Chapter 12
New Innovations for Libraries in the Era of the COVID-19 Pandemic: SWOT

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores new innovation for libraries in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic: SWOT. It highlights various areas in which the pandemic is stretching the thinking of libraries to embrace new innovations. Thereby, it creates a new environment for libraries to work. It also outlines the SWOT of COVID-19 for libraries, especially the intensive, drastic adoption and deployment of technological innovations that have been under-utilised over the years. It is no doubt that new innovation for services delivery were birthed in the lockdown globally by libraries and other organisations. Similarly, it evaluates the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) associated with the new innovation for libraries in era of the COVID-19 pandemic. Useful recommendations were made.

INTRODUCTION

Libraries acquire, store, organise, retrieve and disseminate information to users for decision making and to advance the course of human endeavours. Libraries as information hub are driven by technological advancement and innovations, thus they continue to remain relevant organ of any surviving system.

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Libraries will keep on striving and transforming the world with continuous emergence of new innovations. This is as a result of the continuous growth of information needs in our society today that requires prompt response service delivery. The world is fast embracing the new normal, this is a reality that is here with us today. Everything is going smart by the deployment of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in most human endeavour, we now have the smart librarian, smart services, smart search, smart libraries, smart mobiles and the likes. The innovations have launched libraries into a new era and advanced environment for enhanced service delivery.

It is important to note that any evolving technological innovation is a wakeup call for libraries and librarians because this would rather expand the scope of libraries and enhance its services through various application to libraries activities. New technology innovations for libraries remain an opportunity and strength for promoting the frontier of sustainable development and not a threat or weakness.

The major drive among many other factors for this study is the COVID -19 pandemic which greet the world unannounced and grounded most world economy globally, that many countries of the world are yet to recover from. Its emergence exposes the world and the libraries in particular to a new way of life and mode of service delivery which were earlier thought to be impossible. Evaluating the Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat (SWOT) that came with the pandemic, this have propelled all sectors and the libraries to maximise trending and new technological innovation to provide services. Quality service delivery remain the heartbeat of every library, with the pandemic, a number of new innovations that were not harnessed became popular for service delivery, a typical example is the zoom conferencing platform, even though it has been in existence, the impact and utilization was never given much attention. Covid-19 emergence has led to the exploration of other innovative technology for services delivery like the cloud computing, Internet of Things (IOT), Big data, Bookmark Apps, mobile Library Centre, etc.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Libraries are institutions that collect information resources and preserve them for providing services to information seeker, libraries deploy various kinds of innovations for best global practice. Innovation in simple language is the making of a change to something that is already existing or established. Atata, Oji, & Tom, (2014). This statement collaborate Anyanwu, (2010) who defines innovation as the ability to apply new ideas that will enable you to undertake activities differently. The most important of this definition is application of new ideas, as subject to improvement and evaluations of existing system as the need arises in every aspect of human endeavour. In the context of this study innovation can be viewed as library that is changing or enhancing their method of service delivery using new innovative technology to offer quality services to patrons.

COVID -19 Pandemic is an epidemic breakout from China which ravaged the entire world and led to closure of most organisations. SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat) is an evaluation tendency for examining or assessing a particular situation, to determine the effect on certain circumstances. In this study, we evaluated some of the impact and effect the pandemic had on libraries, the personnel, users and the resources respectively.

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