
MODERN FACILITIES NECESSARY FOR SCHOOL LIBRARY AND MEDIA CENTRE BUILDING IN NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

The primary goal of effective library design and space planning is that the facility must respond to the needs of its service population, providing a range of learning opportunities for both large and small groups as well as individuals with a focus on intellectual content, information literacy, and the learner. This paper takes a careful look at the notion; School Library and its needed facilities, according to international standards, in making sure that the users' needs are satisfied. The Study used standard of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) as the benchmark for the needed school libraries in Nigeria by proposing a format of school library buildings in Nigeria. It concludes by stating the importance of standard facilities in any school library.

Keywords: School Library, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), Library and Media Centre, Library Facilities. Technologies, Nigerian School Library

BACKGROUND

Library services to schools evolved since the late 1800s from public or state library book carts to formal and informal classroom collections as we know it. The inception of modern library began with a group of librarians led by Melvil Dewey with the creation of the American Library Association (ALA) in 1876 under the American library movement. During the rise of developmental stages, school libraries were primarily made up of small collections with the school librarian playing primarily a clerical role in ensuring that the books are well taken care of, manage the process of book borrowing, take part in collection development of the library (as the case may be) and to keep the library clean. Over the last decade, there has been a significant reposition in understanding, function and character of library media centers in schools. The move was championed by changes in technological advancements, development in educational excellence, user/students' presuppositions/suppositions and what it takes to be ready for higher learning in the information-rich global space as students that aspire to get to the next level of educational expositions like going from primary school to secondary, tertiary and career choice, as the case may be. Today, according to International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions; IFLA (2015), "School libraries around the world, in their many forms, share a common purpose: the enhancement of teaching and learning for all". Thus, as Smith (2002) opined; "School library media centres in the 21st century can, and should be, hubs for increased student achievement and positive focused school reform".

A school library (or a school library media centre is a library within a school where students, staff, and often, parents of a public or private school have access to a variety of resources. The goal of the school library media centre is to ensure that all members of the school community have equitable access "to books and reading, to information, and to information technology." A school library media centre "uses all types of media... is automated, and utilizes the Internet [as well as books] for information gathering." School libraries are distinct from public libraries because they serve as "learner-oriented laboratories which support, extend, and individualize the school's curriculum... A school library serves as the centre and coordinating agency for all material used in the school." IFLA (2015). Therefore, a school library has the primary duties of providing a learning space for students to work independently through the use research materials, computers and other technological equipment available for use in the library. There is also a place for teachers and group collaborative discussions between teachers and students/ group discussions between students. This means that school libraries exist to offer numerous learning opportunities for all class of students and teachers, with a focus on intellectual content and information literacy.

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions; IFLA (2015):

A school library is a school's physical and digital learning space where reading, inquiry, research, thinking, imagination, and creativity are central to students' information-to-knowledge journey and to their personal, social, and cultural growth. This physical and digital place is known by several terms (e.g., school media centre, centre for documentation and information, library resource centre, library learning commons) but school library is the term most commonly used and applied to the facility and functions. Pp 16

The above definitions connote that School libraries are no longer what they used to be. The capacity of what their functions are boundless when compared to the realities of our present global society. The primary stakeholders- the students- are so vast in terms of technological advancement that the library is now playing catch up with them in terms of information

accessibility. In this light, an ideal school librarian functions as the literal map /compass to the resources and materials found within the library and the World Wide Web.

In an ideal setting, school libraries also contain books, films, recorded sound, periodicals and digital media just like public libraries. These items are not only for the education, enjoyment, and entertainment of all members of the school community, but also to enhance and expand the school's curriculum. To make this work, schools need to get their library staff right. The library should be staffed by librarians, teacher-librarians, school library media specialists or media coordinators who hold a specific library science degree or professionally trained as a librarian irrespective of their first/previous discipline. This is to ensure that the school operates a professionally functional library so as to manage and guide the stakeholders in the expected way to help attain the goals of the school. This school librarian performs four leadership main roles according to Smith (2002): teacher, instructional partner, information specialist, and program administrator. In the teacher role especially, the school librarian develops and implements curricula relating to information literacy and inquiry that he compulsorily teaches all students to equip them on importance of information, how to get them. IFLA (2015) also stated that a school library must have:

A qualified school librarian with formal education in school librarianship and classroom teaching that enables the professional expertise required for the complex roles of instruction, reading and literacy development, school library management, collaboration with teaching staff, and engagement with the educational community. pp 17

When a professional librarian is in charge of the school library, he/she is a leader and a teacher grounded in information literacy and technology skills, providing information literacy skills program to students and teachers as a specialist. Without a professional librarian in place, the possibility of running a fully operational library through the utilization of prescribed competencies, various components integrated with student and staff is grossly limited. Even when these operations are available in the absence of a professional, they are ineffectively managed and implemented. A professional librarian is always at the center in the learning process of users and leads the way in building those skills in the users' e.g in the use of technology and electronic resources. He/she is also a program administrator, consistently available to students and staff, hearing their information needs which helps to come up with user-centered collection development in accordance with the curriculum. Sometimes, it also extends to resources that may not be directly part of the curriculum but are sort for by the students and teachers to help improve their knowledge on general basis. All of these promote student and staff learning, thereby improving their capacities. Therefore, it is essential for a specialist to be in charge of a field he is trained so as to help bring out the full potentials of that field to the benefit of everyone in the community; a professional librarian in charge of a school library connotes quality school library media program.

Methodology:

The research examined what is already known about the Nigerian School libraries but additional relevant information was presented to throw more light on the foundational knowledge of the school library building and the needed facilities in Nigeria. This qualified it as an exploratory research, with related secondary data to buttress the positions made.

Significance:

This study is beneficial to owners and managers of primary and secondary schools in Nigeria (private and public schools) and government agencies saddled with the responsibilities of approving or certifying schools. The paper has shown the need for all of the aforementioned stakeholders in education to re-examine their understanding about the place of viable school libraries and its impact in the process of learning.

NIGERIAN SCHOOL LIBRARY BUILDING FACILITIES

In the case of the Nigerian school system, the place of modern school libraries are not practically approached in expected ways. One of the leading growing concerns is the architectural capacity of the school library. Most schools allocate space for the library after building their schools, not allocating a space to build a befitting school library. Usually, this space is micro managed to serve a little fraction of the students and books arranged in shelves. In cases like this, it is clear that amenities like conducive learning and reading spaces, carrels (private lockable study spaces or compartments) for group studies are dashed already. This also means that the expected inviting attractive beauty that is supposed to boost students' need to use the library is strongly limited. This case is a general one, covering the public and private school. Though there are exceptions, these exceptions are also limited in library designs especially. To buttress this, Adeoti-Adeleke (2000) pointed out that school library in Nigeria are categorised with lack of adequate furniture, obsolete library collection, unqualified library personnel, poor funding and apathy on the part of government and school heads towards school library development. The situation of staffing of school libraries in Nigeria also is very poor. Most primary and secondary schools in Nigeria lack trained/professional library personnel, coming from the inability of school managers and owners to employ professional librarians or train their staff to be one. As such school libraries have remained infective appendages to them, amounting to the reason behind the many lacks, ineffective and unattractive libraries which leads to ineffective use of library resources that are made available and subsequently leads to poor performance and failures in external examination. Those saddled with the responsibilities of overseeing these schools have also worsened the issue. Federal, State and Local government ministries/units of education give these schools approvals without citing the universally accepted standards required of an ideal school library. They are mostly concerned with a room/limited hall space with textbooks, story books on the shelves, few reading tables and chairs for the students and a corner where the supposed librarian occupies. The place for creative learning space is hardly a priority as pointed out earlier. The inadequate furniture the libraries is also a core reason to the students' low usage of the library. Even in such tight spaces, they are mostly left with just windows for ventilation; no available or sufficient air-conditions and fans for students and library resources. These assertions are supported respectively by Adeoti-Adeleke (2000) that lack of adequate furniture and other library gadgets such as chairs, shelves tables, fans etc. have limited students' eagerness to use their school libraries, and Akparobore and Akparobore (2020) who stated that sufficient air conditionals are not available in school libraries Nigeria.

There are numerous positions on what is expected of a school library in terms of facilities from different quarters. However, this study dwelt on the position and prerequisites of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions; IFLA, in proffering the standardized international modern school library that Nigerian schools need to draw strong inspiration from in operating viable educational environments. IFLA (2015) states that: 'the physical and digital resources of a school library include facilities, equipment, and collections

of resources for teaching and learning’’. This prompts the need to discuss the facilities that every approved Nigerian school library should have based on the standards of IFLA.

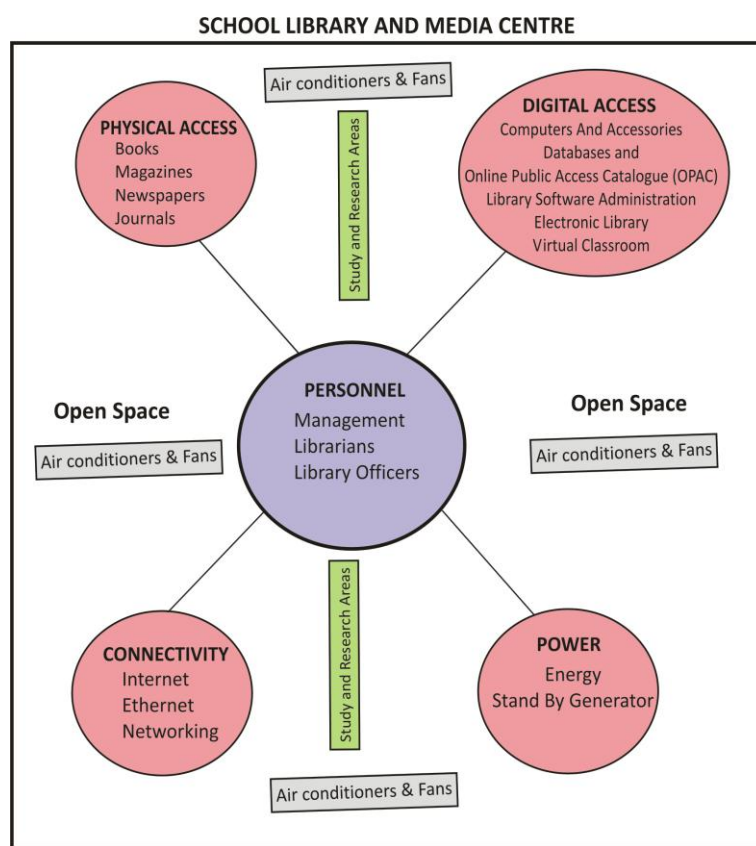
FACILITIES NEEDED FOR SCHOOL LIBRARY AND MEDIA CENTRE BUILDING

School library/media centers are expected to be a foremost point of any school community. The library’s architectural design should be beautiful by creating attractive and inviting space for students, teachers, and every other school community members. This means that it should have well designed structures/amenities that are attractive, inviting, positive effect on usage to affect students learning behaviours as the interactive, individual or group learning that occurs. According to IFLA (2015), the functions and uses of a school library are of primary importance when planning new school buildings and renovating existing ones. The educational role of a school library should be reflected in its facilities. It placed that the following should be placed:

1. Location and space for the Building: There are no universal standards for the size and design of school library facilities, but it is useful to have criteria on which to base planning estimates. In general, libraries are moving from a resource-centred model to a learner-centred model: School and academic libraries are often designed as learning commons. The following considerations need to be included in planning school library facilities:
 - a. Central location, on the ground floor if possible.
 - b. Accessibility and proximity to teaching areas.
 - c. Noise factors, with at least some parts of the library free from external noise.
 - d. Appropriate and sufficient light, natural and/or artificial.
 - e. Appropriate room temperature (e.g., air-conditioning, heating) to ensure good working conditions year round as well as the preservation of the collections.
 - f. Appropriate design for library users with special needs.
 - g. Adequate size to give space for the collection of books, fiction, non-fiction, hardback and paperback, newspapers and magazines, non-print resources and storage, study spaces, reading areas, computer workstations, display areas, and work areas for library staff.
 - h. Flexibility to allow multiplicity of activities and future changes in curriculum and technology.
2. Organization of space: The following functional areas need to be provided:
 - a. Study and research area – space for information desk, catalogues, on-line stations, study and research tables, reference materials and basic collections.
 - b. Informal reading area – space for books and periodicals that encourage literacy, lifelong learning, and reading for pleasure.
 - c. Instructional area – space with seats catering for small groups, large groups and whole classroom formal instruction, with appropriate instructional technology and display space (seating for 10% of the student population is often recommended).
 - d. Media production and group project area – space for individuals, teams and classes (often called ‘labs’ or ‘makerspaces’).

- e. Administrative area – space for circulation desk, office area, space for processing of library media materials, and storage space for equipment, supplies, and materials.
3. Physical and digital access: Physical and digital access to the library should be maximized. With technology, digital access to the information resources of the school library can be provided throughout the school and beyond, 24/7. Where staff resources are limited, supervisory systems that include the use of trained student and adult volunteers should be considered.

Based on the above IFLA specifications, a diagram in a pictorial form is given below to specify the necessary modern facilities needed for school library and media centre building in Nigerian schools:



Going by the above pictorial diagram, the design and layout of a school library should be dictated by function in the sense that the facility must have room for flexibility, enough to meet the growing/changing needs of the users over time. The design must have the capacity and layout to address wide range of eventual program activities for the library. This also means that the library’s look and arrangements may change from time to time, depending on the trend of school libraries at every particular time. This also points to the fact that the size of the school library should not be based solely on the population of school, it should be large enough to contain all essential areas of a comprehensive program expected of a standard school library. Based on the design above, users pattern of use should also be incorporated in the space allotment; e.g group discussions, private individual use, especially for students in graduating class, teachers corners or carrels, multimedia spaces, virtual or digital library space with the technologies to go with it and general conducive spacious space for every user.

All of these is so that the room for renovation and remodelling is made flexible for the school library as time goes on. In a nutshell, a school library in Nigeria can be said to be a standard one if it has the following capacities to meet ever-changing student and unique community needs like:

- Availability of quality and varied information resources
- Availability of new/modern technologies
- Accommodating various learning and teaching styles like library group discussions
- Availability of Information Literacy curricula
- Be open to change; especially in space requirements
- Have administrative area for library staff
- Space for processing of library media materials, and storage space for equipment, supplies, and materials

CONCLUSION

What a school allocates to its library goes a long way in expressing their passion and conviction about their love for learning and knowledge. To attract students to a new library in the digital age, school administrators should not forget the important role of architectural design in creating spaces that are functional and, even more important, inspirational. They should note that libraries, though generally seen as physical buildings, should not be static. Design and facility needs to allow for flexibility, movement, fun in the students quest for discovery. The external world has to be almost seamlessly integrated with the internal spaces and facilities of the library to make it an interesting place to visit and augment their knowledge.

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