 Mitigation of Challenges**

	Yes	%	No	%	X <sup>2</sup>	df	Sig.
Increase in budgetary allocation	108	72.0	42	28.0	4.880	3	.182
Policy Change	82	54.7	68	45.3	3.159	3	.368
Librarians/Information Professionals to imbibe Advocacy Culture	71	47.3	79	52.7	4.529	3	.210
Market Branding of Library Services	66	44.0	84	56.0	10.411	3	.015
Formation of Library Consortium to Address Common Challenges	107	71.3	43	28.7	25.031	3	.000
Redesign of Curriculum for Library Education	87	58.0	63	42.0	7.968	3	.047
Re-orientation of Librarians/Information Professionals	93	62.0	57	38.0	11.763	3	.008
Closing Digital gap between Africa and the rest of the World	94	62.7	56	37.3	8.783	3	.032

Over 70% of respondents agreed to the need to increase budgetary allocation to the libraries with libraries coming together to form consortium as a platform for addressing common challenges. As large as 62% of respondents acceded to the need for a general re-orientation of librarians as a way of enhancing their capacity to address library challenges in Nigeria. This is closely followed by 58% of respondents who agreed to the need for a curriculum re-design for library education. Such a re-design is expected to include courses that can enhance capacity for lobbying and policy advocacy of which about 55% of respondents acceded to. Closely related to this is the issue of marketing and branding of some selected library sources. While 44% of respondents support market branding of library services 56% are against it. Four challenges shown in Table 1.2 are found to be significantly associated with the type of libraries respondents come from. These are weak national information infrastructure, increasing complexity of copyright laws, poor quality of library professionals from the library schools and sustainability of pan publishers' initiative. Similarly, five mitigation issues were found to be significant also with respondents' libraries. These are market branding of library services, formation

of library consortium, curriculum redesign for library education, re-orientation of librarians, and closing of digital divide between Africa and the rest of the world. Sustainability of subscription to e-resources was found to be marginally not significant at .166 level.

### **Discussion**

From findings, it is apparent that libraries in Nigeria are mired by a number of challenges. Most of them are characterized by paucity of print and electronic reading resources, gaps in collections, high rate of obsolescence of existing ones and a general weak infrastructure for information services. All these challenges are underpinned by under funding by government who established the libraries. The implication is that most of the libraries are unable to participate effectively in the global arena with regard to information delivery to their patrons. It is apparent then that libraries in Nigeria must of necessity embark on a process of self-rejuvenation that will ensure the ability to meet with the demands and challenges of modern information management in a global digital environment.

The resolution of these challenges revolves around policy advocacy and articulation on the part of librarians and information workers. This is especially important for those challenges that are external to the libraries such as funding, weak ICT infrastructure, high cost of hardware and bandwidth, sustainability of pan-publishers initiatives, and poor quality of library professionals to mention a few. Library professionals will on collective basis need to embark on policy advocacy drive at the level of the political ruling class in the country. In this regard, the umbrella body for librarians in the country will in this context become the arrow head of policy advocacy. This approach is considered as an imperative more so that not less than 80% of libraries in the country are government funded. Unfortunately, government has no clear cut policy on annual budgetary allocation to the libraries. Experience shows that funding allocation to libraries by government is usually based on rythmes rather than reasons. Policy advocacy is a professional art that requires an in depth understanding of the political climate or terrain including perspectives on principal target groups or actors. It is in this regard that the idea of a general re-orientation of librarians as a mitigation strategy is underscored. In essence, this approach is in consonance with Ouattara (2008) submission

to the effect that African countries need to embark on proactive policy articulations as a way of combating the challenges associated with globalization including the maximization of its potential benefits and optimal management of its downside risks. For a challenge such as library branding, which is internal to libraries, individual library ingenuity or initiative becomes crucial as the challenge varies from library to library. This is unlike the lack of common standards for library practice which cuts across the board. This can be addressed using library professional body as a platform. On the other hand, the formation of consortia can also be created to address challenges that are common to different types of libraries.

It is expected that the identified measures will reverse the contradictions between government functionaries public extolment of the importance of libraries in the development process of the nation and their seemingly reluctance to back up such extolment with resources. This is a classical case of policy somersault. The position is typified by the reversal of federal government initial approval of 10% of University annual recurrent budget as allocation to University libraries in the country. The new policy is now 10% of overhead cost which in itself is a sub-head of recurrent expenditure. The reversal of the policy only served to stiffen service delivery in all Federal University libraries in the country. The poor funding of University Libraries in Nigeria appears not to be different from what obtains in some other African countries. In Zambia the result of INASP (2008) study of University Libraries funding states that “libraries appear to have suffered more than other University services from the reduced level of government grants to higher education”. The poor funding support to libraries has inevitably impacted negatively on their capacity to acquire reading materials on regular basis, sustainability of journal subscription in both hard and electronic format and the deployment of ICT in the library. It is however, important to note that over 50% respondents do not accept that paucity of printed materials constitute a challenge to libraries in the country. This may not be unconnected with the book donation initiatives of some donor agencies’. But then the issue of sustainability becomes crucial.

The issue of weak national information infrastructure (NII) is a major constraint to electronic driven information service across spatial boundaries. In Nigeria as much as in most other parts of Africa, infrastructure such as broadband technology and other

communications systems are still at the rudimentary stage of development and this inhibits access to the internet. According to the Internet World Statistics (2008) source, Africa which represents 14.2% of the world population has an internet penetration rate of 4.7% while 3.4% of the population actually uses the internet. This is unlike in South American countries with a total population of 380 million and 9.6% internet use rate. At national level of countries, an estimated 8 million of Nigerians have access and use the internet compared with 5.1 million in South Africa, 6 million in Egypt and 0.8 in Uganda (Internet World Statistics 2008). It is important to observe that much of the facilities for accessing the internet are attributable to private initiatives as opposed to government efforts. As presented in the findings, high bandwidth cost is still a constraint to most libraries attempts at getting on the net. This challenge is however being addressed by the Nigeria ICT-Forum which is assisting Universities to share cost on consortium basis. Some landmark achievements have been recorded in this regard and this perhaps explains the relative use of internet services by most universities in the countries.

The issue of sustainability of fee based subscription to electronic resources (books and journals) by libraries in most countries in Africa is a problematic one. Due to poor funding support, most libraries are unable to subscribe to these resources while those that do are unable to sustain their subscription. One major challenge to Library subscription to electronic resources on the continent is that of sustainability. This is further compounded by the possibility of the library loosing the entire collection including past issues should there be a brake in subscription. This is unlike subscription to hard copy journals, in which libraries can still retain copies from past subscriptions, should there be a brake. This is a dilemma that calls for joint proactive initiative by both subscribers and publishers.

In recent times, most libraries on the continent have continued to enjoy free access to e-resources like HINARI, AGORA, OARE eLF-net, INASP etc. These were put together through the collective initiatives of some pan-publishers. The challenge of this initiative for Africa libraries is what becomes of the fate of the libraries that have been availing themselves of these services should the publishers decide to opt out of the initiative. It is observed in recent times that some publishers have either reduced the number of their journals or withdrawn completely from the initiative. This is a challenge

that is currently catching the attention of most library managers on the continent. Furthermore, the issue of patrons' access to e-resources due to limited availability of facilities for internet access is among other factors responsible for under utilization of these resources even in an environment where they are available. Most University Libraries in Nigeria have had to establish such access facility as a way of mitigating the challenge.

The issue of capacity building for Librarians is a major factor in the delivery of library services in any environment. There is a yawning gap between the demands of contemporary library practice and current curriculum library education in Nigeria and perhaps in many countries in Africa. One can not agree less with Onatola (2008) who observed that "most of the problems of quality control and inhibitions to sound professional ethics within the library and information profession in Africa are internal". In as much as most of these problems are internal, they have global implications as the delivery of library services now cut across physical or national boundaries. What is however, required now is a redesign of curriculum of education for librarians with such curriculum bearing in mind contemporary demands for information packaging and delivery, library marketing or branding, and policy advocacy for library support. Both the Library Schools and the different professional bodies as well as institutions have crucial role to play in this regard. The assumption is that this approach will go a long way to prepare young professionals for the 21<sup>st</sup> century library challenges.

## **Conclusion**

From the findings of the study it is concluded that Nigerian libraries like most of their counterparts elsewhere, in Africa are directly and indirectly financed by government and that most are under funded. In addition, it is also concluded that the libraries are constrained by a number of challenges that have cumulatively hindered the libraries from availing themselves of the many opportunities presented by globalization with respect to information services delivery across physical and national barriers. The most important of these challenges in addition to funding are weak national information infrastructure, capacity to manage the increasing complexity of copyright laws due to the emergence of new information formats, the professional quality of library schools graduates in the country and sustainability of subscriptions to e-resources. It is further concluded that

libraries in the country will need to address these challenges within a framework of deliberate policy advocacy and articulation and implementation. Such policy framework must be inclusive as much as it is expansive to include issues like consortium formation, capacity building for library professionals including curriculum redesign, re-orientation of professionals all with a view to closing the digital gap between the country and the rest of the world. It may also be concluded that the experiences of libraries in Nigeria may not necessarily be dissimilar from those of many countries on the continent.

The underlining assumption of these conclusions is the belief that library development in Africa should include two mutually inclusive approaches which must be linked together. The first approach involves fine-tuning or refining of existing library systems and adapting same to contemporary demands of globalization. The second approach involves a process of finding enduring solutions to emerging problems or challenges. The two approaches involve clear analytical thoughts, innovative ideas and guts as responses to the numerous political and socio-economic conditions that directly and indirectly affect library development on the continent.

Going by the findings of this paper, it is concluded that a large proportion of Nigerian libraries and by inference most libraries in Africa seem unaffected by globalization and its driving information technologies. Accordingly, the journey to bringing these libraries to meet with the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a long and tortuous one that is characterized by bumps and hiccups all of which can be assuaged through concerted initiatives. As a necessity therefore, library managers must embark on policy advocacy and formulation to address the identified challenges most of which are intellectual, administrative as much as they are political. A move in this direction by libraries on the continent is expected to mark the beginning of a journey in self-discovery with regard to the provision of information services irrespective of physical, spatial and time barriers. How early this objective is achieved by libraries in Africa will be an index of how soon borderless library services can emerge on the continent.

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