

Chapter 3

Integrated Library System as a Panacea to Sustainable Library Services Delivery in an Era of Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has meant that most organizations have adopted new ways of working with a view to satisfying their teeming customers with many employees now working remotely and interacting virtually with customers and coworkers. This has indeed redefined working trends since 2020, and librarians and libraries are no exceptions. This chapter therefore is an overview of the concept ‘pandemic’, the impact on library services, as well as the place of integrated library system (ILS) as a panacea to sustainable library services delivery in an era of pandemic and recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

A pandemic may be described as a disease that affects the globe leading to unimaginable loss of lives and the stagnation of human activities as well as global economy. An instance of a pandemic is the 2020 Covid-19 which tore the world apart and shook businesses and personal lives all over the world forcing institutions, organizations and individuals to operate from homes (remote working method) powered by information and communication technologies (ICTs) as a result of social distancing at the expense of the normal physical office setting. The new dimension is with a view to satisfying their teeming customers’ needs. This has indeed redefined working trends since 2020 and librarians and libraries are no exceptions.

It is imperative to know that the world is dynamics and that the only thing that is constant is change. The 2020 experience as a result of the insurrection of the deadly COVID-19 also known as corona virus is an astute example. Using this recent happening as a yardstick, librarians and libraries through

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thorough analysis stand out as information managers and disseminators in any future occurrence of such societal menace. The fact is that for every misfortune, there is a fortune and to libraries and librarians, the emerging trends to embrace in this era of pandemic for sustainable service delivery is information and communication technologies as they apply to librarianship

Inasmuch as it has always been said that technologies can only assist and cannot replace the intellectual rigor of capturing essential details that are required to identify specific items within library collections, but the truth remains that in an era where digitalization has enveloped the globe and information becoming the most priced factor of production, the library has no option than to devise means as to remaining relevant in every situation, including the period of pandemic. The puzzle is how would a social institution like the library self-isolate and maintain social distancing in a period of pandemic and still remain relevant? It is in a situation like this, that the library should go full technological. The application of an integrated library system should be the bail out. The integrated library system (ILS) provides users with coherent and successfully organized repository of information and knowledge (Lynch, 1994) and allows librarians and libraries to provide services optimally to their clientele without having any form of physical contact.

In the present dispensation, the application of information and communication technologies in libraries is to establish a relationship and support users and accessibility to information without boundaries for all throughout the every 24 hours of seven days in a week (24/7). These can only be achieved in an era of pandemic through digital content and information dissemination. The obvious is that the end user supported mechanisms have greater input in the ability to allow users have access to the digitally recorded document which include, integrated library systems, online databases, digital library collections, e-books, e-journals and other web-based resources.

It is against this backdrop, that this write-up becomes necessary as to x-raying impact of Covid-19 as a pandemic in provision of library services and how an integrated library system could be a panacea to sustainable library services.

THE PURPOSE THIS PAPER

It is no longer news, that COVID-19 is a pandemic. What is news now is the aftermath of the disease on the economy, organizations, nations and individuals. The library as a social institution responsible for educating people regardless of status, sex, religion, etc through the provision and dissemination of information had her fair share of the impact of the virus. As revealed by National Authorities of Public Libraries in Europe (NAPLE) (2020), most member libraries shut down in March, 2020 thus focusing on online services and digital content with staff members of most of these libraries working from home while some who were made to report to work, worked under strict physical distancing with the provision of anti-bacteria gel. The story is same in other countries. In developing countries like Nigeria where most of the libraries were not and have not been automated, it was total closure with users left stranded and academic programs grounded.

It is in view of this development that this write-up becomes imperative as to having a look at the impact of pandemic on libraries and librarians as custodian of knowledge, managers of information and information disseminators as well as how an integrated library system (ILS) can function as a panacea to sustainable library service in a period of pandemic

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