

“The Role of Libraries in Literacy and Education” Pre-Requisite For Education & Sustainable Development at All Levels of Education

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Abstract: *The objective of the paper is to establish a relationship between the library, literacy and education. It also discussed the library as a pre-requisite for education for sustainable development at all levels of education. The paper emphasized the role of libraries through extension services and Audio-visual aids, story hours, lectures, book exhibitions, pictures, newsreels, films, etc. for mass education.*

‘Education’ and ‘library’ are two inseparable—indivisible concepts, both being fundamentally and synchronically related to and co-existent with each other. One cannot be separated from the other, and the existence of one is impossibility without the other. None of them is an end in itself, rather both of them together are a means to an ultimate end. One dies as soon as the other perishes. One survives as long as the other exists. This inter-relation, this co-existence, this dependence of one upon the other have been coming down from the birth of human civilization to the posterity through a process of evolution in accord with varied needs, changes, and circumstances of various stages of human life. Education cannot exist alone in the absence of library, and library has no meaning if it cannot impart education. Education is an eye-opener to a human being; it gives him perfect, adequate knowledge, creates civic and rational sense, withdraws him from the subjection of low habits, selfish passions, and ignoble pursuits, and thus educes him from abysmal darkness to limpid and perspicuous enlightenment, while library is an instrument of self-education, a means of knowledge and factual information, a centre of intellectual recreation, and a beacon of enlightenment that provide accumulated—preserved knowledge of civilization which consequently enrich ones mental vision, and dignify his habit, behavior, character, taste, attitude, conduct, and outlook on life.

Key words: *Science and Technology (S&T), The Association of Research libraries (ASL), Virtual Library (VL),*

I. Introduction

Over the years, many libraries have supported education efforts by providing teaching resources, information and referral services. Many libraries have outreach programs designed to meet the needs of specific groups of people with limited educational skills. Library resource materials are distributed to the institutionalized, including those in prisons, hospitals, rehabilitation centers, and group homes for the elderly and disabled. In addition, some libraries offer programs for groups at risk for education-related problems. The development of Science and Technology (S&T) in the last two centuries has led to an information explosion. Rapid changes have taken place at a great pace. In order to meet the growing needs of users the library system has been greatly improved and upgraded to meet the new challenges. The services offered by libraries have also undergone a great change. With the advent of new technologies in the field of computers and telecommunications, revolutionary changes have taken place in the field of Library and Information Science.

Definition

For a better understanding of this paper, it is necessary to define what a library is;

At the elementary stage library is referred to as:

- a collection of literacy documents or record kept for reference or borrowing
- a depository house built to contain books and other materials for reading and studying
- a collection of standard programmes and subroutines that are stored and available for immediate use.
- A building that houses a collection of books and other materials.

Advanced definitions of Library however are as follows:

- The online Dictionary, Thesaurus and Encyclopedia described the library as a place in which literary and artistic materials, such as books, periodicals newspapers, pamphlets, prints, records, and tapes, are kept for reading, reference, or lending. In a digital sense, a library may be more than a building that houses a

collection of books and other materials as the Internet has opened up an avalanche of online and electronic resources for accessing documents on various fields of interest.

- Online Glossary defined digital library as a collection of texts, images, etc, encoded so as to be stored, retrieved, and read by computer. Furthermore, a digital library is a collection of documents in organized electronic form, available on the Internet or on CD ROM disks. It is the traditional/conventional physical library that provides a basis for the digital library. The Association of Research libraries (ASL) in a publication on 23 October, 1995, described digital collections as unlimited access to document surrogates: they extend to digital artifacts that cannot be represented or distributed in printed formats. Another further development from the digital library is the advent of Virtual Library (VL).
- A web definition for virtual library is that which exists solely in electronic form or on paper. The building blocks required for such a library may not exist, and the chemical steps for such a library may not have been tested. But the materials needed like journals are barred to a location, which can be decoded through passwords.

The word library comes from *liber*, the Latin word for “book.” (Encarta, 2009). A library is a collection of sources, resources, and services, and the structure in which it is housed; it is organized for use and maintained by a public body, an institution, or a private individual. It can mean the collection itself, the building or room that houses such a collection, or both. The term ‘library’ has itself acquired a secondary meaning: “a collection of useful material for common use.” This sense is used in fields such as computer science, mathematics, statistics, electronics and biology. It can also be used by publishers in naming series of related books, e.g. The Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology (Encarta, 2009).

Libraries are defined as organized collection of published and unpublished books and audiovisual materials with the aid of services of staff who are able to provide and interpret such material as required, to meet the informative research, educational and recreational needs of its users. Libraries are regarded as agencies through which sources of information of accumulated knowledge and experiences are selected, acquired, organized, preserved and disseminated to those who need them. Libraries are essential tools in learning at any level. It is the intellectual centre of the society containing records not only the intellectual but also of cultural, economic and social inclination.

Libraries are established for the systematic collection, organization, preservation and dissemination of knowledge and information. It is very important for man to preserve and maintain the valuable knowledge and information contained in the books and documents because we want to preserve our knowledge and wisdom for the coming generations. By preserving the documents in a library this knowledge can be made available to others so that they can benefit from it.

Library makes available all the records of knowledge of the past and ‘present, whereas a man acquires that conserved knowledge to choose as between good and bad, the right or wrong, which distinguish him from the other animals who have no rational power or thinking.

A good—well-equipped library is a *sine qua non* for the intellectual, moral, and spiritual advancement and elevation of the people of a community. It is an indispensable element of the absolute well-being of the citizens and that of the nation at large. People acquire education through certain institutions, schools, agencies, welfare bodies, museums, and organizations, and library is the most outstanding of such institution! A school, a club, an enterprise of a society can never alone impart education; each of them is dependent upon a library—a centre of wholesome education, and the quencher of thirst for concrete, fathomless, ultimate knowledge!

The central mission of a library is to collect, organize, preserve, and provide access to knowledge and information. In fulfilling this mission, libraries preserve a valuable record of culture that can be passed down to succeeding generations. Libraries are an essential link in this communication between the past, present, and future. Whether the cultural record is contained in books or in electronic formats, libraries ensure that the record is preserved and made available for later use. Libraries provide people with access to the information they need to work, play, learn, and govern.

Library does not mean merely a collection of books. It is a learned institution equipped with treasures of knowledge maintained, organized, and managed by trained personnel to educate the children, men and women continuously and assist in their self-improvement through an effective and prompt dissemination of information embodied in the resources. A research scholar can never successfully conduct his investigations and researches without the help of a library and a librarian. Librarian, as an “information officer” or a “scientific officer” possesses, of necessity, definite subject background and knows best the subject area to be covered by an investigator in his narrow field of the problem in hand that he wants to attack!

The scope of a library as an effective aid to study and education is virtually multitudinous. There are different types of libraries, viz.,

- Special library,
- Public library and
- Academic library which contribute to education in various different ways.

Before accounting their role in education abruptly, it may be pertinent here to recall the definitions of these various kinds of institutions which are not often self-explanatory to the general public at which my present endeavor is primarily aimed, so that the various parts played by them in the furtherance of education can be distinctly and succinctly gleaned.

Academic Library

The primary objective of academic library is to meet the academic needs of the particular institution for which it is created to serve. *Academic libraries*, comprise of school libraries, college libraries, and university libraries whose prime objective is to meet the academic needs of the particular institution for which it is created to serve. The purpose of a university library differs, in varying degree, from that of a school or college library in that the former adheres extensive and particular emphasis to research projects apart from the curricular needs of the institution. Besides aiding in the studies of children and assisting the teachers in their teaching and periodical research, a school library is primarily concerned to pro-create an urge for reading amongst the children who here get a first-hand-knowledge to use the library resources most effectively in their future career. This institution serves to build up a strong mental base and character of the children.

Public Library

A public library which is very often called a “peoples’ university”, is a democratic institution operated for the people by the people that conserves and organizes human know. The scope or command of a public library that meets not specific but general requirements of the public thus remains quite broader in its vision. It differs from the other types of libraries in that by offering opportunities of informal self-education it inculcates reading habit amongst all types of general readers and, as a consequence, maintains a sizeable collection of light literatures, i.e., fictions, novels, story books, etc., for recreational studies, and a children’s corner equipped with juvenile literature. Among its broad based functions to perform in educating the general public as well as the children, the following ones can be quoted :

- it facilitates informal self-education of all people in the community ;
- enriches and further develops the subjects on which individuals are undertaking formal education ;
- meets the informational needs of all ;
- creates and further develops civic sense and habits of the citizens ;
- supports educational, civic, and cultural activities of groups and organizations ;
- encourages wholesome recreation and constructive use of leisure time
- provides children, young people, men and women opportunity to :
 - educate themselves continuously,
 - keep abreast of progress in all fields of knowledge, and
 - maintain freedom of expression and constructively critical attitude to all public issues and world affairs.

special library

The special library has been historically, and remains today, an integral, functioning unit of the organization in which it is found, dedicated to the proposition that it exists only to offer the information which the organization needs in order to build, prosper, advance, and achieve its ultimate ends.”

The highly specialized libraries do necessarily contain certain amount of materials on bordering or allied subjects for instance, the library of the Institute of Business Administration should include such subjects as economics, statistics, banks and banking, etc., beside the all embracing term ‘business and commerce’.

A *special library* which is specialized in a particular field of knowledge differs in its mandate from other types of libraries on the following grounds :

- periodical literature is of prime importance and forms the major part of the collection (about 90 p.c.)
- reports, standards, specifications form a considerable quantity ;
- it files information rather than material’ which calls for the introduction of special techniques (mechanical indexing, information retrieval system, etc.) for organization ;
- information here are most up-to-date more than the textbooks, periodical literatures or published reports ;
- it ensures quickest dissemination of information.

A library is not, however, merely a conservator of the past events, experiences, and knowledge. ‘The preservation of the physical object called the “book”, for example, may not be important in itself. What is important is for the library to transmit to the incoming generations the ideas which the book contains.’ Through the instructional staff of the academic institutions the knowledge and ideas conserved by a library are revitalized and put to use in the education of youth who are to be leaders in society and workers in the field of research, and through the

methods of research the students are given an opportunity for independent works, and then the libraries and laboratories become inescapable and vital aids in an endeavor which is directed toward the expansion of man’s fund of knowledge. While the library makes this direct contribution to the advancement of knowledge, it serves as the principal training ground for those who undertake investigations in the fields of science, technology, industry, and the like.

Education

Education refers to the process of learning and acquiring information. Education can be divided into two main types: formal learning through an institution such as a school and self-taught learning or what is often termed life experience. Generally, education is important for learning basic life skills, as well as learning advanced skills that can make a person more attractive in the job market. Education has the same importance as food and shelter and it is known to be essential to a life of an individual. As food is considered necessary for the health and shelter for the body, education is needed for the mind. Education in the largest sense is any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character, or physical ability of an individual. In its technical sense, education is the process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills, and values from one generation to another.

- Education is the process by which people learn:
- Instruction refers to the facilitating of learning, by a tutor or teacher.
- Teaching refers to the actions of an instructor to impart learning to the student.
- Learning refers to those who are taught, with a view toward preparing them with specific knowledge, skills, or abilities that can be applied upon completion.

Type Of Education:

- Primary education
- Secondary education
- Tertiary education / Higher education
- Adult education
- Alternative education
- Distance education
- Vocational education
- Audio-visual education

Features Of Education:

- *Life long process*: - Process of development from infancy to maturity.
- *Bipolar process*: - Interplay of educator and educand.
- *Tripolar process* :- Interplay of educator, educand and social process.
- *A deliberate process*:- The educator is aware of his aim.
- *Preserver and Transmitter of heritage*: - The cultural heritage is transmitted from generation to generation.
- *It is progressive*: - Changes according to the needs and demands of the society.

Purpose/Function Of Education

- Acquisition of information about the past and present: includes traditional disciplines such as literature, history, science, mathematics etc.
- Formation of healthy social and/or formal relationships among and between students, teachers, others
- Capacity/ability to evaluate information and to predict future outcomes (decision-making)
- Capacity/ability to seek out alternative solutions and evaluate them (problem solving)
- Development of mental and physical skills: motor, thinking, communication, social, aesthetic
- Knowledge of moral practices and ethical standards acceptable by society/culture
- Capacity/ability to recognize and evaluate different points of view
- Respect: giving and receiving recognition as human beings
- Indoctrination into the culture
- Capacity/ability to live a fulfilling life
- Capacity/ability to earn a living: career education
- Sense of well-being: mental and physical health
- Capacity/ability to be a good citizen
- Capacity/ability to think creatively

- Cultural appreciation: art, music, humanities
- Understanding of human relations and motivations
- Acquisition/clarification of values related to the physical environment
- Acquisition/clarification of personal values
- Self-realization/self-reflection: awareness of one's abilities and goals
- Self-esteem/self-efficacy

Libraries Inspire Education

- When individuals of all ages have the opportunity to explore information that matters to them, various forms of education can emerge. Libraries have tools to inspire education of all ages.
- They teach skills and strategies individuals need to learn and achieve
- They are partners in education, developing curricula, and integrating resources into teaching and learning
- They teach the skills individuals need to become effective users of ideas and information
- They seek, select, evaluate, and utilize electronic resources and tools and instruct individuals and educators in how to use them
- Library is the ideal neutral and non-threatening environment for learning, formal and informal, to occur
- Libraries have a record of personal service and impartiality
- They readily partner with other learning providers and with other libraries
- They provide public ICT facilities and support.

Importance Of Library In Education

Library is like a storehouse of knowledge. You will find books in a library in almost all topics, be it history, geography, or even science fiction a library has it all. All schools and colleges have a library. Libraries are as the shrine where all the relics of the ancient saints, full of true virtue, and that without delusion or imposture, are preserved and reposed- Bacon. A library is like the whole world encompassed in one room. Without a library a school will not be complete. It is very essential to the education and school system. Any problem you have any query unanswered you will find it in one of the books stored in the library.

A pivotal role played by the libraries it is one of the factors which helps in the development of a society or an even a civilization. It caters to the knowledge thirsty minds of thousands of people. With the onset and advancement of technologies virtual libraries are created. These types of libraries are present in many colleges. Libraries are an integral part of the education system and one is incomplete without the other.

The Need For Library Services:

Its objectives and needs include, the establishment of books and materials to lend to the public for their consumption, Thus the libraries have an essential and close bearing upon the advancement of education and learning at all levels for all the times to come. The Libraries create literacy among the people, give public lectures. Library services improve knowledge and skills for positive productivity as a tool for national development. According to Metzger, (1991), Library services are needed to enable the individual develop full potentials and widening the horizons of perception, interests and skills. Other needs for library services include; public enlightenment or rights in the society, understanding social values and expected conduct in public life; assisting to adjust to existing social, political, spiritual and economic activities of the society, to cultivate and maintain reading culture and promotion of good literatures.

Onshwakpor, J. E. summed up the need for library services from the perspective of adult education when he observed that, “If adult education is to have a greater share in the molding and building of a happier individual and a better society, the providers of adult education must go beyond their roles as literacy facilitators to a more practical role of providing libraries for sustaining the newly acquired skills of adult learners.

II. Conclusion

It is evident from the above that the different types of libraries play a significant role on different styles in educating the citizenry of a nation. The utility of a library in education can at once be felt and generalized particularly when we look into the educational conditions of the poor. Libraries make available all the relevant books and other materials almost free of cost, and the children of the poor and the rich alike can derive equal amount of advantages out of this free service that helps in pursuing constructive education. Apart from this, the public libraries render a yeoman service in the adult education through extension services and audio-visual aids, viz; story hours, lectures, book exhibitions, displays, book weeks, and motion pictures, newsreels, film strips, music stores, phonorecords, and the like. These aid mass education libraries also strengthen communication and

collaboration between and among the research, business, government and educational communities in the society and contribute to the life long learning opportunities.

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Author's profile

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