

NIGERIA

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NIGERIA

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RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NIGERIA

INTRODUCTION

The National Library of Nigeria was established for the fundamental goal of ensuring access to the entire fount of recorded knowledge for the progress and development of Nigeria. It is to serve as “the giant memory of the nation, its intellectual store-house, and the data bank for its learning and remembering processes”.

FUNCTIONS

The National Library of Nigeria was established by the National Library Act 1964 which was later repealed and substituted with the National Library Decree No. 29 of 1970. The statute enjoins the Institution to:

- i Assemble, maintain and extend a collection of books, periodicals, pamphlets, newspapers, maps, musical scores, films and recordings and such other matter as the Board considers appropriate for a library of the highest standing.
- ii Establish and maintain a branch of the National Library in each State of the Federation.
- iii Make the facilities of the National Library available to members of the public and others on proper terms.
- iv Make such arrangements as the Board considers appropriate with respect to:
 - the exchange of matter included in the collection aforesaid,
 - the preparation and publication of catalogues, indexes and similar aids,
 - the provision of assistance to other persons in the organisation of libraries and with respect to the manner of using facilities under the control of libraries.
- v Make recommendations and give advice on library development or organisation to any department or agency of government of the Federation or a State or to any local government authority.
- vi Responsible for the development of the National Bibliography of Nigeria and national bibliographical services, either in a national bibliographical centre or elsewhere.

THE GOVERNING BOARD

One of the ways in which the present democratic government has impacted positively on the growth and development of the National Library of Nigeria was the termination of the seven-year Board interregnum. The Board was constituted and inaugurated in January 2001, and it had since been articulating, formulating and enunciating policies for the development of the Library, enhancement of its service delivery and accentuation of professionalisation.

In order to apprise the Board with the level of library development outside the Nigerian borders, a working tour of select libraries in America was arranged for the Board Chairman, Princess Tejumade Alakija. She visited and toured the Library of Congress, Howard University Library and Rutgers State University Library, New Brunswick, New Jersey. During the tour, there was an agreement with the host libraries to assist with manpower training at the National Library of Nigeria and to improve our collection through book donation.

FUNDING

As a result of the political situation of the past, public libraries in Nigeria, National Library inclusive, suffered neglect and deterioration. However, Government is now responding to the needs of libraries. But with respect to the National Library, the level of funding is still a far cry for a turn-around development that will culminate in the computerisation of our services.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The National Library of Nigeria is yet to have a specially designed and purpose-built infrastructural facility for library service delivery. However, there are encouraging signals from Government that the situation will be redressed soon.

Meanwhile, Branches of the National Library of Nigeria has spread to fourteen States of the Federation. Four of these branches operate in specially designed and purpose-built prototype State Branch buildings. Three others of such buildings are at various stages of completion in other States. Currently, the other ten branches operate in temporary premises provided by state governments pending the construction of permanent prototype branch buildings.

A total of 1,000 workforce render service at the Abuja Headquarters and the fourteen other State Branches.

LEGAL DEPOSIT OBLIGATIONS

The legal instrument establishing the National Library of Nigeria confers on it the depository obligation of the nation. Consequently, specified copies of all materials published in Nigeria are to be deposited free both by commercial and government publishers with the Library. Such titles deposited are compiled into the National Bibliography of Nigeria. Although this document has not been published for a considerable length of time, it has now been resuscitated with the publication of the year 2001 edition.

READERSHIP PROMOTION

The Board has channelled efforts into the activities which are designed to create awareness of the benefits of a virile reading culture through a Readership Promotion Campaign programme. These activities have commenced in various geo-political zones in Nigeria.

UNESCO-ASSISTED PROGRAMMES

UNESCO sponsored a Consultant to the National Library of Nigeria, Abuja, in September 2000 to a two-week IDAMS Country Training Seminar. The training was on the use of UNESCO software package for the validation, manipulation and statistical analysis of numerical data. A participation programme seminar was also organised by the National Library of Nigeria in collaboration with UNESCO on June 4-5, 2002 in Lagos, Nigeria. It was a national seminar titled "*Preservation for Posterity*". The Seminar was in support of the digitisation programme of the National Library of Nigeria.

Nigeria's National Universities Commission has commenced a programme of Virtual (Digital) Library, using select Federal Universities in Nigeria as pilot. Their experience will be useful to the National Library of Nigeria.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COUNCIL FOR THE INFORMATION FOR ALL PROGRAMME

Nigeria was represented at the UNESCO's Intergovernmental Council for Information for All Programme by the National Librarian, Mrs O.O. Omolayole. The Session was held at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France from 15th – 17th April, 2002. At the meeting, Nigeria's representative was elected as a Vice-Chairperson to the Bureau. The Information for All (IFA) programme provides a framework for international cooperation and partnerships for the development of common strategies, methods and tools to build an information society for all.

LIBRARIAN'S REGISTRATION COUNCIL

The Government has inaugurated the Librarians' Registration Council. This is the body which will regulate the practice of Librarianship and Information Management in Nigeria. This development has the potential of enhancing professionalism in the library and information sector in Nigeria.

NIGERIAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

The body of the professional Librarians in Nigeria, the Nigerian Library Association, turns 40 this year. To celebrate the occasion a Conference was held from June 16 – 21, 2002 at Topo-Badagry, Lagos. The Conference focused on a review of the past achievement and the vision for library and information sector in Nigeria in the next four decades.

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