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# ACHIEVING A SECURED NIGERIA: ROLE OF LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS

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## ABSTRACT

*The article examined the security challenges in Nigeria highlighting the causes and threat factors which range from illegal immigrants, cultism, corruption, unemployment, armed robbery, terrorism, Fulani marauders as well as ethno-religious conflicts. It stressed the importance of information to every one and that the availability of documented information helps people in solve everyday problems as well as make informed decisions that affect their life endeavours. The concept of libraries and information centres was clarified in a modern way, stressing on collection organisation, and access to information so as to improve the quality of human decisions. Since libraries are essential components of education, they are also seen as agents of societal change. Without being exhaustive, roles of libraries and librarians in the fight against insecurity are discussed. The paper concluded that libraries are dependable allies in this fight against insecurity through partnership and dissemination of relevant and needed information.*

**Keywords:** Libraries, librarians, information, curbing, eradicating, insecurity, Nigeria, peace, role, education, social inclusion

## INTRODUCTION

Libraries form an invaluable and inestimable part of the process of education from the time the kid is literate, lifelong until his grave. The expression, “when a man is tired of learning, he is tired of living” encapsulates what libraries as part of the avenues for gaining knowledge and information do. All societies are in a state of flux. The library is itself an agent for change.

According to Irvin (1978), “The whole purpose and aim of libraries is to encourage individual citizens to learn how to think things out for themselves, freely and without pressure, how to base their reasoned opinions on observed facts; how to live a full, creative life of their own, a life that is intellectually

honest and independent”.

Libraries have always been great information stores and agencies of mass culture. They have operated almost everywhere as social services for community use. They have always reflected society but have always constituted themselves as agents in the processes of societal change. Libraries are closely related not only to intellectual development but also to changes in the organizational structure of any society. Rajkoomar (2012) affirmed that library is a treasure of knowledge. Libraries provide people with access to information they require to play, work, learn, and govern. The purposes of libraries have been changing over the years becoming more faceted and multifarious. Libraries are not institutions/buildings/warehouses/stores as defined in earlier times, but are an agent of educational, social, economic and political changes or revolutions in the community and their doors are now open to everyone who need them.

Buttressing Rajkoomar (2012) assertion, Mondal (2022) submitted that as gateways to information and culture, libraries play a basic role in society. The resources and services they provide produce opportunities for learning, support accomplishments and education, and facilitate the new ideas and views that are central to an original and innovative society. In addition, they facilitate the guarantee associated with authentic records of data created and accumulated by past generations. Further, a world without libraries might be very difficult to provide analysis and human information or to preserve the world’s needed information and heritage for consultation by future generations.

## **BACKGROUND TO NIGERIA’S SECURITY CHALLENGES**

A nation that is riddled with crisis and insecurity can hardly make progress. National security question involves a lot of issues that touches on all spheres of human existence.

The security of a nation is uniquely concerned with the well-being, welfare and interest of her citizens, preservation of her sovereignty and territorial integrity against external aggression (Ossai-Ugba, 2013). Panle and Nwokedi (2020) opined that the importance of security to economic well-being of a country and her citizens cannot be over emphasized. It therefore becomes imperative that every nation should work hard to ensure that not only its territorial integrity is secured and maintained, but the lives and properties of the citizens are maximally protected.

The desire to ensure a more secure world encouraged the United Nations to set up a high level panel on “Threat Challenges and Change” which submitted the reports of findings in 2005. This report was captioned “A more secure world - Our shared responsibility”, which highlights or recognizes the fact that in this 21st century more than ever before, no state can stand wholly alone. The report asserts that collective strategies, collective institutions and a sense of collective responsibility are indispensable. Today’s threats recognize that national boundaries are connected and must be addressed at the global and regional, as well as national level. This brings us to the issue of internal security. No state, no matter how powerful can by its own efforts alone make itself invulnerable to today’s threats. (Fatoberu, 2019).

The outbreak of violent conflict has become a major source of insecurity in Nigeria. It is estimated that Nigeria has “witnessed over 300 violent ethno-religious, communal and political conflicts of varying intensity and magnitude” (Osuji, 2013). In recent years, the number of kidnapping-for-ransom incidents has spiked across the country. The Switzerland-based Centre for Security Studies says Islamist terrorist groups in particular use extorted ransom funds to finance a significant share of their expenses. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghred is alleged to have collected a total of \$89 million in such revenues between 2003 & 2012. Terrorist groups use the ransom funds to recruit new members, to fund maintenance of training camps for the procurement of weapons and communication tools and for organising and executing terrorists’ attacks (Punch Editorial, April 2021). The Nigerian government labeled Fulani attacks on communities in the North Central as merely “herders-farmers-clashes”, while global terrorism index since 2015 ranked the Fulani Marauders as the world’s fourth deadliest terrorist group.

In recent times, at least 7,222 Nigerians were killed and 3,823 abducted as the country witnessed 2,840 incidents of insecurity between January 1 and July 29, 2022. Also, no fewer than 1,499 people were injured during various attacks witnessed in 505 local government areas in the country (Ynaija, August 2, 2022; Sahara Reporters New York, August 2, 2022).

In the year 2022, there was hardly a day that passed without one gory tale of travellers being killed or abducted by kidnapers, bandits or unknown gun men. Farmers have abandoned their farms for fear of bandits who kill them or abduct them for ransom. The security agencies were overwhelmed and over stretched. Terrorists and bandits activities escalated in a larger dimension in 2022.

Statistically, Nigeria has recently been included among the countries with the least peace in the world, according to Global Peace Index, it is the 18th less peaceful state. In addition, Nigeria is the sixth country most affected by terrorism, based on the Global terrorism Index. One further serious threat in Nigeria is the risk of mass killings, or genocide. Nigeria is the second country in Africa with the highest risk of genocide and the sixth worldwide (Statista Research Department, [www.statista.com](http://www.statista.com)).

Under Buhari administration, insecurity is the greatest challenge facing it at the moment. As submitted by Omede, Okorafor and Ngwube (2018), terrorism, poverty, unemployment, corruption, heavy dependence on oil are all contributing factors to the spectre of insecurity in Nigeria. Analysts have also linked these crisis and conflict to inadequate communication, illiteracy, intolerance, ignorance, governance, failure and misinformation, divisive tendencies/agitations, illegal immigrants resulting from porous borders, illicit flows, illegal arms and light weapons including youth’s restiveness and militancy (Panle and Nwokedi, 2020).

Going from Chibok, Maiduguri, Katsina, Jos, Niger, Southern Kaduna, Benue, Niger Delta, and recently South Eastern Nigeria and everywhere else in the country, lives were being snatched by insurgents, bandits, kidnapers, cultists, ritual murderers, armed robbers, child abductors, and rapists who have no respect for the sanctity of life (Ndubuisi-Okolo and Anigbogu, 2019). Be that as it may, as Nigerians continue to express fears that with widespread insecurity that the nation is plunging into

a state of anarchy, because it is particularly insidious and dangerous, the permanent resolution of the current epidemic of the insecurity requires more than garrisoning of the entire country through the deployment of more soldiers. Institutions have to rise to the occasion which has become overwhelming to the security agencies. Such institutions that can act as a change agent remain the library and information centres. It is very obvious that part of the solution to insecurity is having access to the right information for personal and national development.

### **IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION TO THE CITIZENS**

Information per se has varieties of meanings. Some people will identify it with transmission over communication line; others will identify it with recorded facts, while some others will simply define information as content of text.

Defined vaguely by Satija (2013), Information is what is communicated or formed through sense perceptions. It has no existence of its own. After a brief analysis of the components of information, he submitted that information answers questions of what, which, who, how and many other types. There is a difficulty in defining “information”, perhaps in the fact that there is no consensus on the nature and scope of the discipline. Generally therefore, an art of collecting and keeping of this information can be regarded as documentation. We define information here as ‘Knowledge transformed or prepared for transfer’.

Irrespective of the perspective they are viewed from, individual, societal, communal, national, or global, development is hinged upon the availability, accessibility and use of information to address man’s needs in all his areas of endeavour. Information is exponentially being recognized as man’s fifth factor of production. It is a resource and commodity for development, a processed data to which meaning may be attached used for planning, decision making, and reduction of uncertainty (Oluwaseye, Akanni & Busuyi, 2017). It provides those who possess it with the requisite knowledge to make informed, personal, organizational, career, institutional, societal and communal result-oriented decisions.

Information is one of the most important things in the modern society. When we get informed about something, we get knowledge. This knowledge protects us from making mistakes. According to Nelson Mandela, ‘the more informed you are the less aggressive and arrogant you are’. Anasi (2010) submitted that information is necessary for people to be liberated from shackles of ignorance, misconceptions, economic stagnation, social unrest, and political instability. Social cohesion cannot be achieved without timely, accurate, and relevant information. People rely on information to help guide their actions and shape their understanding of the world and their environment. If we refer back to earlier definition of information as the content of text, it becomes convincing that all textbooks, journals, newspapers, CD-ROMS etc. contain information and the library being a place that houses both books and non-book materials becomes a “source of information”. The librarian’s duty is to send information to the reader(s), to invite their attention to the latest development in any field of interests of the users.

## **CONCEPT OF LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION CENTRES**

Njoku and Ken-Agbiriogu (2020) see libraries from traditional point as a place for collection of books, manuscripts, journals, and other sources of recorded information, but intensified that at the last 50 years, libraries have increasingly developed into a provider of information resources and services that do not even require a building. The primary role of the library is to acquire, process, preserve, and disseminate recorded information to members of the public. Ezennia (2012) defined the library as “an institution for care of collection of books that make them accessible to prospective users”. He added that stocks in the library are audio visual materials (magnetic tapes, phone records, films) arranged in a systematic manner to allow for easy access and location of individual items for loan, reference or research. Ibrahim and Ibrahim (2013) also stated that library is a place, a room or a building where books, journals and other sources of information are kept and used for study, research and recreation. The libraries as a repository of knowledge has changed its horizon over the years to become not only a place or building but a thoroughfare through which information can be delivered to people, no matter the location (Chorun, Beetseh, Ilo, & Idachaba, 2014). Irrespective of their format, libraries unite all information sources and make them simple for anyone looking for information to access. Information is viewed as fresh ideas or knowledge collected from the environment for human use to affect behaviour, bring about improvements, and increase efficiency in all human endeavours because information is today’s currency (Ailakhu, Kalu, & Odili, 2022; Ajegbomogun, 2008). All citizens are more equipped and informed through the information they obtain. No matter what kind, the library is the entrance to knowledge wherein Information is obtained, processed, repackaged, stored, and disseminated to citizens.

## **THE ROLE OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS IN CURBING AND ERADICATING INSECURITY IN NIGERIA**

Libraries have the main objectives of being entrusted with the selection, acquisition, organisation, storage, and dissemination of information to their patrons, (Akor, Ekere, and Akor, 2019). Library and information professionals (LIPs) are dependable instruments and allies in the war against insecurity in several ways. LIPs while using the instruments of information organisation and their professional skills and competencies, and the dissemination of relevant information can join other stakeholders in the war against crimes and criminals in Nigeria.

Jatto and Balogun (2012) stated that library is a living and active part of the whole effort towards promoting peace and security in Nigeria. The role of the library in curbing insecurity is not just to spread information in a particular area but to offer a holistic approach, around all aspects of the policies of the country. This is because the line between security and insecurity lie in information given or information withheld. Panle and Nwokedi (2020) concurred that the ability to use information and its associated tools is a source of power for any nation which the library and librarians are best equipped to do. In essence the libraries and librarians have the following roles to play in curbing insecurity in Nigeria:

❖ **Creating awareness:** An ignorant man can never act in a positive manner desirous of the

society. This is because he lacks knowledge and understanding. Libraries and librarians and all information professionals can contribute to the promotion of peace in the society or nation by creating awareness on the need not only to embrace peace but to ensure peaceful co-existence so that adequate security can be ensured. Libraries can collaborate with other bodies to sensitize the citizens on this need as often as possible. Creating awareness promotes social inclusion where all members of a community feel valued, basic needs are provided, and equal opportunity for resources and power sharing are provided. This brings about a significant reduction in crime rates both in the urban and rural communities.

- ❖ The library occupies a central position in creating awareness also of the programmes and initiatives of government aimed at making life better for its citizenry (Ariola, Nwaigwe & Anyalebechi, 2017). They also asserted that the library helps in ensuring that the citizens do not only access information but also understand the content or import of the information in order for them to use it meaningfully.
- ❖ Organizing and supporting continuing education programmes: The concept of continuing education connotes education and re-education, training and re-training opportunities made available to people out-of-school such as young school leavers, the employed, and the unemployed and so on in order to cope with new challenges or situations of life. This aspect of the roles falls on public libraries in Nigeria which should intensely embark on continuing education programmes. This would lead to massive empowerment of the citizens of all ages who desire to be literates and re-trained especially in the rural areas. To buttress the above, Benson, Anyalebechi & Amaechi (2015) suggested that public libraries halls or community information centres (CICs) can be used as venue for provision of non-formal education programme. State libraries, library boards, should partner with State Ministry of Education, teachers in public and private schools and the school proprietors and their regulating bodies can propose to the different state governments to adopt public library as centre for continuing education programmes. Illiteracy deprives the individual of full participation in the democratic process and exposes him to exploitation and manipulation.
- ❖ Establishment of Community Information Centres: It is also the role of libraries to ensure that community information centres are set up in the rural parts of the country. These centres will provide needed information to these rural dwellers, mostly in the areas of agricultural and educational information. Again, the information must always be made available to them on time. Aside reading materials for the literate population, community radio services should be mounted in these centres and information communicated in English as well as in their native language.
- ❖ Translation Services: Since most information resources are written in English language, the library's role is also to translate these resources into the languages that they can read and understand. Most literature on peace and security are written in English language. An interpretation of such literature through translation will help immensely in driving the point home to the people who are meant to use them. An example is translating the aspect of laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on peace, security and co-existence of the ethnic groups, and printed in a concise form.

- ❖ The public libraries aim at maintaining literacy by enriching reading habits and to encourage using free time properly. The programmes expected to be run by these public libraries in addition are:
  - a. Mobile Libraries: A mobile library or bookmobile is a travelling library that brings books and library services to users. Whatever form it can take to reach the most remote part of the cities and rural communities viz truck, train, boat, bus, donkeys etc. let the books and library materials be made available to the potential users in Nigeria. Also mobile library for the village natives should be designed to help the natives in speaking, reading and writing the local languages in order to upgrade their living standards and acquire national identity. Audio visuals can be adopted for teaching.
  - b. Services by school libraries: Community development and services is the mission of all schools. School libraries may also act as community libraries. Books and other reading materials are circulated among the schools.

In any effective school library program, the librarian should have definitive responsibilities in certain areas of the curriculum and should have an active teaching role. With his/her wide knowledge of materials and techniques for using them, the librarian can make a strong partner in the planning and implementing of the educational enterprise especially now that the Nigerian 6-3-3-4 curriculum includes security education at the primary level.

- ❖ Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI): This is a special service provided on chosen specific subjects in libraries. Information resources are selected and sectionalized in compiled or display formats in the library with the aim of making it immediately accessible to users, as well as drawing their attention to such.
- ❖ Use of Electronic Media to Promote and Create Awareness on Security: This is done through film shows, short plays, and dance drama. In rural areas, these activities should be organized in the local languages.

## **CONCLUSION**

The library of the 21<sup>st</sup> century provides a space and opportunities for exploration, creation and collaboration between all categories of people and communities irrespective of their levels of literacy or otherwise. When Nigerian citizens are provided information needed to better their lot and shun vices, security of lives and properties will be ensured. In essence, Nigerian government, private individuals and philanthropists need to set up more public and private libraries for potential users in order to make information on existing and emerging issues widely available. Nigerian libraries and librarians as a matter of necessity should organize a nationwide library week centred on curbing insecurity as soon as possible. The library, especially public libraries should make conscious efforts through the National Library of Nigeria, Library Boards, and State Ministries of Education seek to be made agents of sensitization of empowerment programmes such as N-Power which imbibes the Learn-work-entrepreneurship culture in youth between the ages of 18 – 35. Banners for announcements

should be constructed and obviously placed in front of library buildings in order to attract the attention of the youth. Mounting of exhibitions on peace, dangers and aftermaths of terrorism, cultism, ritual killings, rape, sectionalism, prebendalism, favouritism, and the likes should be adopted by library and information centres.

In addition, the role of the library should not be neglected in correctional centres/prisons in Nigeria because necessary information resources stocked therein will help immensely in reforming the imprisoned criminals. No doubt, the injustice, corruption, bad leadership, unemployment have contributed to the spate of insecurity in Nigeria. Disseminating adequate and necessary information accurately and timely on the need for Nigerians from all tribes and religion to live peacefully, love one another, be conversant with relevant laws of the country as well as seize every opportunity to be educated, re-educated formally and informally will go a long way in solving the problem of insecurity in Nigeria.



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