

**NIGERIAN LIBRARIES AND THE MILLENNIALS: CONTRAST OR CONVENTION?**

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**Abstract**

*Since the beginning of the 21st century the concept of the library advanced focus from simple collections to connections and now to communications for collaboration. It all began with acquisitions, to storage and to access, in order to respond to challenges posed by an increasing information glut in networked information-based society. Today, Libraries, Museums, Archives and Information Commons have helped developed countries intellectually to achieve successes. Almost everything in the past have been documented and preserved to challenge the present in its leap into the future. This development informed a new generation of library user– the millenials, who uses emerging technologies which enables information access within and outside the library. But, the integration of Millennials into Nigerian Libraries that is infrequently used remains a mirage. Therefore, the use of emerging technologies to increase collection, creation, consolidation, communication and collaboration in Nigerian Libraries is a crucial contrast.*

**Keywords:** Nigerian Libraries, Millennial

**Introduction**

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa. It is geographically and well located on the West African coast. It has a great diversity in the area of its natural components that comprises of varied topography, climatic conditions as well as vegetational patterns. With a population of over 170 million people, Nigeria is the largest country in Africa and accounts for 47 percent of West Africa’s population (World Bank, 2017). According to the study of Ibrahim (2011), the development of libraries in Nigeria started aggressively from its birth, and that effort gained the support of foreign agencies and organizations which provided grants at different periods, but the major impact was championed by the regional leaders. A document that rightly mirrored the use of books and libraries in pre-colonial Nigeria was one by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) which was among the papers presented at the two-week regional seminal organized by the same world body between 10th-22nd September 1962 held at Enugu entitled, “Present Situation of Public Library Development in the English Speaking African Countries.” On Nigeria, the document stressed that each region was responsible for the establishment and management of its public libraries where it compared their activities in the then three regions. It showed that operations of libraries in the regions predated our independence. On Eastern Nigeria, it stated that the region had a Central

Library built in 1959 which was managed by Eastern Nigeria Library Board. It continued that the East had a 'Five-year Development plan' to provide 'Divisional Libraries' across the region, and hence, as part of the implementation of this rewarding plan, it inaugurated the Port Harcourt Division in 1962, and in addition, operated mobile libraries with over 1600 books borrowed by its readers through the scheme.

In the Western Nigeria, the document pointed further that the Ministry of Education was in charge of the libraries and operated three mobile libraries among 'fifty local communities'. It emphasized that the region had a committee on Library development in meeting its future aspirations. One could presume that the use of books in libraries in this region predated other regions since some institutions in that region were established before independence like the premier University, University of Ibadan founded in 1948.

The document further stressed that libraries were managed in the Northern region by its Education Department and that, "Northern Region was first in the federation (1952) to organize library services on a wide scale. The centre is Kaduna, the capital. Facilities are provided for the locality and the schools, native authorities and teachers training-centres. The service has the additional task of providing a centre for bibliographical information; 'monthly lists' are issued to all institutional borrowers."

When University of Nigeria, Nsukka came on board Nnamdi Azikiwe personally donated about 12,000 books, including Journals to start its library in October 1960 which was later named after him. By 1967, the Eastern Nigeria Library Board had over 156,000 volumes in its system of divisional and branch libraries which were strategically positioned at Ikot-Ekpene, Onitsha, Port-Harcourt and Umuahia, and the Central Library at Enugu which positively indicated that the 'Five-year development plan' pointed out earlier in the UNESCO document had achieved some of its main objectives (Ibrahim,2011).

Today, libraries, Museums, Archives and Information Commons have helped developed countries intellectually to achieve successes because almost everything in the past have been documented and preserved which challenge the present in its leap for the future. At the beginning of the 21st century the concept of the library is shifting in focus from collections to connections/communication and from storage to access in order to respond to challenges posed by an increasingly digitised and networked information-based society (Niogaard,nd).

Singh and Kaur (2009) as cited by Abubakar (2011) observed that there is a paradigm shift from stand alone libraries to library and information networks; from printed publications to digital documents; and from ownership to access. The transition according to them is as a result of the impact of ICTs, the Internet and the web which is affecting all types of libraries and users.

In Nigeria and as in every other nation-developed and developing, the library primarily metamorphosed from the - Private, Public, Hybrid and Digitized. These can be further categorized into user-content eight types of libraries which conventionally are – Private, Public, National, Academic, School, Special, Hybrid, and Digital.

### **THE MILLENNIALS**

Today, by the introduction of information technologies, the information society and prospective library users are the millennials. The millennials are the most library-loving generation. (Ferro, 2017). According to (Howe & Strauss, 2000), the millennials are a generation of children born between the years 1982 and approximately 2002. They are cooperative team players, followers looking for consensus. According to Somaratna, (2019), they are Internet savvy, always connected to social media and learning to multitasking. In essence, as a user of today's academic library in the developed world, they are socially and culturally more diverse than previous generation. They opt for the good of the group, focus on deeds over words, and are patient and conforming. They are social and use technology to enhance their sociability. Millennial is the designation for the latest generation. They are noticeably self-confident, optimistic, multitasking, and more independent than their previous generation (Howe and Strauss, 2000). Their experiences, values and preferences will likely shape a different world and challenge old paradigms (Rivera, Huertas 2006). They are the children of the smart world, basically artificial intelligence explorers.

The millennial generation is also known with a variety of names. They are called Digital natives, Native speakers, Nets, Internet generation, iGeneration and Nintendo digital generation, all making a reference to the digital world of these days. Other names are the Echo boomers, the boomlets, the Nexters and Generation N with reference to previous generations among others, or Generation Y and Sunshine generation as a reference to an inclusive and hopeful generation. They are called the Digital Natives because they are native speakers of technology, fluent in the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet. This fact results from the context in which they were born, and poses interesting challenges to the “Digital Immigrants.” The Digital Immigrants are all of those born when the computer was not yet personal, the cell phone did not exist, and the best information highway was a well-equipped traditional library.

The millennials or digital natives learn about a social media, tweet, facebook, instagram, blog, the wiki or podcasts. They know the difference between the blackberry, the PDA, and the Mylo, and instead of having a sound system or a boombox, they download through the Bluetooth and other downloading devices to the iPod and the MP4. The millennials represent the first generation to be born with this new technology (Brown 2000). They have spent their lives surrounded by and using computers, videogames, digital music players, video cams, cell/android/smart phones and all the other toys and tools of the digital age.

The millennials use technology that enables certain types of activities. For example, wireless networking enables learner mobility and makes it possible to be constantly connected. The majority of wireless network use, however, may be outside the academic realm. Using technology to increase customization, convenience, and collaboration is well received; however, its integration into most courses or curricula is not as deep as into students’ personal lives.

Perhaps the biggest trait that defines the Millennials is their lifetime attachment to technology. They understand technology better than any previous generation. Technology has also allowed the Millennials to be a more “curious generation.” The majority grew up in homes with Wi-Fi, Hotspot and internet or networked computers and learned about them from birth. Technology is so ubiquitous to the generation that they are able to move from one type of technology to another, such as watching television while surfing the Internet, and often consume several types of media simultaneously. Multitasking is “second nature to them”. They are using technology to create new ways of doing things, such as creating a term project, as a digital video, playing video games instead of traditional board games, and connecting with friends and extended family worldwide through email, instant messaging, and social networking. They also use technology to create new social and familial networks with friends based upon the music they listen to, the books they read, the pictures they take, and the products they consume.

Technology has become a group and shared experience through not only social.

### **Traditional library and Modern Libraries**

Traditional library is different from the modern library in that it is not user-centred and lay emphasis on storage and preservation of physical items, particularly books and periodicals. The cataloging of materials is at a high level rather than one of detail, e.g., author and subject indexes as opposed to full text. Also, browsing is based on physical proximity of related materials, e.g., books on sociology are near one another on the shelves. Furthermore, Information is physically assembled in one place; users must travel to the library to learn what is there and make use of it. The most crucial component of the 21st century library is the user rather than the old content concept. The 21st century has virtually turned everything virtual. The library and its users have also gone virtual. The library users require 21st century technologies to access library collections, as access is no longer restricted to the user paying a visit to the library (building) physically. Essentially, it is now the library without border. The 21st century library therefore, emphasizes access rather than ownership. (Anyira, 2011).

According to Blackburn (2011), Libraries have increasingly seen technology become a quick candidate as a solution to nearly every problem existing in the field. Though rapidly suggested as an alternative, the new technology is not adopted as quickly as in other sectors. “It is difficult to change libraries as quickly as other technology-based information providers because library systems and services constructed around them have been in place (and deeply ingrained) for centuries. However, Millennials are bringing technology from their personal lives and using it as solutions to their workplace needs. For example, virtual reference software (such as IM reference) now provides for the needs of students who demand faster electronic service than e-

mail and the convenience of online resources (Lukasiewicz, 2007). “Exploring the role of digital academic libraries: changing student needs demands innovative service approaches” by Adiranna Lukasiewicz (2007) discusses the importance of libraries embracing digital change to reach Millennials through such technologies as instant messaging (IM), podcasting and blogging. In addition to these tools, librarians are reaching out with other cutting edge techniques to the growing number of students who feel more comfortable in an online environment. Her study on the effectiveness of IM as a communication tool for reference found students were more willing to see the importance of the library as a research tool when it adopted this technology for reference questions. This newest generation of students clearly thrives on these tools and social networks and wikis are also enhancing library experiences (Lukasiewicz, 2007).

Lukasiewicz also affirmed that the global trend is now characterized with a fundamental shift from traditional information environment to an e-environment where emphasis is placed more on the acquisition of e-resources such as e-books, e-journals as well as online databases. Digital library is characterized in the following ways: emphasis on access to digitized materials wherever they may be located, with digitization eliminating the need to own or store a physical item; online cataloging of library materials; browsing based on hyperlinks, keyword, or any defined measure of relatedness; materials on the same subject do not need to be near one another in any physical sense and broadcast technology where users need not visit a digital library except electronically; for them the library exists at any place they can access it, e.g., home, school, office, or in a car.

#### **Nigerian Libraries and the Millennial: The contrast**

The global trend in library services is now characterized with a fundamental shift from traditional information environment to an e-environment where emphasis is placed more on the acquisition of e-resources such as e-books, e-journals as well as online databases. However, traditional library, information services and functions are still relevant. In Nigeria, majority of the libraries still operate below the global expectation in that the shift from traditional to modern is on the slow side Olorunsaye and Alegbeleye (2021). This could be due to so many factors such as lack of man power, poverty, and probably the information professionals are not proactive enough. (Abubakar 2011)

Today, the contemporary practice in academic library and other categories of library services in the 21st century is being propelled with an information explosion, and the inclusion of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in all aspects of library services. Kumar (2009) as cited by Abubakar (2011) notes that academic libraries are changing dramatically by adopting new means of technology in all activities of print to e-environment where a variety of manual method, are replaced by computerized system which provides opportunity for online accessibility.

It is very sad to know that Nigerian libraries are yet to use the emerging technology for effective information delivery. What a contrast in the millennial age? Nigerian library services in the 21st century should focus more on digital, hybrid, virtual or libraries without walls in order to transform the Nigerian library environments.

#### **Millennials and Information: The convention**

Millennials by convention are very inquisitive and format agnostic, and to them information is information, no matter its format. They expect information to be available and at their custody anytime/anywhere and 24/7. As a result, technology is integrated into their lives and must support their liking for multitasking. Second, Millennials and technology are inseparable.” For them, “technology has blurred the distinction between private and public domains”. This generation is principled, civic minded, and direct and “demands respect and finds no need to beg for good service (Jones 2007)” With technology at their fingertips on a nearly constant basis.

Millennials shape and create new forms of media. In turn, the media helps redefine the culture to be centered on Millennials and how they view the world. This is nearly always done online, which is the means of delivering self made content to the wider world, and can make individual content a shared group experience though social networking components of the Internet. Examples of the new active and participatory media that Millennials are creating include the collaboratory nature of Wikipedia, online blogging, sharing videos

though YouTube, and expressing opinions online with sites such as e-pinions. Online content is also increasingly peer reviewed, so that other users can state and/or edit whether the information provided by someone else is useful, relevant, and accurate. An increasing amount of the technology used by Millennials is mobile (Clausing et al., 2003). While previous generations use cell phones as a tool, most Millennials seamlessly integrate the smart phones into their social lives, using them for not only voice calls, but for chatting, sending text messages and accessing the Internet. They also want traditionally analog forms of media, such as movies and music, to be digitized and available in any medium on a constant basis, whether through their iPods, cell phones, or streaming through the Internet.

Technology has also played a role in giving young people instant access to information. It is a part of the daily lives of Millennials, They also share information as never before as online influence can come from sharing, rather than hoarding information. For the most part, Millennials believe information available to them is accurate and believe that they are good judges of determining what information is not trustworthy or needs further verification. They have an attitude that the more they use an online service, the more they are able to trust its authenticity. Millennials also want their information customized to their way of doing things and will either manipulate information to their needs or demand it from service providers. This is the needed convention in the Nigeria Library environment.

### **Conclusion**

For Nigerian libraries to remain relevance to millenials, it must combine the ingenuity of leading libraries with powerful technologies and expertise to meet the great opportunities of the future. With a proactive vision, we can harness the power of today's leading-emerging technologies and maximize the value of content available today to achieve great success –namely, taking library services to new heights and expanding the role of your library in the community. By embracing change and taking the proactive approach, we can evolve together (Sommers, 2005).

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