

Chapter 15

Library Contributions to Achievement of Namibia Vision 2030

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ABSTRACT

Namibia's Vision 2030 aspires for a knowledge-based economy supported by quality education and training systems, which in turn will provide a good quality of life for its citizens. It is a good quality of life supported by access to information in issues related to health, education, agriculture, political, and other social economic issues. The vision is driven by access to information and communication technologies (ICTs). Libraries are well placed throughout the country to train citizens in information and computer literacy, provide developmental information, and access to ICTs. Based on a review of literature, the chapter covers the types of libraries in Namibia, the legal and regulatory framework for library services, the efforts to equip libraries with ICTs infrastructure and skills, the library services, challenges encountered in service provision, and some solutions and areas for further research. Recommendations on enhancing the contribution the libraries can make in the achievement of Vision 2030 include: development of sustainability and maintenance plans.

INTRODUCTION

Libraries play an important role in social, political, and economic development. To play this role effectively, libraries have to be innovative and provide up-to-date services in line with the latest developments in their communities. This is what Mchombu (2015, p.14) refers to as “developmental librarianship”. International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) (2015, p. 2) concurs stating that

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“the growth of libraries in an evolving information and cultural environment is essential, as they are key stakeholders providing access to information, education, research, and social participation”. Libraries empower citizens in their quest for growth and development, by not only providing information but also information literacy and the necessary tools to access the information (Eniekebi, 2018). Over the years libraries have come up with strategies to position themselves in the participation towards the achievement of national development plans and meeting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (IFLA, 2015).

The use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) enables libraries to provide services to a wider catchment area with minimum delays (Barretto & Dessai, 2021). Web 2.0 and Web 3.0, with their variety of social media tools such as wikis, blogs; cloud computing; the internet of things; block-chain; and artificial intelligence, have presented libraries with endless possibilities for providing the right information, to the right user, at the right time.

Although libraries have embraced their role in national development and the great potential ICTs provide in the delivery of information services, they have to contend with several challenges. Some of the challenges summarized by LISBDNETWORK (2022) include the following:

- Users are overwhelmed by the huge amount of information and failure by some to use the web efficiently;
- Inadequate financial resources to maintain and upgrade the equipment and software; pay for internet connections, software licenses, access to electronic journals subscriptions, and online databases; and
- Failure to carry out the preservation of digital information resources results in some of the information being stored in formats or media that cannot be accessed or read.

In this chapter, the authors discuss the issues raised above through a Namibian case study. The purpose of the chapter is to examine the role libraries in Namibia are expected to play towards the achievement of Namibia Vision 2030. The objectives are to:

- Explain perceptions on the role libraries are expected to play towards the achievement of Namibia Vision 2030;
- Describe the library environment in Namibia;
- Explain the efforts which have been made to equip libraries with ICTs infrastructure and skills;
- Discuss the services which have been provided by libraries towards the realization of Vision 2030; and
- Highlight challenges and possible solutions to enhance libraries' contribution to Vision 2030.

Through a review of literature, mostly Namibian studies, the chapter highlights some of the library services and concludes on the extent to which libraries have been equipped to play their vital role in a knowledge-based economy. The authors provide some recommendations on how some of the challenges could be addressed, as well as suggestions on future research directions.

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