

Chapter 18

New Approaches to Rural Library Management in Nigeria: A Holistic Approach to Sustainable Development

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores new approaches to rural library management as a holistic approach to sustainable development in Nigeria. The aim is to search through existing works of literature and new approaches and opportunities for holistic sustainable development for rural libraries. This research depends on secondary sources including existing literature and documentary research, featuring a critical analysis of relevant documents relating to rural librarianship and management in Nigeria. The central focus is the management of readers, resources, and staff.

INTRODUCTION

Rural library management for Sustainable Development aims to develop capabilities that enable and empower societies to build from the ground up. It is fast becoming a trending topic when it comes to the growth and expansion of library administration towards sustainable development. The discipline of librarianship culminates to make an impact in every sphere of society. Thus, rural librarianship is not left out. The impact of rural librarianship is felt not only in education and literacy but in a holistic view which includes social, economic, cultural and environmental impact.

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In time past, the concept of rural management was not heard much but with every society striving towards achieving a sustainable society, it cannot be overlooked anymore. This is because rural librarianship offers society the opportunity to build from the scratch. The Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship and the American Library Association (ALA) defines rural libraries as libraries that provide services for less than 25,000 residents. Other researchers (Swan, Grimes & Owen, 2013) view rural libraries as libraries holding a population of less than twenty-five thousand in the legal service area. With a slightly different view, the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) defines rural libraries as the libraries usually found and located in communities with 10,000 residents or less (Samsuddin, Shaffril, & Fauzi 2020).

New approaches to rural library management as a means of a holistic approach to sustainable development are all-encompassing and majorly relate to the aspect of public librarianship and everything it represents (Abu, Grace & Carroll, 2011; Iwe, 2003; Obiozor-Ekeze, 2015). Thus, there is interdependency between rural and public libraries.

All players and actors in the society should consider it their responsibility to advance sustainable development through rural library management, although the emphasis is placed on the library and information professionals to do so. Thus, rural library management is a term that refers to every process involved in the establishment and running of a rural library which includes planning, coordinating, and controlling (NIOS, 2012; Tutorials point, 2016). Effective management of rural libraries can lead up to sustainable development.

This book chapter represents rural library management for sustainable development as a holistic and transformational aspect that addresses different spheres of society as well as technology. It discusses the state of the art in rural library management; challenges of rural library management; and current developments in rural library management. It also describes the competencies or capacity to be built by rural libraries and information professionals to facilitate this process and the roles of technology in sustainable development.

State of the Art of Rural Library Management

In discussing the state of the art from previous literature, the different authors and researchers seek to give an explorative view of rural library management from a global perspective (Real, 2018; Abu, Grace & Carroll, 2011) and the Nigerian perspective (Nwokocha & Chimah, 2016).

The concept of the rural library is more than just shelves of books but a means to offer an ever transformative culture to the rural community. Globally, in both developed and developing countries, rural libraries have the mission to provide patrons with equal opportunity of access to resources and to provide that access for continuous development of knowledge, personal skills, civic skills and lifelong learning (Aabo 2005; Yan & Agnes 2009).

In America, the rural library is highly managed and it fosters socio-economic and sustainable development. Rural libraries serve approximately 30 million Americans, helping their communities solve incessant challenges with broadband access, early learning, workforce development, and access to reliable information (Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), 2018). Almost four out of ten of America's public libraries are located in rural communities.

In the United Kingdom, Omona (2020) noted that most of the focus of the rural libraries is geared toward fulfilling the themes of sustainable development. Strategic approaches are put in place to deliver effective transformation in the rural communities through effective and adequate innovative management.

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