REPOSITIONING STATEBRANCHES OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NIGERIA FOR IMPROVED SERVICES SALAWU, B. A. NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NIGERIA ABSTRACT

- State Branches are branches of the National Library of Nigeria established in various states of the Federation. Their establishment was informed by the need to extend library and information services to all parts of the country in line with the National Library of Nigeria Decree No. 29 of 1970, which establishes the institution as national depository and bibliographic agency. State branches render services directly to the public and liaise with publishers, other libraries and institutions. They provide insight into the operations of the institution.
- There is therefore, the need to pay great attention to the development of the branches in order to boost their operations and thus enhance the public image of the institution. The whole institution and the state branches, in

particular, are faced with problems, which need to be addressed squarely. This will reposition them for a more effective and efficient service delivery in their areas of operations.

This paper therefore examines the functions of, and problems confronting the branches. It also proffers solutions as a way forward.

INTRODUCTION

The National Library of Nigeria was established by the Act of parliament otherwise known as National Library Act (No. 6) of 1964 which was revised by Decree No. 29 of 1970. The institution is charged among other things with the following functions:

To assemble, maintain and extend to users, a collection of books, periodicals, pamphlets, newspapers, maps, musical scores, films and recordings as the Board considers appropriate for the library of highest standing; to establish and maintain a branch of the National Library of Nigeria in each state of the Federation; to make the facilities of the National Library available to members of the public and others on proper terms and to be responsible for the development of National Bibliographic services.

The above functions provide the basis for the establishment of branches across the nation. At present, the country is divided into four zones with branches in every zone. There are nineteen branches so far with hope of establishing more in the future. The existing nineteen branches are: Kaduna, Niger, Kwara, Kano, Sokoto, Ondo, Ogun, Edo, Oyo, Osun, Enugu, Imo, Cross Rivers, Rives, Plateeau, Bauchi, Bene, Adamawa and Taraba (see Appendix). The branches render library services to the members of the public in their respective states.

Initially, the sate branches constituted an integral part of the Reference and Users' Services Department (RUSD), which oversaw their operations. However, owing to expansion in services, which translated into increase in the number of branches, there arose the need for restructuring of the institution for functional and operation effectiveness, hence, the State branches Services Department (SBSD) was created in February 1996 to replace the then Department of Planning, Research and Statistics. The department was charged with the responsibility of supervising and coordinating the activities of the branches in order to ensure a more effective and efficient service delivery. It is also to prepare budget to take care of the basic needs of the branches. Surticular are in rely with problems, in The first soft of the first work work as any est. FUNCTIONS The state branches play a vital role in the library and information services of the institution. In fact, their importance can hardly be over-emphasized. A thorough examination of their functions will shed more light on this.

a) **Reference and Users' Services**

The libraries are open to members of the public from all works of life who are at liberty to make use of the library collections consisting of local and foreign reading materials to be read on the library premises.

The branches have competent and experienced professional staff who respond to readers' enquiries thereby assisting them in locating the needed information from the collections. They also engage in other activities that enable readers to locate and use reading materials. These include comprehensive indexing of newspapers, correct filing of catalogue cards in the catalogue cabinet; shelf reading and compilation of bibliographics. The branch libraries also render photocopying services to their clientele since books are not loaned out to members of the public. However, the libraries take cognizance of the copyright law in discharging this function.

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Collection of Legal Deposit Items b)

The Decree setting up the apex institution mandated it to collect three, ten and twenty five copies of books published in Nigeria by private publishers / publishers, state and Federal government respectively within one month of publication at their own expense. Consequently, the branches go on legal deposit drives to collect the material published in their respective states and environs on behalf of the institution and then forward them to Collection Development and Processing Department (CDPD) for processing in accordance with the requirements of universal Bibliographic control. The branches thus, remind the publisher of their obligations to the institution and the need to obtain International Standard Serial number (ISSN, International Standard Book Number (ISBN) and Catalogue In-Publication (CIP) data for their new publications. They are also expected to maintain registers of publishers in their areas of operations and update such from time to time and forward such register to Collection Development and Processing Department in Lagos.

Link Between ISSN/ISBN Centre and Publishers C)

As the National depository and bibliographic agency, the institution carries out some international programmes on behalf of the International Federation of Library Association (IFLA) and UNESCO for effective national bibliographic control of the country aimed at achieving Universal Availability of Publication (UAP). These include issuance of International Standard Serial Numbers (ISSN) and International Standard Book Number (ISBN) to Nigerian publications. These are unique codes assigned to serials (Journals, newspapers, magazines) and books respectively in order to distinguish them from any other publications of the same kind. This makes for easy identification and location of the publications throughout the world. The records of serial titles and publishers registered for ISSN and ISBN are then forwarded to the international centres in Paris and Berlin respectively where they form part of international databases.

For now, this function is highly centralized and cannot be performed by the branches. However, they have continued to serve as a link between publishers and the institution's ISSN/ISBN centre. The branches connect publishers with the centre. Thus, the publishers are able to obtain their codes with ease. In fact, many branches have assisted publishers in obtaining the codes for their new publications thereby saving them the trouble of having to embark on long journeys to the centre in Lagos.

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d) **Displays and Exhibitions**

The branches render current awareness services by mounting exhibitions and displays on notable and topical issues. Similarly, new publications are put on display to arouse and stimulate the interest of users in reading. Also, branches maintain current awareness board, which are regularly updated with topical issues in the news to keep patrons abreast of the development in the world. e) <u>Subpoena/Cert if ication</u> Branches take active part in subpoena services. Staff from branches, in response to subpoena summons, go to courts to tender documents as evidence in cases of litigation. Similarly, branches certify documents for individuals and organizations for the same purpose.

f) Inter Library Cooperation In furtherance of inter library lending programme, branchies establish relationships with other libraries in the same location. This is to facilitate exchange of information resources in order to meet the information needs of their clientele since no library is self-sufficient. g) Consultancy Service s Branches render professional assistance in the establishment and development of libraries in their areas of operations. They have in fact assisted many assisted many schools and organizations in setting up libraries of their own. This also includes training of personnel to run such en file dat 1930, sour 25 de servit listre baarden i libraries. newspapers. In the Later Later of the states in a decision Organization of Seminars and Workshos The branches do organize seminars and workshops with a view to broadening and updating their knowledge in their professional callings. This can be in-house seminar meant for members of staff only or an allinclusive seminar, which extends participation to professional colleagues from other libraries in the same location. An important feature of this is paper presentation by distinguished profestsionals and scholars who may bernembers of staff or outsiders. They serve as forum for discussing issues of professional importance. In addition, branches organize lectures for secondary school students. an assistment dam mail of an artes fiber er has

i) <u>Selection of Books</u> Branches are expected to take part in selection of books for the institution as part of their inputs to the collection development processes. Their interaction with the members of the public and proximity to the grassroots

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give insight into the needs of their clientele. As such they are in a position to recommend for purchase certain reading materials that will satisfy the information needs of their clientele. To this effect, they are expected to liaise with the book industry. i) Clearing House Service The above functions also establish the state branches as clearing house service points for the apex library. They attend to the patrons' enquiries and link them with other departments for their needs. They serve as collection points for legal deposit materials and assist publishers in obtaining ISSN and ISBN for their new publications. They offer professional assistance in library establishment. They assist in the circulation and marketing of National Bibliography of Nigeria published by the National Bibliographic Control Department of the institution. The Research and Development Department also requires their assistance for any seminar or workshop organized outside Abuja and Lagos. built not start ostare a bit of another to start in saide of the first sector start contrined. In addition to the above functions, branches play hosts to schools and institutions who visit them on either school excursion or to acquaint themselves with the operations and services of the National Library of Nigeria. The branches have continued to discharge their statutory function in their various areas of operation. In fact, reports show that they enjoy high patronage and their clientele have continued to increase over the years. But the branches are, however, face with myriads of problems, which militate against effective operations and tend to undermine their impact in their various locations. printing trains the second with the back of the other of the second with second and

3. PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

According to Omolayole (2001) all libraries whether academic, school, special, public or national are predicated on four principal pedestals namely, purposely-built physical structure, personnel (adequate in number and qualifications), collection (adequate and current in number and varieties) and services (efficient and effective in delivery).

The above submission beautifully captures the major problems and challenges bedeviling the branches. Hence, it is within this context that the problems and challenges will be under the following subheadings:

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a) <u>The Building</u> The institution needs to set high standards not only in its information services but also in other things including the physical structures of the buildings as befits the foremost institution. Therefore, the buildings need to be kept in *Nigerbiblios Vol. 16, Nos. 1 & 2, Jan.-Dec., 2005* good shape at all times for the comfort of library with all paraphernalia of modern library such as elegant tables and chairs, cabinets, show glasses, display stands etc. Every now and then, some branches complain of inadequate tables and chairs, broken-down photocopiers and inadequate staffing, while the authorities try to meet their needs with the provision of the required items. However, there is always room for improvement in view of the fact that establishment of branches is a continuous exercise. Therefore all the required items cannot be provided at once. In fact, the newly established branches have been mostly affected in this regard. All these items need to be adequately provided and maintained including powergenerating sets and air-conditioners.

At present, out of nineteen branches, only the Zonal offices, which are four in number, have prototype buildings, while the rest are occupying temporary buildings donated by the various state governments. Some of these buildings are posing a lot of problems in spite of the huge some of money being spent on their renovation. The authorities often have to carry out repairs on these buildings even after renovation at one time or the other, a pointer to the fact that the buildings are either none too good architecturally or none too suitable for library services since they were not designed for that purpose. The general complaints are either that of leaking or blown off roof, or part of the buildings getting dilapidated. Even with the prototype buildings, leakage through the roof have been a problem. Water as a result of leakages poses a menace to the library as it can damage the collections as well as the arrangement. Secondly, the reading rooms and the halls become water logged. This is affecting patronage and scaring away patrons from making use of the halls and auditoriums, which are sources of revenue for the branches. In the same vein, a situation whereby a branch has to change location as a result of quit notice will surely affect its smooth operations. In fact, some branches are facing threats of ejection from the temporary sites. Cases in point are Ogun, Imo, Taraba and Cross River State Branches. Apart from the psychological effects of the threats on the members of staff, the branches stand the risk of loosing some of their collection, while some of their audio-visual materials and ICT equipment can easily get damaged in transit. The Cross River State Branch commenced operation again in 2003 after it had been closed down for two years on account of its renovation.

Although this problem is receiving the attention of the authorities, one is of the view that the only lasting solution is the construction of the prototype buildings. The temporary buildings occupied at present by many branches are makeshift since they were not built for library services. It is noteworthy

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that some prototype building projects are nearing completion. However, cognizance must be taken of the need to undertake the roofing of the buildings with more solid materials that can withstand heavy rainstorm. Also, the elegance of the building should be sustained through regular face-lifts.

Closely related to the above is that some plots of land allotted to the institution for prototype buildings are under threat of revocation by the donors. This suggests the need to develop the pieces of land on time and putting adequate measures in place to safeguard the land from being taken over.

b) Inadequate Collections

The strength of every library lies in its collections and information service to the people. In other words, a library will be adjudged good or otherwise by its ability to meet, to a large extent, the information needs of its clientele. To be able to do this effectively, the library must be well stocked with adequate reading materials relevant to the needs of the community. Considering the status of the National Library of Nigeria as custodian of the nation's intellectual output, the branches need to stock assorted books that can serve everybody in the community, be it government, intellectuals or professionals.

However, it is observed that the collections in many branches are inadequate to cope with the information and research needs of the clientele. While zonal offices and some other branches are fairly well stocked, information resources in the rest, especially the newly established ones, are scanty. This problem is further compounded by lack of networking that can facilitate exchange of information and resource sharing between the branches and other departments within the institution on the one hand, and branches and other libraries on the other hand. Even with networking, there is still the need to update and enrich the collections.

Again, the acquisition policy of the National Library of Nigeria needs to be reviewed to include modern media. It is observed that many branches lack

audio-visuals such as microforms, reader/printers, televisions, videotapes and cassettes, film projectors, etc.

For instance, provision of television sets will provide users opportunity of television viewing. This is a new dimension to information dissemination as global live programmes such as the Olympics Worid Cup etc can be watched on the television. This will surely endear users to the libraries. Furthermore, a combination of television, video-tapes and cassettes will

enable the clientele to watch educative cum informative and recreational films, for library should not only serve as fountain of knowledge but also as a means of recreation and relaxation. In addition, videotapes and cassettes can be given out on rentals. This can serve as money-spinners for the institution in general and branches in particular.

Non-Enforcement of Legal Deposit Law

C) Failure or reluctance on the part of publishers to comply with the legal deposit law usually necessitates Legial Deposit drives by the branches. It is noted that while some reluctantly comply, others remain defiant. This is another problem being encountered of the punishment on the defaulters. The fact that no publisher has been prosecuted for default, which is put at 50 pounds equivalent of N12,500.00, in my own verw, is stiff enough to serve as deterrent to defaulters if it is enforced. The institution needs to prosecute a publisher as a test case. If this is done, it will empower the branches to enforce compliance with the Legal Deposit law in their various areaus of operation. In this connection, it is necessary to put in place an enlightenmentawareness campaign in other to sensitize the publishers towards their legal deposit obligations to the institution. To this end extensive media publicity will be required.

Decentralization of Issuance of ISSN and ISBN to Nigerian d) Publications

As earlier mentioned, the National Library of Nigeria, on account of its status as the apex library serves as the international agency for issuance of ISSN and ISBN to Nigerian publications. The ISSN/ISBN centre of National Bibliographic Control Department of the institution located performs this function. This implies that pulnishers will have to travel down to Lagios to obtain the codes for their new publications. Although, the branches cannot perform this function, they have continued to serve as link between the centre and publishers from where they are directed to the centre in Lagos after being briefed on the procedure for obtaining them. Many publishers, however, do not find this convenient because of the marathon distance journey involved; a stuation which has forced many heads of brancines to often assist them in securing the codes for their publications. This situation partly accounts_ for the ilegal sale of the codes by un authorized persions. Consequently, it has been surgested that the function be delegated to the branches, as this will save the publishers the troubles of obtaining them directly from Lagos. However there has been a lot of argument against this suggestion. One such argument is that decent raization will not give room for proper accountability.

about ang. Ang, Ang Alis hereby suggested that meashed. In case, there is certainly the need to fashion a better and easier modality that will enable publishers to secure the codes with ease. It has even been argued that automation and networking will address this problem. In that case, the earlier this was put in place, the better. e) Transportation and Communication Branches lack official vehicles to facilitate movement in the course of discharging their statutory functions. For instance, provision of vehicles will enhance easy supervision and coordination of branches and conveyance of the materials down to Lagos. This is than the present method of dispatching the consignment through public transporters. Although, it may not be possible to provide all the branches with vehicles considering th lean purse of the institution, at least, the zonal offices should be provided with vehicles so that conveyance of the Legal Deposit materials can be done on zonal basis. The second set of the second set is set as the model of the second with the second set of the second set of the Again, in the year 2002 the branches head office in Lagos took over responsibility for the distribution of processed books to the branches in order to ensure their safe and timely delivery. These materials have to be collected from NBCD, packaged and then dispatched through the public transporters. This modality is certainly not the best considering the risks involved. For one, the safety of the materials is at sake. For another, it is less economical, considering the high charges. Provision of a vehicle for this purpose is surely a better alternative. For now, the only means of communication with the branches is land phone, which is sometimes disconnected by the organization that provides the service due to logistic problem. This needs to be supplemented with mobile phones (GSM). Provision of other facilities like e-mail and fax machines is equally essential. and an initial state the second state in the second state in This situation of a state f) Adequate Training for Branch Staff Branches render professional assistance in library establishment and development in their respective states. The branches need to be well equiped and staff adequately trained towards a more effective and efficient performance in this regard. It has been observed that most of the branches lack the necessary tools for this job. Branches might need to liaise with either NBCD or RDD or other libraries in the same location in order to carry out this job. This may slowdown the pace of their services in this wise. A better alternative is the provision of all necessary facilities and adequate training for members of staff in order to acquire the dexterity in core areas of librarianship such as cataloguing and classification, indexing and

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abstracting, etc. it is hereby suggested that members of staff be exposed to these areas before and after being posted to the branch.

g) <u>Automation and Networking</u> There is no doubt that the National Library of Nigeria with seven departments and numerous branches is overdue for automation and networking. The relationship between the different departments is symbolic or mutually dependent since their services are directed towards the same goal i.e. development and provision of library services in the country. While other departments perform technical activities, the b^ranches serve as nationwide service points for provision and dissemination of processed information by other departments. Besides, the b^ranches serve as links between the institution and members of the public including publishers and other libraries. There is usually the need for branches to link up with other departments in the course of discharging their statutory functions.</u>

In the light of the foregoing, there is the need for good working relationship between the various departments. This calls for close contact, co-operation and interaction for the purpose of resource sharing and exchange of information. This becomes necessary in view of the fact that the information materials in the branches, which are situated far away from the headquarters, are inadequate to meet the information needs of their clientele.

However, lack of centralized headquarters and networking tend to undermine the concept of cooperation and resource sharing between the component units. These branches are the worse off in this regard. Thus, it becomes impossible to access information in other departments especially Reference and Users' Services Department (RUSD), Abuja and Lagos, which house the bulk of the institution's information resources if the need arises. In addition, lack of Internet connectivity deprives the branches access to information within Internet public domain. This situation makes it difficult for branches to satisfy, to a large extent, the information needs of their patrons. This implies that branches will keep referring them to other libraries.

Computer networking through Local Area network and Wider A_rea Network including Internet connectivity will, by and large, address this problem and enable branches to provide services online thereby expanding library services across the country. This will boost their services $a_n d$ enable them to reach many more that have not been reached before, for it will afford them the opportunity to render email and online reference services.

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Furthermore, networking and eventual transformation to virtual library will afford the institution the opportunity of contgributing more to the distance learning programme of the government and educational developing of the country in general. For instance, the National Open University, which is meant for the general public requires the support of all libraries to function effectively since libraries meant to support the programme cannot be built in every nook and cranny of the country. The students will certainly benefit from the services of the institution through its branhes. With networking, the institution will be able to liaise more effectively with other libraries and national organizations such as the Education Tax Fund (ETF), the Universal basic Education (UBE), the National Teachers Institute (NTI) etc. be in the intration of the pattern to give pression and the third the sit might be Above all, branches will be transformed into virile and dynamic resource centres as it will boost their operations and services and consolidate the position of the institution as a "library of highest standing" LIDS OUT SIGN OF BOURD OF BUDIES OF STREET

4. THE WAY FORWARD

Finance All the problems highlighted emanate from inadequate funding, which of course, is not of the institution's making. As the library keeps expanding more money is needed for provision of more facilities needed for effective operation. This calls for progressive increase n the annual subventions. Again, the institution, like others, needs to undergo automation and networking. The cost of procuring the iCT technologies in addition to the cost of training and retraining members of staff for capacity building is enormous. With the dwindling finance of the institution, it becomes difficult to procure all the materials required for the smooth operations of the branches and the institution as a whole since the institution works within the limit of its budget.

The problem of finance must be addressed squarely. Donations from wellto-do Nigerians, national and international organizations will certainly improve

the funding of the institution. In fact, the Education Tax Fund has been of immense assistance in this wise. In the other hand, the institution can generate funds through the provision of Internet services, printing and binding of books, organizing training and workshops for other libraries and consultancy services. Branches should also be allowed to run these services in order to generate funds to supplement their allocations and then spend part of it on the maintenance of their respective offices.

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THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT 5.

The institution as the nation's bibliographic agency deserves more attention from the government than any other similar institution since the institution was set up by an Act of parliament, which provided for establishment of a branch in every state of the federation. For now, the nation is made up of thirty-six (36) states with the institution covering only nineteen (19). This implies that more branches will be established in future. The government

needs to be sensitized towards the financial implication and the need for improved budget. Furthermore, since the government assumes the greatest responsibility for information, the government, both at the Federal and State levels stands to benefit immensely from the services of the institution, taking a cue from the role of the Library of Congress in America. It will therefore, be in the interest of the nation to give greater attention to the development of the whole institution so that it can fulfill the goals for which it was established. To this end, transformation to virtual library is certainly the ultimate. The onus rests on the authorities to make a proposal for funding towards the realization of this project.

OBSERVATION AND CONCLUSION

6. The operations and services of the State Branch Services Department confer

- on it a unique position in the hierarchy of the National Library of Nigeria from the readers viewpoint. First of all, the branches are the organs through which the institution extends its services to all parts of the country in line with the decree setting up the institution. They render services directly to members of the public and act as a link between other arms of the institution and publishers, other libraries and books sellers. They serve as windows through which the public peeps into the operations of the institution Therefore, the worth of the institution will largely be judged by the performance of the branches. In this wise, they are the image-makers for the National Library of Nigeria.
- However, the problem of finance must be tackled head-on. This becomes imperative considering the fact that, on the part of library users, financial

constraints may not be an acceptable excuse for not rendering good services to them, because not many of them have insight into the institution's problem. As the apex library of the nation, people will certainly look up to the institution for the best services. Even though the branches will complement and supplement the public libraries, the National Library of Nigeria needs to ser the pace for them in its services. It is gratifying to note that the able and indefatigable authorities of the institution have continued to square up to

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the problems and challenges bedeviling the branches in spite of all odds. Recently, the Educational Tax Fund (ETF) supplied computers, photocopying machines and typewriters to some branches through the efforts of the National Library of Nigeria Management. The institution has and its still enjoying book gifts from the same organization. Moreover, computerization and networking of the headquarters has begun. It is hoped that this will be extended to Lagos offices and branches in the near future.

APPENDIX NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NIGERIA STATE BRANCHES AND THEIR LOCATIONS

Zone A Branches

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- I. Kaduna State Branch
- 2. Niger State Branch
- 3. Kwara State Branch
- 4. Kano State Branch
- 5. Sokoto State Branch
- Kaduna (Zonal Headquarters) Minna
 - llorin Kano Sokoto

Zone B

- 6. Ondo State Branch
- 7. Ogun State Branch
- 8. Edo State Branch
- 9. Oyo State Branch
- 10 Osun State Branch

ZoneC

- Enugu State Branch
 Imo State Branch
 Cross River State Branch
 Rivers State Branch
- Akure (Zonal Headquarters') Abeokuta Benin Ibadan Osogbo

Enugu (Zonal Headquarters) Owerri Calabar Port Harcourt

<u>Zone D</u>

Plateau State Branch
 Bauchi State Branch
 Adamawa State Branch
 Taraba State Branch
 Benue State Branch

Jos (Zonal Headquarters) Bauchi Yola Jalingo Makurdi

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National Library of Nigeria, Akure, 27th – 28th November, 2000.

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