

LIBRARIES INFORMATION AND  
SOCIETY



ANABA A. ALEMNA

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## INTRODUCTION

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Dean of the Faculty of Social Studies, invited guests, Ladies and Gentlemen. I am standing here today, not only as the first Ghanaian Professor of Library Science produced in this country; and the first Professor from the Department of Library and Archival Studies to give an Inaugural Lecture; but also the only Professor presently from the Upper East Region of Ghana. To God be the glory for bringing me this far in such a short period of my academic life. Perhaps this is the moment for me to pay tribute to two very eminent professors, formerly in this University, who have had a great influence on my career. These are Professor F. Johnson and the late Professor S.I.A. Kotei. These were men of great intellect, indomitable courage and professional excellence. I salute these two bibliothecal giants, they are great thinkers.

## THE CONCEPT OF LIBRARIES

For centuries, libraries have served as repositories of information and knowledge that have provided the vital underpinnings for socio-economic, political and cultural development in any civilization. Their relationship with cultural progress has been so interdependent that it is needless to argue whether man's cultural advancement merely produces libraries as by-product.<sup>1</sup> We may, however, safely assume that the emergence of the library was a direct response to the accumulated body of recorded experience that has exceeded the retentive capacity of the human memory.

We may therefore define libraries as collections of records

of human culture in diverse formats and languages, preserved, organized and interpreted to meet broad and varying needs of individuals for information, knowledge, recreation and aesthetic enjoyment. They arose out of the social necessity to provide information, whether in the raw form of empirical data or in the highly processed form we call "knowledge", which is critical to the nation's well-being and security.

Professor C. C. Aguolu<sup>2</sup> once observed that the librarian is entrusted with the distinctive cultural and social responsibility of having to select from the universe of rapidly proliferating records, growing at an exponential rate those that may be needed by his actual and potential user; to acquire and preserve them for future use; to organize them by introducing effective access devices; to interpret their contents through personalized services, and to disseminate information stored in these records. Libraries would be useless if they were mere storage systems.

The librarian deals with two types of books: the *physical* and *intellectual* book. If he is concerned only with the *physical* book, oblivious of its content and societal use, as it is very erroneously believed, he is just a custodian, as keepers of all physical objects are custodians. He/she could be regarded as a storekeeper in the parcel room of culture, dedicated to receiving the priceless packages entrusted to him by the past and redelivering them to the future.

But this should not be the case. The librarian is primarily concerned with the *intellectual* book, which embodies the cherished experiences, knowledge and culture of the ages. Consequently, he has created bibliographies of all types, cataloguing codes, and classification schemes to provide the effective subject access to the intellectual book, print or non-print, micrographic, audio-visual, or machine-readable. As a well-known American historian, Barbara Tuchman puts it, without the intellectual book "history is silent, literature is dumb, science is crippled, thought and speculation at a stand-

still... infact, the development of civilization would have been impossible".<sup>3</sup> The Librarian is concerned with all knowledge generation, transfer and application.

## **THE POWER OF LIBRARIES**

Professor John Harris, the founding Head of Department of Library and Archival Studies, University of Ghana, declared the power of libraries succinctly when he wrote almost three decades ago that "libraries are instruments of power, potent with all the explosive thoughts of mankind, and like all powerful instruments, they must be handled with respect, understanding and caution".<sup>4</sup> It may be pertinent here to declare that if we, living in this age, tend to forget the power of libraries, kings, queens, emperors, generals and individual scholars of ancient Egypt, Greece and medieval West Africa did not. They built outstanding private libraries not only for research and study, but also as symbols of affluence and prestige.

### **Impact of World Revolutions**

#### ***The Industrial Revolution***

The Industrial Revolution in Europe spanned roughly a century i.e. 1760–1860. The period was marked by an unprecedented rise in the collection of books and development of libraries by both private individuals and governments. The period also witnessed a rise in mass literacy and the urge for learning by the working men of Europe. The industrial revolution was marked by the introduction of machinery into production and a rapid take-over of the economy by a rising bourgeoisie from the feudal overlords. The new class came into prominence as a result of the spread of knowledge and the urge for learning during the Renaissance. Following Guttenberg's landmark invention of the printing press, the

production of books became cheaper thus widening the circle of people with access to book collection. Individuals as well as governments started big library collections. Governments realized that libraries, apart from being valuable for their educational, information and cultural uses, can also be employed for the purpose of propaganda for government policies. This period witnessed the beginning of the great national libraries of Europe and America.<sup>5</sup>

### ***The French Revolution***

The French revolution broke out in 1789 with its egalitarian concepts that coincided with the task of the library as an agency helping to create "a community of thinking men that hold opinions independently arrived at". The leaders of the revolution confiscated large collections of royal and private libraries and, for the first time, made them available to the people. Thus, by seeking to improve the education of its citizens and making available to them a means of enlightenment and information, it prepared a community of enlightened citizenry ready to participate actively in the development process. In England, a tradition of private and institutional libraries was proceeded by establishment of educational and public libraries. The British Museum (National Library of Britain) was established in 1753 and the idea that libraries be provided at public expense took root during this period. In 1850, the famous "penny rate", which was an Act of Parliament, was passed enabling local councils to levy such rate for the provision of free library facilities to the people.

### ***The American Revolution***

The American revolution was no less instructive. It is striking the amount of national pride and consciousness exhibited by Americans today when one considers that the United States of America is truly a "melting pot" formed by a conglomerate of nationals of many nations. It is because the dream of the

founding fathers of America has been harnessed, assembled, diffused and transmitted from generation to generation of Americans by means of the right kind of literature and reading materials. All Americans associate themselves as Americans regardless of their Irish, German, French or African descent. The library is one of the commonest features of American life and community activities often revolve around it. As the repository of the literature and history of the American revolution, the library has played a very prominent role in sustaining the American dream and ensuring the survival of the nation. Government on its part has paid considerable attention to library development by adequate funding. Even while the Americans were still trying to consolidate their revolution the government had established the Library of Congress in 1800. It was this library that was destroyed when the British army captured Washington in 1814 and it was with a flare of patriotism that President Jefferson offered his personal library as the nucleus of a new Library of Congress.

### ***The Bolshevik Revolution of Russia***

Russia was still largely feudal in 1917 when the Bolsheviks came into power. Prominent among the programmes of the new communist government was its attention to the provision of libraries. The Communists in their bid to build an egalitarian society did not only take over private industries and businesses, they also took over all private and public libraries decreeing all to be state institutions. They realized the revolutionary role of libraries and not only used it as an agency for mass education but also as a means of indoctrinating its citizens in communism. Furthermore, the library continued to be used as a means of sustaining the revolution.

Finally, research and development units of giant-multi-national companies establish and maintain vastly modernized libraries to support the research efforts of their researchers in product innovation. Governments in Europe and America es-

establish research centres and institutes for the furtherance of science and technology and they provide millions of dollars to provide backup services such as libraries to the researchers. Library services in these countries have superseded the traditional *modus operandi* of libraries and have gone largely electronic with the use of computers. This has greatly improved the capacity and efficiency of the libraries in their various roles.

## INFORMATION IN AFRICAN SOCIETY

Information may be defined as knowledge given or received of some fact or circumstance. Generally speaking then, information consists of statements made by individuals about concepts which they have assimilated into their store of knowledge. Primary producers of information include journalists and broadcasters, who observe events and relay their observations through the media. Writers and commentators who add their own interpretations of such events as well as scientists who cause events to happen in their laboratories and relay their observations through publications are also considered as primary producers of information.

Secondary producers include editors, publishers, booksellers and librarians all of whom provide or facilitate access to the various sources of information. All these bodies are concerned with the transmission of concepts and ideas from person to person and they all belong to a social organization in order to carry out this transmission successfully. For an effective and efficient information system in a society, therefore, these individuals have to cooperate and understand one another in order to achieve their aims.

In every society, providers of information expect that there will be consumers of the information. These are people for whom the information is of value. The mechanism for

transmission of information from the source to the consumers is also vital in information provision. Producers of information always aim not only to inform the consumers, but also to persuade them. Thus, the sharing of information often leads to the sharing of a point of view. This often represents the association of a number of concepts organized on the basis of personal experience.

The organizing of personal experiences makes a society what it is. Through these experiences, we associate concepts and ideas of the world around us and when we perceive that certain associations please us or enable us to cope better with the world, we are often tempted to pass them on to someone else. It is when our knowledge of the world is socially useful, that we can build a good foundation for society in general.

Society develops out of the ever-increasing stock of socially available concepts that have common acceptance. The stock becomes available through various pathways such as the media, and libraries. Librarians must, therefore, understand how they fit into the communication process and how they relate to others involved in the process of transmitting information which is so important to the society.<sup>6</sup>

## **Oral Information**

Every society has had to rely on oral traditional methods to preserve knowledge of its past before the establishment of writing as a normal way of recording events, thoughts and activities. Even after writing becomes established, a larger amount of information continues to be carried in the memories of participants in many important events.

The greatest interest in oral tradition has, however, been exhibited in countries of the developing world. Not only was literacy a relative new-comer in these countries, but by and large these countries had been under colonial domination for

varying periods of time. When the colonial yoke was cast aside and independence attained, there was a realization that such documentation as existed was largely a chronicle of the deeds of the colonizers. Indeed, the colonizers had in many instances deliberately suppressed any indications that the indigenous ruled populations had a history or culture of their own.

The written documents, which in literate cultures bridge the divide between the historian's present and the past that he/she studies, did not exist in most African cultures before the present century. No direct expressions of the remote African past survived in the way that documents do in literate cultures. Yet, other sorts of true evidence from the past do survive in oral form in African societies, though often indirect, muffled, and mixed in complex ways with information from the past.

In recent times, there have been growing signs of a fuller appreciation of the extent and nature of African oral literature. There have been attempts to establish oral literature as a systematic and serious field of study which could coordinate the effort of all those now working in relative isolation. These include students of culture, of ideology, of society, of art, of religion, and finally of history. As librarianship cuts across all these subject areas, it becomes even more relevant for librarians to have a knowledge of the nature of oral traditions, various mechanisms available for testing their validity, authenticity, and reliability, and of the uses to which they may be put by researchers.<sup>7</sup>

The increasing popularity of oral literature both as a technique and a product, is partly because it has been found to be an excellent tool, adaptable to practically every discipline and subject area. Without oral traditions, we would know very little about the past of large parts of the world, and we would know them from inside. Oral traditions, therefore, have an important part to play as a source of information in every society.

## LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION PROVISION

For a nation to achieve maximum development, all the available resources would have to be carefully mobilized and utilized. This, of course, includes information from libraries. The library helps individuals in a country to obtain information for their daily activities as well as for social communication and mobility. At the institutional level, managers and policy-makers, planners, scientists and technicians need well organized information from libraries. At the national level, the different arms of government machinery also need information at all stages in the planning and execution of their programmes. It goes without saying, therefore, that proper organization of a country's library and information resources is a necessary condition for social, economic, educational and political growth and development.

Libraries are known to flourish in nations that are politically and culturally mature, and that appreciate the need for information. Whenever there is economic prosperity, governments are prepared to provide more funding for libraries. On the other hand, where there is economic crisis, libraries are among the facilities that suffer most.

In most nations, librarians and educationists are seen as the best people to bring about change in the society. This is because of the key roles they play in education. Adequate information provision through libraries have been known to add value to decisions taken by industries and corporations. The importance of special libraries in the success of business organizations cannot be over-emphasized. They facilitate research into new products and the development of older ones.

It has been found that even in national and state legislative houses and legal decision-making houses, libraries have been known to be very essential. Legislators have to be aware of what is happening around them. They must have access to

newspapers, magazines, reference books, law books and official government publications. It is difficult for legislators and lawyers to adequately prepare their speeches and reports without these materials.

It is important to stress, however, that although the role of libraries in information provision is generally acknowledged, it is impossible to meet the information needs of a particular group of users unless the required information exists and is easily available. There should be a means of identifying, locating and obtaining local information for the use of the people. Unfortunately, this is an area which poses problems in most African countries. In these countries, there is a predominance of foreign information sources. Although these sources are equally important, sometimes they tend to be irrelevant to the needs of African countries.

In order to fulfil the important role of libraries in information provision, a way must be found to identify the various sources of information, both local and foreign. This will include the compilation of national bibliographies, national union catalogues and surveys of the information activities of the libraries in the country.

## INFORMATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

African countries are becoming increasingly aware of the fact that information especially specialized information, is an indispensable factor in the development and rational use of their total natural and human resources. Hence the designation of 19th November every year as "African Information Day" by the ECA Conference of Ministers responsible for planning and social development. This is very important and significant because information is one vital resource which plays a significant part in a nation's development process. In fact, changes

in socio-economic and political processes, as well as advancement in scientific and technological development, are induced by the availability of information.

Various sources of information can be used by African countries. These include domestic and international sources. Domestically, some of the information sources include Government ministries and departments, universities and other institutions of higher learning within each country, non-Governmental organizations, foreign embassies and United Nations agencies. International sources of information include regional and sub-regional organizations, International information systems, International Conferences and seminars.

### **Problems of Information Access in Africa**

For African countries, therefore, it appears there is so much information generated within our own borders that we can use to assist in our development process. Our major problems, however, arise out of difficulties inherent in accessing information within our own countries. One of these difficulties is lack of proper reporting by information professionals which leads to misinformation, thereby, hampering the planning process. There are also difficulties arising from the concept of confidentiality of information, especially that produced by Government ministries and departments. Various tags such as "Secret," "Confidential," "Secret and Confidential" which are often placed on some information is a big stumbling block in accessing information in Africa. Incidentally, some Government ministries and departments are even unaware of the duration of these tags when they are kept on the documents.

A major problem of information access in Africa is lack of proper documentation. This, unfortunately, is the situation in some of our ministries and government departments. A casual visit to some of these places will indicate how poor the documentation services are. Researches, project reports and

consultancy reports that have been painstakingly undertaken with public funds are left to rot in cupboards and cabinets. As a result of the improper documentation, some of these researches are being duplicated in other organizations because the researchers are unaware that similar projects have been carried out elsewhere.

The problems outlined above stem from the fact that African Governments do not consider information gathering, processing and dissemination of vital importance. As a result, there is inadequate financial provision for the information sector. Information professionals are also not regarded highly in the society, which has led to the low development in human resources in this area

### **The Need for National Information Policies**

It is a good idea for Africa to have a Development Information Day. However, it is pertinent to point out the need for National Information Policies in all African countries. The aim of a National Information Policy can be stated briefly as to identify the information requirements of the country, and to ensure that they are satisfied as fully, promptly, cheaply and conveniently as possible. An information policy is necessary to avoid waste, duplication and needless expense, as much as to defend both freedom of information and the right to privacy. The leaps and bounds with which information technology has progressed in recent years has made such a policy seem even more urgent.

Among the recommendations of the O.A U's Africa Priority Programme for Economic Recovery (APPER) adopted in July 1985, is that the greatest emphasis should be placed on the use of information in economic and resource management, and on the promotion of science and technology. This requires coordination of scientific and technical information and information for research and development activities. A national

information policy will thus ensure that a nation's resources are used with maximum economy and effectiveness.

There are several other reasons why a nation should have an information policy. Such a policy if put in place, will decide how the national information system should be organized; what services should be provided; and how this is to be done. The policy thus ensures the proper coordination of human, material and financial resources devoted to information in any country.

The need for a national information policy is important because the policy would embrace the expansion of document holdings and collection of data that have all along been left to haphazard treatment in a number of African countries and would also provide improved access to them. It would then be easier to provide networking facilities with foreign collections and databases. This will also enhance the standardization of equipment and techniques for the processing of information.

The policy is necessary because it is a declaration of intent by governments in Africa to undertake action in the information sector. Thus, a country which does not have an information policy is likely to have a weak or non-existent information infrastructure which is likely to create an acute information shortage and thus have a debilitating effect on all aspects of development. African countries need such a policy so that the economic, scientific, medical and cultural prosperity can go on because such a policy will ensure information flow to all members of the community. Information provision will be brought to as near perfection as may be practicable. Existing services would be assessed to estimate deficiencies which need to be made good.<sup>8</sup>

In order to reap the numerous benefits to be derived from a National Information Policy, a permanent secretariat must be established as soon as the policy is put in place. This will become the focal point for the implementation of information

policies. Implementation should cover libraries; archives and documentation centres; the media and broadcasting; telecommunications; publishing; and such related agencies.

Functions of the permanent secretariat will include the monitoring of training facilities for information professionals; provision of relevant data; liaison with government authorities; cooperation with international agencies; and the monitoring of standards. It is also the duty of the permanent secretariat to review and pay attention to legal aspects like copyright, access, privacy, accuracy and misuse of information.<sup>9</sup>

It is now becoming increasingly evident that information professionals must be as much concerned with the development process as sociologists, economists and development planners are. The economic goals of a country must be examined and the individuals who work to realize them, and their specific requirements, must be identified. Information professionals in Africa must prepare plans to justify how information services can make a contribution to socio-economic development. Of course, there is first of all, the need to build an awareness and respect for information and information professionals in Africa.

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The Information Age is with us. Advances in research and development in microelectronics have created important areas such as informatics and telematics and fields related to computer science and computer technology. These advances have given birth to what we are generally now referring to as the new communication and information technologies. At the heart of all these developments is the emergence of a "new culture" coming into being as part of the massive impact of the new communication and information technologies.<sup>10</sup>

The dramatic acceleration in the development and use of information and communication technologies during the last few years has set in motion a worldwide process of transition from the "Industrial" to the "Information Society". Business, education, training, research, entertainment — indeed, all aspects of life — are increasingly affected by electronic network and multimedia technologies, which are opening up new opportunities and challenges for all.

As we move towards the third millennium, it is of utmost importance to understand and to influence the fundamental changes brought about by the "communication and information revolution". The complexity and interrelation of today's world problems defy traditional explanations and solutions and require a completely new approach which must be both comprehensive and interdisciplinary. Moreover, individuals, groups and communities will need to develop not only new tools of analysis but also very different mentalities and attitudes in order to adapt to the emerging "new" civilization based on information and knowledge.

At the heart of this transformation are technological advances which include the digitalization of various types of information — text, numbers, sound and images — and their integration into a single commodity, so-called "multimedia", artificial intelligence and the incorporation of user-tailored, interactive interfaces into information products and services; digital compression and switching techniques which facilitate the communication of ever greater volumes of information; an exponential increase in computing power couple with dramatic reductions in cost; communication satellites with vastly increased power and accessibility, inexpensive optic fibre cable and new wireless technologies; and, perhaps most impressively, the explosive growth of computer networks and, in particular, of the largest among them, the Internet, which links millions of individual computers and users all over the world.<sup>11</sup>

The advance in communication and information technolo-

gies have made it automatically necessary that African countries adopt these new development. These have to be applied to practically all sectors of the society. Fortunately, this has been accepted as essential and relevant in Africa. Most African universities have set up their own computer centres. We cannot, therefore, be blamed for our inability to acquire new methods in handling information. The main problem with the new information technologies in the African society lies in how the western world is pushing the information technology on Africa. The question is whether African countries are able to adapt these new information technologies and the information they provide to the African background.

Every culture represents a unique and irreplaceable body of value since each people's traditions and forms of expressions are its most effective means of demonstrating its presence in the world. The biggest problem in the Information Age is to ensure that the progress of science and technology does not lead to the extinction of unique and irreplaceable bodies of values in the African society.

There is now a realization by many African information professionals and a growing number of decision-makers and researchers that the solution, indeed the salvation of their countries, depends on policies and systems which can make information more easily available. However, there are still a few obstacles to overcome. These include the inability of various governments in Africa to provide the necessary funding and support for organizations that have been mandated to deal with information. The Pan-African News Agency (PANA) and the Pan-African Development Information System (PADIS) are two examples. The goals of these organizations are lofty, but the resources are simply unavailable to enable them to carry out the tenets of their mandate. Until this half-hearted attitude about information has been changed, there is very little we can gain from the positive impact of information.

## COMMUNITY INFORMATION PROVISION

Saracevic defines community information as "appropriate information", which should be problem-oriented, self-contained, directly applicable, scaled for local use, able to reach the disadvantaged and communicable through traditional channels.<sup>12</sup> Information needs differ from community to community. Certain needs which are placed highly on the agenda of one may not necessarily be placed high in another community. Even within each community, information needs differ from group to group depending on their demographic characteristics. Such characteristics may include socio-economic level and educational background. Information needs change with time and the specific circumstances of a given community or group of users. Community information is, therefore, seen as a means which aid the community and the individuals within the community towards self-reliance and self-determination.

The term *community information* appears to have originated in the United States, where it was used to describe the kind of services developed during the 1960s as part of the war against poverty and urban decay. Since these services were neighbourhood-based and attempted to link the enquirer with appropriate sources of help in the community, they were called "community information services".

The introduction of community information services, sometimes referred to as rural information services into librarianship was based on the idea that the information needs of people are influenced by the dynamic social, economic, political and cultural information environment within which the communities live or exist, hence the need for information providers (librarians) to assess the ever-changing needs of target communities that consume the library's information services.

Community information can be identified in two ways:

1. Survival information, such as that related to health, housing, income, legal protection, economic opportunity and political rights.
2. Citizens action information, needed for effective participation as individuals or as members of a group in the social, political, legal and economic process.

In general, therefore, we can say that community information is geared towards helping people with daily problem-solving or in raising the quality of their lives. Mr. Chairman, please permit me to use this anecdote to emphasize the importance of survival information:

Here is a professor who cannot swim, travelling on a boat with his house-boy who can swim, and the conversation starts:

*Professor:* "Boy, do you know anything about psychology?"

*Boy:* "Me ain't know anything about them psychology".

*Professor:* "Then you have lost part of your life. What about sociology?"

*Boy:* "Me ain't know anything about them sociology

*Professor:* "Then you have lost another part of your life  
What about philosophy?"

Before the boy could answer, the boat hit a rock and the Boy quickly asked the Professor: "Sir do you know anything about 'swimology'?" The professor shouts, "No"! "Then", the boy retorts, "you are about to lose all your life".

Mr. Chairman, this story demonstrates first of all, that our needs are different, and secondly that there is no end to the necessity to learn new skills. Whereas the professor thought he was okay with his Psychology, Sociology and Philosophy, the houseboy made him aware that he also needed "swimology" to survive. If we agree that knowledge and the acquisition of skills is an unending process in life, then we must seriously

consider making adequate provision for the sustenance of the source of all knowledge — libraries.<sup>13</sup>

For us librarians and information scientists, the lesson to be drawn from this story is the need for us to learn to anticipate the information requirements of our communities and strive to satisfy the anticipated needs. Public librarians in particular should re-define their roles in communities and consider integrating community information services into their traditional library system. For those of us in the Library Schools, the training of community information providers should be regarded as a priority if appropriate community information resources and services are to be provided.

## LIBRARY SITUATION IN GHANA

Information systems, like other social structures, are intended to contribute to the socio-economic and cultural development of individuals in society.<sup>14</sup> In Ghana, unfortunately, the promotion and development of library and information systems have not been accorded the priority it deserves. The prevailing economic conditions over the past two decades have contributed immensely towards the paucity of these facilities. One reason why their provision has not been taken seriously is that the potential contribution of information to economic and socio-cultural development has never been seriously appreciated. Paradoxically, among the people who should know better are development planners and policy-makers. Although they constantly make use of information, they have not appreciated its true value, probably because of its intangible nature.

The upsurge in economic activities has made it necessary to strengthen the capabilities of the relevant national institutions to acquire, process, and organize the data and information which are essential for national development. Steps

have to be taken to review the activities of the existing information institutions to determine the kinds of equipment and materials needed to enhance their operations.

A careful study of library facilities in the country reveals a not too impressive picture. Apart from the public libraries which are in almost all the ten regions of the country, most of the special libraries are concentrated in Accra and Kumasi. This is discouraging in a country with one of the highest literacy rates in Africa. Many of the research institutes have sited their libraries many kilometres away from the plants they are supposed to be servicing with information<sup>15</sup>

According to Professor Kisiedu,<sup>16</sup> Ghana's library resources are spread countrywide but there are concentrations in certain areas, especially in the large towns and other specific locations in the ten regions of the country. Of those, Accra easily has the highest concentration of libraries and other information resources including university, government, and other research/special libraries and public library services.

Ghana's library and information services were established in the 1950s and 1960s a period of comparative prosperity when, for many developing countries, development and progress meant striving to reach in two or three decades, the stages reached at that time by the western industrialized countries.<sup>17</sup> Rapid development were possible due to an unprecedented boom in Ghana's economy in the decade immediately after the Second World War when there were sharp increases in the prices of Ghana's exports, particularly cocoa and timber.

In keeping with prominent development model, there was rapid development of formal educational structures "the Accelerated Development Plan" as it was called, and a sustained effort to educate the masses through adult literacy programmes in order to produce a literate population which would give a boost to further economic growth.

The net result was a remarkable increase in the literacy

rate from an estimated 9 per cent the decade before independence to 20 per cent the decade after. The increase in the literate population was matched by an unprecedented development in public library facilities to sustain literacy and provide a base for the pursuit of knowledge and a source of information. The expansion in University education involved a corresponding development in university libraries (University of Ghana 1948, University of Science and Technology 1952, University of Cape Coast 1962).

The conversion to a modern economy, it was believed, was only possible by means of scientific investigation and this in turn depended on the collection, evaluation and interpretation of scientific data. Research library development was thus considered essential, and special libraries started to develop as integral parts of research organizations. Apart from the Cocoa Research Institute Library established in 1938, the Central Reference and Research Library now National Science and Technology Library and Information Centre (NASTLIC) and most of the Institute libraries were established in the 1950s and 1960s: Animal Research Institute (1957), Food Research Institute, Industrial Research Institute, Institute of Aquatic Biology (all in 1965) and Crops Research Institute (1967).

The Colonial Administration had long before independence demonstrated the importance of information services within government departments by establishing government department libraries, such as those of Food and Agriculture (1890), Supreme Court (1909), Geological Survey Department (1925), Lands Department (1925), Meteorological Services Department (1937), Ministry of Information (1944) and Statistical Service of Ghana (1948).

The aims and objectives of library and information services emphasized support for education and research and though they included the dissemination of knowledge and information, and initiation of ideas, they envisaged mainly a literate

clientele. After over three and half decades of independence, Ghana's economy has run down and with it, library and information services, and the problem of illiteracy is far from solved.

Section 5 of Ghana's Vision 2020 Document states that "the basic objectives of the medium-term programme which have been set out in the previous section are based upon five development themes, namely: Human Development; Economic Growth; Rural Development; Urban Development; and an Enabling Environment".<sup>18</sup> When each type of library system in the country is assessed in terms of its contribution to the achievement of Ghana's Vision 2020, we cannot but agree that we still have a long way to go in our library development.

### **Public Library Services**

These are provided by the Ghana Library Board which is characterized by a central direction in respect of policy formulation and administration, central support and economic services, and a planned hierarchy to provide library services over a wide geographic area to meet local needs.<sup>19</sup> The Ghana Library Board has ten administrative units in the ten regions as well as forty-three service points for adults and forty-nine for children throughout the country.

The first attempt to start Public Library Services in Ghana was made in 1928, when the Right Reverend John Orfeur Anglionby, the Anglican Bishop of Accra from 1924 to 1951, made accessible to the public his personal library of some 6000 volumes at Bishop House in Bishop Boys School, Accra. When the Government agreed that a library service for effective services throughout Ghana should be controlled by a statutory corporation and funds were approved by the Standing Finance Committee in the 1949/50 estimates, the Advisory Committee sponsored a bill to establish a Library Board in Ghana.

This eventually became a law on January 1st, 1950. In January, 1950, the Ghana Library Board came into existence

under the Gold Coast Library Board Ordinance, 1949 to establish, equip, manage and maintain Public Library Services in the country. Since its inception, therefore, the Board has concerned itself with the provision of a nation-wide library service. Presently the Board has Regional Libraries at Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi, Cape Coast, Ho, Tamale, Bolgatanga, Koforidua and Sunyani while plans are afoot to build one at Wa. In addition to these Regional Libraries, various Branch Libraries have been opened within each Region to meet the educational needs of people who live outside the Regional Capitals.

The services provided by the Library Board are not confined to its Headquarters, Regional and Branch Libraries but are carried to readers in the remote areas of the country by means of Extension Services.

To strengthen library services at the regional and district levels, the Ghana Library Board Act 1970, Act 327 saw the formation of Regional and District Advisory Committees to advise on library policies in each region and district of Ghana. By this Act, the Board is in a very strong position to provide efficient and regular library services subject to adequate and regular funding. The Act, in the development of Public Library Services, also sought to provide the necessary basis for Regional and District Library Services under the Ghana Library Board. Unfortunately, the public libraries are in a state of decline. Suffice to say that the one-time role model for all public libraries in Africa in particular and the third world in general, has become a sorry spectacle. The public library service stands in a unique position in the mobilization of public support for national development through the acquisition and dissemination of appropriate information to all strata of society.<sup>20</sup>

### **Academic Libraries**

This type of library is usually fully government subsidized and

aims at the development of science, technology, education and research in the interest of society. The information resources collected are openly accessible and few restrictions are placed on dissemination; lending and photocopying services are readily available and often free of charge or obtainable at reduced prices. The greatest emphasis is on the collection of information because the user group is generally not oriented towards a specific subject. In Ghana, they comprise the libraries of the country's tertiary institutions. Between them, they hold the largest collection of materials used to support teaching, learning and research.

In age, size and range, the library of the University of Ghana (The Balme Library) is the country's premier university library.<sup>21</sup> The library has a total stock of over three hundred and fifty two thousand five hundred and twenty six (352,526) volumes and subscribes to over four hundred periodicals. Apart from these, the library receives ninety scientific journal titles every month from the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). The library is classified according to the Library of Congress scheme of classification and maintains a union catalogue of departmental libraries.

In both range and quality, the University of Ghana library satisfies the needs of the average undergraduate. It is now rapidly developing its graduate collection to meet the academic development plan of the university which envisages a greater emphasis on graduate work and would thereby raise the quantity and quality of research work in all disciplines.

Other libraries at the University of Ghana apart from the main library include: the School of Administration library, the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) library, the Institute of African Studies library, the University of Ghana Medical School library and the Faculty of Law library. The subject scope of the School of Administration library is a reflection of the subjects taught at the School. Its collection is in the areas of management, accounting, political

science, public administration, finance and health administration. The Population and Social Science library at ISSER has over eight thousand volumes and subscribes to over four hundred journals mainly in the area of statistics, economics, mathematics, agricultural economics and other related topics in the social sciences.

The University of Science and Technology library dates back to 1953 when the University was moved from Achimota to Kumasi. With the establishment of new departments and the appointment of a full-time librarian, an attempt was made to build a more balanced and comprehensive stock.

The Main Library and the libraries of the various faculties, Institutes and Centres together constitute the University Library System. The main function of the university library is to provide appropriate forms of recorded communication needed for study, teaching and research in the University.<sup>22</sup> Additions to stock keep increasing every year. Under the World Bank Funding of Tertiary Education Reforms Programme, many essential scientific and technical books have been acquired recently. With a modest collection of 4,000 volumes of books at its inception, the total bookstock in the library system now stands at about 200,000 volumes. The number of current journals that are received in the Main Library is about 360 titles. These include the very core journals needed for academic work in the University. A majority of journals are received under the World Bank Funding of Tertiary Education Reforms Programme, while the rest are received as donations from the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), Washington and the Campus Book Link, London. Under the funding assistance being provided by the International Development Association (IDA), an affiliate of the World Bank, it was expected that journal subscriptions would increase to about 500 in 1995.

In addition to the traditional library services of lending and reference, the University library provides photographic,

photocopying and telex services to all departments and individual members of the University community. User education programmes are also mounted every year, particularly for the first year students.

A CD-ROM work-station has now been installed in the Main Library. Some software packages have been received under the Project for African Research Libraries of the American Association for Advancement of Science (AAAS), and this has made it possible for bibliographic searches to be conducted in the CD-ROM by some academic staff and students especially in the field of engineering.

In addition to the Main library, all the faculties, including the College of Art, School of Engineering and the School of Medical Sciences, as well as the Institutes and Centres have their separate libraries. The stock of these libraries are growing appreciably. In recent times copies of some useful textbooks acquired under the World Bank Funding of Tertiary Education Reforms Programme have been allocated to these libraries. Some of these libraries have audio-visual materials, and a few others provide photocopying service. The services of these libraries are heavily patronized by students.

The University of Cape Coast library began in 1962 with a collection of about 650 books mainly on English Literature, Economics, History and Geography, transferred from the UST library, Kumasi. The library now has two divisions — the Arts Library and the Science Library. The Arts library accommodates 65,000 volumes and 100 readers and the Science library houses 45,000.<sup>23</sup>

Apart from the Arts and Science libraries, the Faculty of Education also has a library. This Library is however, autonomous from the Main Library. It is essentially a reference library, serving a user population of about 2,000. The library stocks about 5,700 volumes of books and about 60 periodical titles. Computers are used to perform some housekeeping functions in the library.

The University for Development Studies (UDS) library was one of the first departments that the University set up when it was opened in 1993. Its collection is mainly in the field of agricultural sciences and has accumulated over 4,000 volumes of books over the short period of its existence.<sup>24</sup>

The primary objective of a university library for example, is to provide materials for teaching, learning and research. The range and diversification of information needs of both students and faculty are reflected in the variety of up-to-date materials in these libraries. Professor Kwapong<sup>25</sup> once described a university library as "the heart, if not aorta of any university, and its academic health, intellectual vitality and effectiveness, therefore closely depend on the state of health, and excellence of its library, which indeed is its life blood. An inert and moribund library invariably means an inert and moribund university". If we consider the present condition of our university libraries, and if we abide by Kwapong's definition, then we are getting quite close to having moribund universities in Ghana.

### **Special Libraries**

Information service is the *raison d'etre* of special libraries. While other types of libraries may encompass multiple objectives — education, recreation, aesthetic appreciation, or scholarly research — the major, and usually only, objective of a special library is the provision of information in support of the objectives of its parent organization.

In Ghana, this group comprises the libraries of research, financial, industrial, and commercial institutions as well as those of government ministries and departments and parastatal organizations. They are mostly mission or discipline-oriented and tend to serve a well defined clientele. Their collections centre mainly in their areas of special interest.

One of the oldest special libraries in Ghana is the Minis-

try of Food and Agriculture Reference Library which dates back to the establishment of the Aburi Botanical Gardens in 1890.<sup>26</sup> Its purpose was to carry out exhaustive exploration of agricultural resources with a view to finding economic plants for European markets, to experiment on both economic and decorated plants from other tropical and subtropical countries to find out which could thrive under local conditions. This library, housed in permanent buildings, is near the main Agriculture Ministry. It has suffered from neglect for a long time. However, there is now a serious effort being made by the government of Ghana in conjunction with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to upgrade this library. The book stock is over twenty thousand volumes and there are over one hundred periodical titles.

The Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana was established at Tafo in the Eastern region in 1938. This is the first research institution connected with Agriculture to be established in Ghana. It has a library which holds special collections in the form of monographs, pamphlets and journals. Its present stock stands at over ten thousand volumes and over one thousand pamphlets. It subscribes to about one hundred and fifty journals on cocoa and allied subjects

Other agriculture-related libraries in the country are the Soil Research Institute (SRI) library, Kumasi. This library has been built and administered to meet the institutes' objectives and programmes. The collection now stands at over eleven thousand volumes mainly on soil science, and it subscribes to over fifty journals on various aspects of soil conservation and erosion, soil microbiology, soil fertility, chemistry, and mineralogy. The SRI library stocks materials covering soil classification and soil fertility. The holdings are also rich in food science and food technology.

The Animal Research Institute (ARI) was established in Accra in 1964 with a library collection rich in animal science and related subjects. It provides Current Awareness Service to its staff and compiles bibliographies in specific fields

The Building and Road Research Institute (BRRI) is also located at Kumasi, with a stock of over five thousand volumes, over eight thousand five hundred monographs, and a periodicals holding of 170 titles. It is especially rich in civil engineering, building, architecture, and allied subjects.

The Bank of Ghana was established in March 1957 and started operations in August of the same year. The library has over ten thousand volumes and has developed into one of the best organized special libraries in Ghana. It is essentially for reference and research designed to meet the needs of the bank. It subscribes to over three hundred journals and magazines.

The Supreme Court library is one of the oldest libraries in Ghana and is believed to have been started with the establishment of the Supreme Court of Ghana (Gold Coast) in 1876. The library, with over twelve thousand volumes, specializes in statutes, law reports, legal textbooks, of the United Kingdom, some common law countries and countries of the Commonwealth. It has a collection of government publications, that is, reports of commissions of inquiry and reports of government departments and the gazette dating back to 1910.

As in the case of the university libraries, the special libraries are faced with problems of lack of materials and space. The materials are mostly outmoded, and often of little or no value to researchers.<sup>27</sup> Although attempts have been made by various governments in Ghana to establish libraries in Government Ministries and Departments, progress has been rather slow. Today, over forty years after independence, most of these libraries are still struggling to survive. Most of them are not adequately developed. Yet these are the Ministries and Departments that are expected to organize information for the nation's Vision 2020.

### **School Libraries**

The School Library Service scheme was initially proposed as part of Ghana's Second Development Plan beginning from

1959. Hitherto some schools, particularly in remote areas, were already subscribers to the book-box service from which some children's books were obtained. The school libraries are located in second cycle educational institutions, and support the teaching, learning and recreational programmes of these schools. The size of their collections depends, to some extent, on how well-endowed their schools may be.

As a result of missionary and governmental efforts, a number of Secondary Schools and Training Colleges had, by the end of the first three decades of the 20th Century, been established in Ghana. Notable among these are Akropong Training College (1948), Mfantshipim School (1876), Adisadel College (1910, Wesley College (1922), Achimota College (1927) and Saint Augustines (1935) Achimota College, however, stands out as a unique institution because of the objectives for its establishment and, most important of all, its integrated library programme. The library had a well organized and clearly defined library policy.

Achimota aside, important steps in the development of libraries in Secondary Schools and Training Colleges were taken in 1939, 1940 and 1950. The Accelerated Development Plan of 1951 and the establishment of Ghana Education Trust Schools of 1954 had by 1960 led to great expansion in secondary schools and training colleges. Later events seem to suggest that although most of these second cycle institutions were provided with libraries, unlike Achimota, they lacked efficient organization of library materials.

It was not until June, 1972 that the Schools and Colleges Department of the Ghana Library Board was established and charged with the responsibility of advising and assisting in the development of good and effective libraries in Secondary School and Teacher Training Colleges throughout the country. It is to classify, catalogue and process materials for schools and colleges. Other responsibilities include the production of booklists, reading list and other publications suitable for school

libraries, the organization of seminars, workshops, in-service training courses for school library personnel and the building of standard book collection from which tutors could examine and make selections. Finally, the Department acts as a clearing house for overseas book donations to schools and colleges in Ghana

The department has grown steadily over the past twenty years. Its responsibilities have also increased considerably and now include all pre-university institutions. However, staff shortage and financial constraints have led them to concentrate more on second cycle institutions, namely: senior secondary schools and training colleges.

## **Issues in Public Library Development**

### *Community Libraries*

The Public library in Ghana must move its planning and priorities more firmly into the context of community needs, and give a greater emphasis to those aspects of service that are most clearly relevant to local problems. This implies, among other things, increased knowledge of local communities, a more active involvement in community issues, and also the development of new services which could better respond to the needs of the people.

### *Adult Education*

The public library should be in a position to provide materials in support of the adult education programme in the country. This role should be seriously considered as the public library represents the most economical and constant supply of free reading materials essential to establish fluency and improve competence.

### *Preservation of Culture*

With regards to the preservation of culture, public libraries can make attempts to preserve the past, while trying to foster

the cultural activities of the present. The public library should join forces with the national Archives to collect and preserve the papers of local, regional or national organizations as well as individuals who have influenced the development of the country at the local or national levels.

### *Oral Pedagogy*

The public library should also consider the possibility of collecting, processing and disseminating oral literature. The basic procedure involves the taping of oral discourse and transcription into a formal bibliographic system.

### *Blind and Visually Impaired*

The blind and visually impaired people in Ghana have long been deprived of most of the printed material accessible to sighted people. This low level of information available is, of course, a most unsatisfactory situation making these people, to an unacceptably high degree, dependent on sighted people to read for them. Consequently, the establishment of library services for the blind and visually impaired people through the existing public library system would be an important step forward in their advancement and integration into society as a whole.

## **Issues in Academic Library Development**

### *Faculty Status*

The status of university librarians has been a controversial issue among librarians in Ghana on the one hand, and between librarians in the universities and faculty members on the other. It is even more controversial when publications are used as the parameter for determining academic status. There is a need for university librarians in Ghana to have a clearly defined status, as there is yet no consensus on this issue. Mr. Chairman, may I use this opportunity to plead for a quick solution to this problem as it is affecting motivation and productivity in academic libraries.

### *Inter-library Loan Services*

Because it is not possible for any library, however large and comprehensive, to have the resources to satisfy the needs of all users at all times, it is imperative that libraries organize schemes for inter-library lending. Unfortunately, inter-library lending has not been very effective among academic libraries in Ghana. This scheme is extremely important in the Ghanaian situation since research materials are often out of print and libraries are, therefore, unable to acquire them.

### *Union Catalogue*

Although attempts have been made by the academic libraries in Ghana to establish a union catalogue, this has not been successful. At present, it is very difficult for librarians in our universities to know who has what. This makes cooperation cumbersome. A union catalogue of holdings and a directory of resources in the universities must be compiled as a matter of immediate importance.

### *Increased Enrolments*

Enrolments in the Universities in Ghana are increasing each year without a corresponding increase in library resources and materials. While the library budgets are diminishing, there is an increased demand on the services, collections and staff. The greatest demand is for space, as all the university libraries are faced with the problems of space for users, staff, materials and equipment.

### *New courses*

Changes in the society and the academic environment also means that new courses and programmes have to be introduced in the universities. The cost of acquiring materials for these programmes is very high, and with no special funding for such programmes, the libraries have to dig into the already slim budgets to accommodate the new programmes.

### *Problems with Faculty*

Faculty members are not always patient, understanding, and reasonable when they are informed that it is not all the materials they request in their respective disciplines that can be acquired. This often creates the impression that the library is neglecting some disciplines and areas of study in favour of others, or at worse, not performing its functions at all.

### *Committee of University Librarians*

This Committee holds periodic meetings to discuss common problems and ways of solving them. However, its decisions are often difficult to implement owing to various bureaucratic procedures within the university administrations. The benefit of coming together is, therefore, often lost.

## **Issues in Special Library Development**

### *Manpower Development*

A major issue in special library development in Ghana is manpower development. Although a number of librarians are being trained in the country, not everyone who receives the professional training can become an effective special librarian. Special librarians need a strong and current subject background in the library's primary focus area. And this is what special libraries in Ghana do not get.

### *Selective Dissemination of Information*

This is an important duty of special libraries. By this method, individual users are informed of the materials, current and retrospective, of value to their specific needs. This technique, as with current awareness service, is very effective in special libraries. The special librarian must, therefore, have a thorough knowledge of what the patron wants, needs, and will find useful.

### *Accommodation*

Most of the special libraries in the country were started in temporary buildings which now appear unsuitable for the purpose. New buildings or extensions to older ones are often difficult to undertake. An example is the new building that houses the Central Reference and Research Library of the C.S.I.R. (NASTLIC) which was completed but remained idle for more than ten years before the library could move in.

### *Automation*

Research libraries are known for their speed, up-to-dateness and precision in providing information to their users. This requires automated facilities which will save time through efficiency, returning much for a minimal effort. Yet this is an area that our special libraries are most deficient.

## **Issues in School Library Development**

### *School Library Legislation*

The absence of a school library legislation in Ghana has enabled individuals and organizations to register schools without making the necessary provision for school libraries.

### *Lack of Interest by School Principals and Headmasters*

A number of school principals and headmasters do not appreciate the essential role the school library plays in the teaching/learning process. Perhaps due to the educational background of some of these administrators who went through primary and secondary schools without libraries, the important role of the library in education may have escaped them.

### *Unqualified Staff and Poor Services*

Only a few of the schools in Ghana have trained teacher-librarians. Many of the school libraries are managed by untrained staff who are in most cases uninterested in the library. Poor services stem from the poor staffing situation and the consequent lack of supervision in school libraries. Faced with the

problem of lack of training, compounded by insufficient time, the tutor-librarian is unable to achieve much towards the organization and administration of the school library. The end result is the poor services provided in Ghanaian school libraries.

### *Accommodation*

A number of school libraries are located in environments which are most unsuitable for the purpose for which the libraries have been set up. Apart from a few schools such as Aburi Girls Secondary school and Achimota School, most of the schools do not have special blocks or buildings designed and constructed specifically for a library.

### *Library Standards*

School libraries in Ghana do not seem to have any specific, unified standards. There is the need for some accepted standards to be formulated for school libraries in order to guide their operation. To be effective, authoritative and accepted, the standards must be formulated and promulgated by the Ghana Library Association in conjunction with the Ghana Library Board and the Ministry of Education.

From the foregoing, it can be seen that generally, library growth in Ghana has been fragmentary and uncoordinated. This is largely due to the lack of a physical structure like a National Library in the country. A National Library will be a centre for library cooperation. It will also be responsible for compiling and publishing the national bibliography, union catalogues, and union list of serials. It is therefore important that a concerted effort be made by the Ghana Library Association to put pressure on the policy-makers to see to the establishment of this very essential library in the country.

We have often been reminded that we are in the "Information Age" and also that "Information is Power". Which is the better place to obtain this "power" than in the library? Every planning process that leads to a better development of

the people must be based on reliable and adequate information that can easily be provided by a well supported library network. It is common knowledge that because of scanty and inadequate information, most of our development projects meet unanticipated difficulties and many simply fail to be cost-effective. Those that succeed produce only temporary or marginal benefits; others do not generate the rate of return or the flow of goods and services anticipated in their conception and design.

For example, at the end of the first phase of Ghana's Economic Recovery Programme in 1985, it was discovered that the cost of some of the projects were initially underestimated simply because at the planning stage, there was insufficient data relating to many sectors of the economy. This implies that timely and reliable information is necessary for the development process.<sup>28</sup> Hence, the need for an efficient and effective library and information system.

### **Implications for Library Education**

One may wonder at this juncture, what the implications of these new developments have on library education. I shall make a few suggestions in this area. The socio-economic and technological wind of change currently blowing over Africa and indeed the whole world has a lot of implications for library and information science education.

One of such implications is the new role which the subject specialist librarian is expected to play in the modern academic community as opposed to the traditional non-subject specialist librarian whose erstwhile role is gradually being eclipsed by modern information technology. As Ochai has stressed, "library education should equip students with necessary skills to identify society's information needs".<sup>29</sup> The logical conclusion is that library education in Africa has to be reappraised and restructured to suit the information needs of the developing African nations.

The groundwork for the African philosophy of librarianship has already been laid by many scholars as well as the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). Bramley, for instance, has said that African countries have started to formulate their own philosophies of librarianship by selective adaptation of appropriate aspects of theory and practice from industrialized societies and tailored them to suit their own special situation<sup>30</sup> Bramley advocated that "library education in all the developing countries needs to be flexible enough to meet the needs of their library services"<sup>31</sup> The IFLA, standing Advisory Committee Section of Library Schools, which has published standards for all library schools throughout the world, has also made provision for individual countries to make convenient adjustments to suit their local needs. Thus according to IFLA, each country should decide what kind of training such persons ought to have. What the present standards hope to illuminate is a fundamental structure of understanding and means of operation which will facilitate the achievement of any national goals.<sup>32</sup>

From the foregoing prescription by IFLA, the international arbiter on library issues, there can be no other better justification for the theoretical formulation and advocacy that African countries should systematize, standardize and publicize their philosophy of librarianship. The onus of this task lies squarely on the shoulders of the various Library Associations in Africa. Mr. Chairman, as you are aware, I am directly involved with a group of experts from other selected African Library Schools in an attempt to restructure library education programmes to suit the African environment.

## CONCLUSION

I will conclude this inaugural lecture with a view from Professor Aguolo.<sup>33</sup> He is of the view that whether libraries flourish

or wither in neglect in any society depends on a complex of factors. These include:

1. The society's appreciation of libraries;
2. The intellectual climate of the people;
3. A buoyant economy; and
4. A government that appreciates the importance of information.

I will add one more factor; the need for libraries and librarians to reject the age-long role as repositories of knowledge and ideas only, and become dynamic and proactive national institutions vigorously involved in national development process.

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