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## **EXTENDING LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES TO THE GRASSROOTS AND THE VULNERABLE IN NIGERIA: THE LIBRARY WEEK PERSPECTIVE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Library week is a period set aside for sensitizing the public on the importance of reading, reinvigorating reading habit, and celebrating libraries and the role of librarians and other library workers in transforming the society through effective service delivery. Library and information services are provided by libraries for information, education, research and entertainment needs of people. However, it has been observed that in most developing climes, like Nigeria, the downtrodden like the grassroots and vulnerable are either ignored or not adequately carried along in library scheme of activities. This is so glaring at this point when public libraries in Nigeria are poorly funded, which has profoundly affected the usual services that the grassroots and vulnerable would have benefitted from, such as public library extension services and mobile library services. The paper therefore, advocates that libraries, librarians and library associations through library week can effectively extend library and information services that would impact the lives of the grassroots and vulnerable, as well as improve their decision making capabilities. The paper identified who the grassroots and vulnerable are, enunciated the library services to be extended to them and also discussed the consequences of not extending these services to the grassroots and vulnerable in the society. The study concluded that library week offers opportunities for libraries, librarians and library associations to reach out to the public and interact in such a manner to bring library and information services closer to them, as well as sensitizing them on the need to read and importance of library to their development and growth in all spheres. It is therefore hoped that library week events impact and would continue to positively impact the grassroots and vulnerable. The study also recommended how library and information services can reach and benefit the targeted audience.*

**Keywords:** Library week, Library and information services, Grassroots, Vulnerable, Nigeria

### **Introduction**

Library week is a global event that is celebrated all over the world. It started as national library week and first sponsored by the American Library Association (ALA) in 1958, with a theme: 'wake up and read' (ALA, 2022). Ever since then, each year's library week celebration has been heralded by new theme, reflecting the need to reawaken and stimulate reading culture among the populace. Some of the themes adopted in America by ALA are: 2018, Library leads, 2019, Libraries-strong communities, 2020, Find your place in your library, 2021, Welcome to your library and 2022, Connect with your library. Sometimes, when there is need to re-emphasize a particular theme, it is repeated the next year or for some years consecutively to re-echo



the purpose. Library week was observed and is still being observed as annual event celebrated in April in libraries across the globe and all types of libraries like school, public, national, special and academic libraries participated and are still participating. It is meant to celebrate nation's libraries, librarians and library workers' contributions, promote library use and support effective library and information services in countries of the world.

In Nigeria, library week was initiated by the Nigerian Library Association and approved on 5th February, 2015 at Oshogbo, Osun State, during the Nigerian Library Association Council meeting. Library week having been approved eventually kicked off in 2016 (from 21st-25th November) with a theme: Equitable Education and Lifelong Learning opportunities for Sustainable Development in Nigeria: The Role of Libraries. Since then, it has become an annual ritual. Different themes have been used in Nigeria on annual basis. For the 2021 event 'Library and Information Services for the Grassroots and Vulnerable' was used, while the theme for 2022 is "Revitalizing School Library System in Nigeria: The Way Forward". With the 2021 Nigeria Library Week themed 'Library and Information Services for the Grassroots and Vulnerable', this paper dissects the key variables and bringing into perspective the functional definitions of the key variables, which basically involve the following: library, library week, grassroots and vulnerable, library and information services, and consequences of not extending library services to the grassroots and vulnerable.

Thus, the specific objectives of the paper are to:

1. define what a library is;
2. conceptualize library week, origin, aim and developmental strides;
3. clarify what grassroots mean;
4. find out what vulnerable stands for and who the vulnerable are;
5. identify the library and information services that can be extended to the grassroots and vulnerable and how; and
6. enunciate the consequences of not extending library and information services to these identified groups.

All these specific objectives shall be related to the role of library in transformation of the society, bearing in mind what library, through library week events, can offer the ordinary man and those that may not be opportune to effectively use the library for one reason or the other.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

#### *Library*

Library can be defined as an organized collection of information resources like books, journals, magazines, newspapers, audio-visuals, among others in print and electronic formats, meant for reading, studying, consultation, reference, research, information, with a professionally trained librarian and other staff readily available to assist users to make effective use of such information resources for their varied needs. It can also be defined as an organized collection of books and other information resources kept for information, reading, studying and research purposes. Libraries and education are noted to be two inseparable twins (Siamese) and indivisible concepts that share a symbiotic relationship (Akidi, 2015). It is important to note that the advent



of information and communication technology (ICT) and the outbreak of some natural occurrences like the COVID-19 pandemic, Ebola, among others, has made libraries to retool and reinvent themselves to the extent that whether people visit the library in person or virtually, libraries offer endless opportunities to transform lives through information, education and lifelong learning.

Libraries are broadly categorized according to their target audience, purpose, as well as the nature of information resources stocked. The major types involve the following:

1. School libraries, found in primary and secondary schools.
2. Public libraries, found in states with branches at local government areas.
3. National libraries, noted as the apex library of the nation with branches in all the states of the federation.
4. Special libraries, found in research institutions and other organisations.
5. Academic libraries, found in universities, colleges of education and polytechnics.
6. Libraries can also be categorized as physical, digital/electronic, virtual and hybrid libraries.

#### *Library Week*

Library week is an event specifically observed to highlight the essential roles libraries, librarians, and library workers play in transforming lives and strengthening communities. ALA (2022) stated that library week is a national observance first sponsored in 1958 by the American Library Association (ALA) and libraries across the country each April to celebrate the contributions of nation's libraries and librarians as well as promote library use and support. It started as a weeklong event developed with the intent to motivate people to read, promote library use, as well as support and show appreciation to their local libraries.

Library week took its root from the discovery that Americans were no longer reading but glued to their radios, televisions and musical instruments, with little or no attention paid to reading of books. The scenario became worrisome and of great concern to the stakeholders in book-trade like librarians, writers, publishers and bookshop owners, among others. This necessitated the founding of National Book Committee, a non-governmental organization in 1954 by the American Library Association in collaboration with the American Publishers Association, charged with the responsibility of ``encouraging people to read in their increasing leisure time`` (National Day Calendar (2022), among other acclaimed `ambitious` goals.

In carrying out the given mandate, ALA (2022) averred that the National Book Committee developed a plan action in 1957, with an idea of annual national library week that is aimed at arousing reading interest in people. This is owing to the belief that arousing reading interest in people will invariably encourage buying books, reading books as well as using libraries. It would also make publishing industries to thrive and writing interest become commercially rewarding and more profitable. The national library week commenced in 1958 with a theme "Wake up and read", which was a clarion call on Americans to fall in love with reading again and to discard all distractions. The theme was repeated in 1959 to lay more emphasis on the need to stimulate reading interest in Americans. Afterwards, each year carries a new theme till date and the month of the celebration is usually April, with different dates as chosen by ALA.



However, themes are repeated when necessary and to buttress the importance attached to such theme, as found in eight themes repeated at different periods as follow:

1. 1958 and 1959- Wake up and read
2. 1968 and 1969 - Be all you can be ... read
3. 1993-1996 - Libraries change lives
4. 1997 and 1998 - Kids connect at the library
5. 2001-2003 - At the library
6. 2004 and 2005 - Something for everyone at your library
7. 1999 and 2000 - Read! Learn! Connect! at the library
8. 2016 and 2017 – Libraries transform (ALA, 2022).

Outside the above years that library week themes were repeated, other years from 1960 to date were given unique themes to reflect the need of the time concerning campaigning for lifelong reading and learning, importance of library to individual and societal development and also promotion of library use and support. Furthermore, different countries have the mandate to develop their themes and engage their library associations, libraries and librarians in celebration of the library week event. Ahiauzu (2022) stated that it is important to note that after 20 years of successful library week celebration organised by the national book committee, and having delivered on the mandate, ALA disbanded the committee in 1974 and not only sponsored but took up the sole responsibility of organizing national library week. The author emphasized that ALA decides on themes and dates for each year's event ahead of time to enable donor agencies, institutions and individuals who would love to support the library week activities to prepare ahead and equally include such support in their annual budgets.

The themes of the last five years of American national library week, starting from 2018 to 2022 are the following: 2018, Libraries lead; 2019, Libraries-strong communities; 2020, Find your place at the library, 2021, Welcome to your library and 2022, Connect with your library. This year's National Library Week "Connect with Your Library," according to Shannon (2022) promotes the impression that libraries are places to get connected to technology by using broadband, computers, and other resources. The theme also emphasizes that libraries offer opportunities to connect with media, programs, ideas and classes, in addition to books. Most importantly, libraries also connect communities to each other, which is a clarion call for communities to get involved, join, visit or advocate for their local libraries. The slated date for the event in April is 3rd - 9th.

From the Nigeria perspective, it can be noted that though readership promotion campaign was initiated by the National Library of Nigeria and commenced since 1982, library week was initiated by the Nigerian Library Association and approved on 5th February, 2015 at Oshogbo, Osun State, during the Nigerian Library Association Council meeting. Library week having been approved eventually kicked off in 2016 (from 21st-25th November) with a theme: Equitable Education and Lifelong Learning opportunities for Sustainable Development in Nigeria: The Role of Libraries. Since then, it has become an annual ritual celebrated by all the state chapters of the Nigerian Library Association and all libraries in the nation and the Nigerian Library Association is saddled with the responsibility of crafting the theme for each year event. The theme for 2017 was Information literacy for sustainable development in Nigeria, 2018, Libraries



and social media as catalyst for national unity and security, 2019, Library services for sustainable development in Nigeria, 2021, Library and information services for the grassroots and vulnerable, and 2022, Revitalizing school library system in Nigeria: the way forward.

Ahiauзу (2022) pointed that the celebration of week in Nigeria, aims at encouraging the general public to read books; have books in the homes, provide books to their children outside recommended texts in schools; and appreciate libraries, librarians and the work they do. In the same vein, state governments are encouraged to set up community libraries and fund the existing public libraries, as they are the only avenues for the vulnerable and grassroots to access information resources and also find conducive reading spaces. Activities of library week in Nigeria include but not limited to the following:

1. Visitation to schools, hospitals, motherless baby's homes and correctional centres and discussing on reading habit as well as presenting book gifts, shelves and computers, among other library items
2. Visitation to hospitals to provide reading materials to the sick, and also to hospital antenatal and maternity wards to sensitize pregnant women the need to read to unborn children.
3. Visiting homes for the handicapped and elderly and providing them with reading materials
4. Building or donating buildings for establishment of public, national library branches or community libraries
5. Drawing the attention of government to the importance of libraries by visiting government functionaries and discussing library matters
6. Radio and television programmes aimed at sensitizing the public on reading, reading habit and importance of library to individual and societal development
7. Debates, quiz, round table discussions (colloquium) and presenting papers on the theme of the year.
8. Rally to different places in the state and communities. Such places include schools, markets, parks, along the streets and public institutions to educate the citizenry on inestimable role of libraries.
9. National Day Calendar (2022) added that library week activities among others, include librarians volunteering at libraries, visiting their local libraries, supporting library fundraisers and attending library events. Shannon (2022) also maintained that part of the activities in library week celebration involve visiting library, uniting against book ban and participating in library promotion in the social media. Among all the activities carried out during library week event, book donations feature most.

In addition to the above mentioned activities, extending library and information services to the grassroots and vulnerable, which is the focus of this paper is fundamental.

### **Grassroots**

The word 'grassroots' means ordinary people in a society or organisation, the very foundation or source, the basic level of society. It can also be referred to as the public, the ordinary man, common, mass/masses, among others. Dictionary.com defines grassroots as 'the common, ordinary people, especially as contrasted with the





leadership or elites of a political party, social organization, etc" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021). Library and information services packaged in different formats are available and should be extended to this category of people, capable of getting them informed, educated and entertained to become useful members of the society and contribute to the economic, social and developmental well-being of the nation. Libraries offer information and information resources that can curb youth restiveness, cultism, banditry, kidnapping and other vices that are threats to societal peace and progress by positively engaging the youth and taking their minds away from crimes and all forms of terrorism.

Kennedy (2022) opined that for truly sustainable grassroots programs at the local level to succeed, there must be a reflection of the community's real needs and values. This means that libraries must tailor their information services towards the actual needs of the grassroots and vulnerable groups. The programs offered by libraries must embrace community information needs, values and knowledge in solving local problems. In providing library and information services for grassroots development, capacity building is fundamental as it promotes inclusiveness and resilience, which offer opportunities for communities to address their local issues and balance competing interests.

Thus, instead of librarians extending library and information services to a community and then leaving, they should incorporate building the capacity of the grassroots and vulnerable to enable them go on to solve problems into the future. Grassroots development therefore, combines participatory approaches and local capacity building to empower the grassroots and vulnerable to develop as a reflection of their own needs and values. By so doing, grassroots development can help communities lead happy, informed, healthy and prosperous lives. With library and information services tailored towards the needs of the grassroots and vulnerable, the society becomes a better place as the children, youth, young adults, and even the elderly would be gainfully engaged as access to information and information resources is guaranteed.

### **Vulnerable**

The word vulnerable refers to people belonging to a group within the society that is oppressed, marginalized group, or more disposed to harm, as well as those in predominantly dangerous positions and as a result are less capable of defending themselves. Vulnerable population encompasses "groups and communities at higher risk of poor health status and healthcare access, experience significant disparity in life as a result of the disparities or barriers they face in social, economic, political and environmental resources, as well as limitations due to illness or disability" (National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health (NCCDH), 2022). Vulnerable according to Rukmana (2014) are individuals who are at greater risk of poor physical, social and health status, among others. Such group equally lack access to information and education. People are considered vulnerable because of disparity in physical, social, information, education, economic and health status when compared with the dominant population. They have the tendency to contract diseases or illnesses and are equally less able to anticipate, cope with, resist or recover from impacts of hazards or disasters. The minors, youth, young adults, aged, pregnant women, handicapped and others who are at higher risk of harm than others belong to this populace.



Vulnerable equally refers to being predisposed to diseases or infection, security risk, drug abuse, dropping out of school and capable of being emotionally or physically injured.

They equally have the tendency to be misinformed or disinformed. Thus, the vulnerable are also those exposed to fake news and misinformation because they cannot easily access the library owing to non-availability of library and its services in their areas or are handicapped in one way or the other, which makes access to information difficult. Those exposed to hunger are also vulnerable because they cannot even afford to eat well to talk of buying books or engaging in educational pursuits. The library being poor man's university (particularly public or community libraries) is meant for such people.

Other vulnerable are motherless babies, prisoners, patients hospitalized, village women who do not have access to information of various kinds in health, agriculture, birth control, disease control, among others. Students, who may not have access to information resources or are misinformed by their peers or through social media platforms being filled with fake news, are not exempted too. All these categories of people need different kinds of information resources to rescue them from such vulnerability and library has the potential to extend library services and resources to such group. Newspapers, magazines, books on health and well-being, love and life, security, disease control, and other informative and educational texts can liberate such individuals and transform their lives. Thus, library and information services must be extended to the grassroots and vulnerable for personal development, and also the benefit of the society in general.

Library and Information Services to be Extended to the Grassroots and Vulnerable  
Library and information services are opportunities offered by the library to inform, educate, enlighten, and entertain library users. They are services provided to ensure that books and other information resources are maximally used for the academic achievement, research, information, personal development and entertainment needs of the actual and potential users of the library and information centres in the communities. Library week is an opportunity to extend library and information services to the grassroots and vulnerable of the society, who can be seen as the downtrodden.

As library week is an annual event organized to sensitize the public on the role of libraries and also to stimulate or reinvigorate reading habit among the populace, libraries, librarians and library associations in Nigeria should leverage on this annual ritual and form a synergy to address the challenges of education inequality as well as digital divide to help the grassroots and vulnerable by extending sustainable library services to these important groups of the society. This they, can achieve, by providing quality educational opportunities for children and young adults in Nigeria through open access libraries with carefully crafted book collections and holistic educational, cultural and community programmes as piloted in Zambia (Lubuto Public Library Project, 2015). Taking a clue from Lubuto public library project, public and community libraries that are free and open to the public should be established.

*Reviving Public Libraries in Nigeria:* Public libraries and their branches in the various states of the federation should be revived and their services extended to the grassroots and vulnerable of the society. The Public libraries should be designed for children and specifically target children excluded from formal education, including youth living on streets as well as children in extreme and desperate poverty. Nigeria has a lot



of children and youth that are in the above state like the almagiris, homeless children, those that hawk wares on the highways and streets of towns, beggars and school drop-outs, among others. Thus, library and information services should be tailored around these groups to curb some of the menaces threatening Nigeria today like kidnapping, banditry, armed robbery, internet fraud, etc, as any child or youth gainfully engaged will hardly think of crimes. Librarians should help to catch them young through extending effective library and information services to them. Essentially, in providing library and information services to the grassroots and vulnerable, the primary thing to do is reviving public libraries and their branches. Thus, public library services in such states or local government areas must be made more functional to be able to serve its useful purposes to the people.

*Establishing and Sustaining Community Libraries in Nigeria:* Establishing and sustaining community libraries in various communities of Nigeria is a sure way of extending library and information services to the grassroots and vulnerable, as it will bring the services closer to the people. In doing this, dedicated professional librarians, and library associations in Nigeria should form partnership and work diligently to provide functional community libraries, provide comprehensive and relevant book collections and ensure that such community libraries serve as educational, informational, cultural and social hubs for young people and even the old.

As a social responsibility, the host of the community libraries can be made responsible for providing staff and managing the libraries, while Nigerian library associations take the responsibility of training staff and providing professional development guidance and assistance. Furthermore, staff and volunteers can be librarians from such local communities, working or residing around such areas or those who have benefitted from library services and have come to give back to the children or young adults using the library today.

*Encouraging Availability of Functional School Libraries:* Librarians, libraries and library associations in Nigeria should leverage on library week event to encourage and support establishment and sustenance of functional school libraries in primary and secondary school education in the nation. Such school libraries should be regularly visited during library week events and beyond, to ensure that adequate resources are provided to cater for the information needs of the users. Librarians and library associations in Nigeria should see school libraries as a pet project and maintain regular donation of books and other resources to take care of the curricula as well as leisure reading. Furthermore, librarians should volunteer to serve in school libraries and also train library assistants that are serving in such libraries rather than leaving the school libraries in the hands of English language teachers and library prefects. The need to encourage availability of functional school libraries has been captured in the 2022 theme, which is "revitalizing school library system in Nigeria: the way forward".

*Visiting Schools and Other Important Places in Rural Communities:* Interestingly, library week activities entail visiting schools. The Nigerian Voice (2019) stated that the Anambra State Library board weeklong activities for the 2019 library week event featured activities that ranged from sensitization of the public on the importance of library to visitation of various institutions and strategic places. The sensitization program also involve rally to important places, like schools, parks, markets, streets and public institutions. It is therefore vital to emphasize that activities of library week event should consider schools in remote areas to identify their problems and know their areas of need. This is because it has been observed that many librarians normally





concentrate their library week activities on urban areas at the detriment of the rural dwellers.

***Establishing Reading/Book Clubs in Schools and Rural Communities:*** Establishing reading /book clubs in schools and rural communities will positively impact the grassroots and vulnerable. This is sequel to understanding that reading, according to Amarteifio (2019) is very critical to every child's education and overall development, as well as the conduit to high performance and success in school. Early childhood reading habit develops in the child an impressive capacity for imagination, critical thinking and a precursor to creativity and innovation. A book club is defined by Chikezie (2018) as consisting of a group of people who come together to discuss and share knowledge on books they have read and express their opinion about the books with the aim of learning and promoting reading culture among people. As custodians and gateway to knowledge, librarians, libraries n and library associations in Nigeria should as a matter of urgency, form reading/book clubs in schools and rural communities to help the grassroots and vulnerable develop reading culture and become passionate lifelong readers.

The Nigerian Library Association in collaboration with librarians and the managers of public, community and school libraries should build story-time, drama and mentoring into their programme of activities to reinforce the educational, emotional, social and informational development and transformation of the children and young adults in the local communities.

1. ***Story Time:*** The community libraries established shall engage in story time event as one of its core mandates. This is because story telling both in English language and local languages is a traditional method of early childhood education and equally draws people to their culture. During the story time, reading and read-aloud sessions are included, which are essential components of literacy development skills in children. According to Luputo Library Project (2015), storytelling is a traditional means of transmitting values to generations and directly connecting young people to their roots and society. The stakeholders and partners required in ensuring the success of this story time programme are the community library staff, members of library association, librarians, volunteers and teachers within the community.
2. ***Drama:*** Drama is another kind of services provided by libraries. Public, School and community libraries can develop performing arts groups that can adapt important books and stories for performance so as to draw more readership as well as illuminate understanding of such books. This is another major way of imbibing values in children and youth of the grassroots and vulnerable.
3. ***Mentoring:*** Mentoring is a service that addresses the psychosocial support and life skills training needs of the grassroots and vulnerable by teaching them values and offering guidance and counseling in various areas of life. Nigerian Library Associations, librarians and managers of public and community libraries can engage the services of professionals in various fields of knowledge to visit the established community libraries and speak to the library users, especially the children and youth. Librarians are also seen as role models and are equally well positioned to mentor community library users.
4. ***Inculcating Information Literacy Skills:*** The grassroots and vulnerable require the consciousness of knowing when to seek information, competencies to identify, find



and locate the needed information, ability to evaluate information and use the information effectively for solving their problems in education, information, economic matters, health, political and other social needs for efficient decision making. The library and librarians have the capacity to inculcate these skills to help them actualize healthy and fulfilling lives.

5. *Provision of ICT Facilities:* Library associations, institutions and librarians can leverage on library week event to assist in extending ICT facilities to community and public libraries, making such libraries a hub of information in the communities where they are located. Through advocacy, ICT facilities like laptops, desktop computers, palmtops, iPods, etc can be provided in partnership with the relevant ministries and agencies like TETFund, Nigerian Communications Commission and Ministry of Science and Technology, National Information Technology Development Agency, among others that may be willing to provide such community services as social responsibility. This gesture will help in bridging the digital gap existing between the children in the townships and those in remote areas.
6. *Reviving Mobile Library Services:* Mobile library services are services that take library and information services to the users in all nooks and crannies of the society. It is intended to make library and information services easily and readily available to the grassroots and vulnerable. Unfortunately, public libraries in Nigeria are not adequately funded, making mobile library services moribund. Reviving mobile library services in Nigerian public libraries is a welcome development that will be a succor to the grassroots and vulnerable as all the nooks and crannies of the society where either public or community libraries have not reached will be served with their information needs through mobile library services.
7. *Developing Entrepreneurial Skills in the Grassroots and Vulnerable:* Libraries, librarians and library associations can organize programmes that would help the grassroots and vulnerable to gain entrepreneurial skills for better living and also become employers of labour.
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8. *Reviving Library Extension Services:* It has always been the pride of public libraries to extend their services to those that for one reason or the other may not be able to visit the library for their information needs. Extension services are provided to prisoners and other detained inmates in correctional centres, patients in hospitals, handicapped, rural dwellers, among others. It is quite disheartening that this essential service of public libraries is dysfunctional owing to paucity of funds. Thus, the Nigerian library associations, library institutions, librarians and volunteers should help to revive this all important service through lobbying and advocacy. When library extension services are revived, the grassroots and vulnerable will benefit from such services as library and information services will be extended to them at the comfort of their homes or village squares to enable access to information resources of their interests.



### **Consequences of not Extending Library and Information Services Opportunities to the Grassroots and Vulnerable**

The consequences of not extending library and information services opportunities to the grassroots and vulnerable are numerous, which include but not limited to the following:

1. *Persistent Poor Reading Culture:* Persistent poor reading culture is one of the consequences of ignoring the grassroots and vulnerable in library and information services provision. This is because the grassroots and vulnerable takes the greater percentage of the total population of Nigeria and already the state of the nation's reading culture has been consistently bemoaned as being too poor. The reading culture of Nigerians and particularly the youth has been noted to be persistently poor to the extent that even the literates have turned to alliterates, as they have equally stopped reading, which could be attributed to many economic and social distractions. People's love for reading has been eroded as they are more interested in watching television, and fiddling with their handheld devices (frivolous pinging, chatting and watching programmes/sites that are not healthy, educative and informative).
2. *Resorting to Crimes and other Societal Menace:* As it is always said that an idle mind is a devil's workshop, children and youth among the grassroots and vulnerable that are not gainfully engaged can easily resort to crimes and other societal menaces. Thus, there is need for libraries to fill the vacuum by extending effective library and information services that will transform the youth through books and other engagements that have the capacity to take their minds away from crimes.
3. *Becoming Susceptible to Fake News, Disinformation and Misinformation:* It has been noted that incessant posting of fake news, misinformation and disinformation in the various social media platforms has made the youth, young adults and even the aged vulnerable, as they do not have alternative, which the library gives. People can be better informed by reading books, and other information resources, which the library provided, in addition to other media like listening to the radio and watching television on health matters. This is because when people are not well informed, they will be deformed as well as remain vulnerable. However, it is unfortunate that some of the grassroots and vulnerable may not have radio and television, making it imperative that library services on health and healthy living are extended to such group.
4. *Making Life Challenging Health Decisions:* It has been noted that when teenagers and young adults are not exposed to adequate health information, they become susceptible to making life challenging health decisions that will affect their progress in life. Health information is required in the areas of sex education, menstrual hygiene, puberty, drug use and abuse, which are all damaging to the teenagers' life and career. Health and healthy living information can be obtained through books, newspapers and magazines, journals, which are all found in libraries. Others involve social media sites when not abused, listening to radio, watching television, healthy conversation with friends and colleagues that are well informed and sincere, Internet as well as interaction with medical personnel. When the grassroots and vulnerable are not provided with information on healthy living, they tend to make wrong decisions in life changing health matters



5. *Non-availability of Reading Materials:* Non-availability of reading materials to the grassroots and vulnerable is a great consequence. This is because lack of libraries and information centres or even mobile library services or public library extension services, which are more avenues for providing services to these groups, make it difficult for even people that are willing and interested in reading to have access to information resources they need at the right time and in right quality and quantity. This consequently leads to poor performance of students in those areas, as well as being misinformed or disinformed by peers and even social media platforms.
6. *Non-Accessibility to Timely Security Information:* Today, the World at large is bedeviled with security challenges requiring everyone to be security conscious. One can only be security conscious if well informed and updated regularly with current security situations within the immediate environment to avoid falling victim of any security threat by being at the right place at the wrong time or wrong place at the right time. The library offers this information through newspapers as well as internet services. While other stakeholders like the print and broadcasting media offer information services too. One can also be informed through social media platforms, which must be verified to avoid misinformation and disinformation, as well as panic provocation.
7. *Inadequacy of Safety Information:* Close to the above consequence is not having adequate safety information in the areas of road safety, safety at home, safety at school, as well as safety at work. When the grassroots and vulnerable do not read to acquaint themselves with safety information and equally do not listen to radio, television, reading labels and equally listening at assembly grounds where safety tips are given to students, they tend to expose themselves to avoidable hazards. A case in point is the hazard of pouring kerosene when lantern or stove is on or pouring fuel into generating set tank when the generator is on, as well as answering calls in the kitchen while cooking with gas. These and many more health hazards have sent many people to their untimely grave, which could have been avoided by providing information services to people through public and community libraries and other enlightenment programmes the librarians can extend to the grassroots and vulnerable.
8. *Inadequate Information On Climate Change:* This has resulted in incessant bush burning, improper disposal of waste, indiscriminate disposal of plastics waste instead of recycling them and not maintaining environmental cleanliness as a result of not being informed of the consequences. Libraries can provide information on climate change and all its resultant effects through its services to the grassroots and vulnerable and avert or curtail the consequences of loss of lives or environmental degradation.

### **Conclusion**

Library week being a period set aside to celebrate libraries, librarians and other library workers' contributions and promote library use and support to effective library service delivery, is a global event that offers the librarians the opportunity to reach out to the public and interact in such a manner to bring library and information services to people instead of waiting for such people to visit the library. The year 2021 theme is apt as it has taken the library and information professionals out of their comfort zones to spread good news about their cherished profession. It is hoped that the effort will yield the desired results of bringing back the users to the library to tap the hidden treasures



found in library and its services, especially for the grassroots and vulnerable and thus transform them for effective decision making and for societal growth and development.

### **Recommendations**

Globally, the benefits of library week right from inception are quite enormous and therefore cannot be over-emphasized. It is an event that libraries all over the world look forward to celebrating, Nigeria inclusive. It is therefore recommended that for the impact of library week to be felt by the grassroots and vulnerable in Nigeria, as a developing country, the following recommendations are necessary:

1. Nigerian library associations like the NLA and all sections and chapters must live up to the expectations of effective library services by volunteering in their communities, states and environments to promote library use and support the extension of library and information services to the grassroots and vulnerable.
2. Lobbying and advocacy for recognition of Library and Information Science profession, library and the role it plays in societal development and transformation should be spearheaded by library associations, institutions and librarians. This will attract government interest in library matters.
3. Librarians should lobby for better funding of libraries in Nigeria. As the major challenge of libraries in Nigeria, especially public libraries is inadequate funding, the clarion call is for librarians and their associations to lobby and advocate for better funding and maintenance of Nigerian public libraries, which are acclaimed as poor man's university. When public and community libraries are adequately taken care of and made functional in our various states and communities, the grassroots and vulnerable will definitely be able to access information with ease and improve their lives and decision making capabilities.
4. Library associations and librarians should engage in book donations to public and community libraries to ensure adequate book collections in the libraries. This will equally help to revive and sustain mobile library services and extension services of Nigerian public libraries.
5. The librarians can attract book donations, library equipment procurement, ICT facilities and volunteer library services to the grassroots and vulnerable. For those in hospitals and correctional homes, books that have therapeutic and reformative effects can be made available to them during library weeks and other programmes.
6. As many public libraries in Nigeria are not functioning effectively, the Nigerian Library Association, its chapters and sections and librarians are encouraged to champion the course of these libraries through lobbying and advocacy to draw the attention of state governments to the need for reviving public libraries in Nigeria.
7. Librarians should see the need to establish community libraries in various communities so as to draw library services to the users and also be responsible for periodic monitoring and supervision of the libraries and their activities to ensure that the purpose of establishing them is achieved. Librarians can also spot out philanthropists and good-spirited individuals in communities that can help financially in establishing community libraries in their communities. Such individuals can volunteer to build libraries or provide space where such community libraries can be established or take off temporarily or donate some library equipment, furniture and information resources.





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## AUTHOR'S PROFILE



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