

PROMOTING INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM: THE ROLE OF THE LIBRARY

BY

Dr. Jennifer .N.B. IGWELA (CLN)
University Librarian,
Rivers State University, Port Harcourt
blessing4okanu@yahoo.com.

And
NSIRIM ONYEMA
Central Library, Rivers state University,
Port Harcourt
nsirimonyema@gmail.com.

ABSTRACT

The study investigated how library and information services promote intellectual freedom. It adopted a descriptive research survey and sampled both undergraduate and postgraduate students that use the library in Rivers State University. The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire. 120 copies of questionnaire were randomly administered to the undergraduate and postgraduate library student users, 100 copies of the questionnaire were successfully completed, returned and used for the study. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and frequency distribution and percentages were used to compute the data based on the number of questionnaires successfully completed and returned. The findings of the study revealed that the library was well equipped with current book/materials and journals on various fields including E-books and E-journals. The reasons for using library resources were to enhance thinking/intellectual ability, enhance academic performance, be motivated and decisive in order to contribute meaningfully to the society and to be informed positively. It was also reported that the reasons for using library resources were achieved and that library and information services could really promote intellectual freedom. It was therefore recommended that the society should see library and information services as a tool to intellectual freedom.

Keyword: Change, Mindset, intellectual freedom, Library, Information Services.

Introduction

Developing an ideal mindset is really crucial to succeeding in everything. The mindset, beliefs and thoughts are dependent on knowledge which is dependent on Information; Freedom which is a state of mind can only be feasible with the availability, access and utilization of the right information. It is the amount and type of information acquired that determines individual's reactions and decisions to situations. Whatever that was done, was done first in the mind, that is, the mind is the driving force of any change. Without a change of mindset nothing changes and information is what is required to change the mind which emancipates one from mental slavery, this is because it is information that is available to someone that empowers the person to act and make decisions. "If you want to be ahead, then you must have something others don't have in your head". The mind as the store house of all mental activities and the starting point of intellectual freedom requires the right information and the library as the store house of knowledge uses information as a tool to promoting intellectual freedom (Igwela & Nsirim, 2018). Improving one's mindset will improve one's ability to succeed in all areas of life. For any nation to experience positive change, the people must first change their mindset. This is because the key to national changes lies in confiding in individuals who have acquired cognate knowledge in the area in which the change is sought. Thus, things of National importance need to be translated into an

individual importance. The people need to be obligated to the strategic directions of the nation in order to work collaboratively and supportively to contribute meaningfully to the society.

DEVELOPING THE CITIZENRY, THE WAY THEY THINK AND ACT: THE ROLE OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

Libraries have a vital role to play in the articulation and defense of the fundamental right of intellectual freedom, which is enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Free and open libraries present a diversity of views, from both the present and the past. IFLA, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, has long promoted the improvement of access to and availability of information through its professional programs aimed at continually raising standards of service. But IFLA members have come to see that the international library community needs to address the dimension of principle, the right of all to access, the information needed to live and prosper and the inseparable right to express ideas and opinions. In response to that recognition, IFLA established the Committee on Free Access to Information and Freedom of Expression (FAIFE) in August 1997. With support from the FAIFE Office in Copenhagen, the Committee is beginning to report on and address issues relating to intellectual freedom and libraries around the world. It promotes intellectual freedom, reports on the global state of intellectual freedom and libraries, and takes action on individual incidents. Through these activities, it helps librarians worldwide to pursue these ideal (Byrne, n.d).

Libraries serve as a tool for intellectual development which can be translated to economic, political, social, personal and national development. Intellectuals in its various dimensions mean the absence of ignorance of situations which according to Nelson Mandela “the more informed you are the less aggressive and arrogant you are. Also, as rightly put by Alvin Toffler, the illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn. The acquisition of knowledge dispels ignorance; therefore, the general objective of libraries which is to acquire, process and communicate information while also serving as a centre where people acquire the needed knowledge to reduce their ignorance. Libraries continue to bridge the gap between the information poor and the information rich by providing and advocating for free access to information. This brings man in contact with the word of information which helps them in fulfilling their quest for knowledge. Paul Tiyambe Zeleza in the article: The Dynamics of Book and Library Development in Anglophone Africa emphasized that books and libraries form crucial repositories of knowledge and information accumulated over time, so that to have access to them is to enter an ongoing intellectual conversation within and between societies and generations, and partake in the immense heritage of human social thought. Information is power and power belongs to the people. Information is a vehicle that drives people to a better understanding that in turn induces sound judgment and decision-making.

Libraries have been identified as one of the key elements for open access to information, which is crucial to educational development. Information literacy which is important for today’s learners promotes problem solving approaches and thinking skills – asking questions and seeking answers, finding information, forming opinions, evaluating sources and making decisions fostering successful learners, effective contributors, confident individuals and responsible citizens. People in many professions use library resources to assist themselves in their work. People also use library resources to gain information about personal interests or to obtain recreational materials such as films and novels. Students use libraries to supplement and enhance their classroom experiences, to learn skills in locating sources of information, and to develop good reading and study habits. Public officials use

libraries to research legislation and public policy issues. One of the most valued of all cultural institutions, the library provides information and services that are essential to learning and progress. (Ogbebor, 2011)

According to Ajegbomogun and Fredrick (2015) in their study, library's role in developing information literacy and societal growth, Information is the bedrock of knowledge development and is expected to achieve societal growth. One of the most obvious trends in recent times has been the rapid growth of information that changes the economy and its attendant structures. Over the years, the developing countries are still not able to match up with this global phenomenon. Lifestyles in most of the developing world have continued to deteriorate simply because of the insensitivity of the government to citizens' plight. Many people are wallowing in abject poverty, debt crises, communal violence, diseases, food shortage and malnutrition, etc. Knowledge acquisition, preservation, access to information and dissemination always enhanced development and will continue to change the way people seek and use information. And also, any societal transformation has to be through large scale development and this greatly depends on knowledge creation, access to information and exchange of ideas globally. Information literacy is the embodiment of high level of information awareness by individual and use to better their life. It is obvious that users of information resources must possess requisite skills in order to harness information resources at their disposal. The way forward towards societal growth is:

1. Through Information literacy
2. Application of mechanized farming
3. Through acquisition of the right knowledge (students)
4. Researchers as knowledge disseminators
5. Policy makers/administrators
6. The role of the library

The role of Libraries as essential tools in learning at any level cannot be overemphasized. It is a centre of intellectual records including cultural, economic and social inclination. With the availability of wide variety of information sources in the library, users are exposed to different information with their respective values and lifelong learning. Diving into a great novel is an immersive experience that can make your brain come alive with imagery and emotions and even turn on your senses. It sounds romantic, but there's real, hard evidence that supports these things happening to your brain when you read books. In reading, we can actually physically change our brain structure, become more empathetic, and even trick our brains into thinking we've experienced what we've only read in novels. Farwa (2017). Reading encourages our brain to think in sequence, expanding our attention spans, changes your brain structure (in a good way) and makes us more empathetic, decision-making processes (strategic and operational); rational and alternative behaviour; cognitive style and perception (Kaye, nd). Paul TiyambeZeze in the article: The Dynamics of Book and Library Development in Anglophone Africa emphasized that books and libraries form crucial repositories of knowledge and information accumulated over time, so that to have access to them is to enter an ongoing intellectual conversation within and between societies and generations, and partake in the immense heritage of human social thought. Information is power and power belongs to the people. Information is a vehicle that drives people to a better understanding that in turn induces sound judgment and decision-making in the society.

Statement of Problem

Ignorant and slavery are inimical to national development and information is the greatest tool required to emancipate one from mental slavery. When information is discarded, development suffers. National development could be measured by the level of information its citizens have. Information can be acquired from different media however; the library is the most reliable place where the most desirable information can be sought (Igwela and Nsirim, 2018) the study investigated library and information services as a tool to Intellectual freedom.

Objectives of the Study: the general objective of the study is to investigate the role of the library in promoting intellectual freedom; **the following are the Specific Objectives**

1. To find out the resources obtainable in the library in Rivers State University Library
2. To identify the reasons for utilizing library's resources in Rivers State University
3. To ascertain whether the reasons patrons use library resources were achieved
4. To investigate whether information obtained from the library could really promote Intellectual freedom of library users in Rivers State University

Review of Related Works

The connection between libraries and intellectual freedom may seem obvious but trivial. Libraries as repositories of books and other documents naturally make some kind of contribution to intellectual freedom Paul (Sturges, 2008).

The library, as a social institution, plays a crucial role in the formation of the intellectual potential of society and must, therefore, respond to changes that take place in the country (Sayenko 2002). The right to think what we please and say what we think serves as the bedrock principle upon which all ideas are based. According to Sutton (2001) to a library, intellectual freedom takes the form of the right to receive ideas, that is, to access information and the library is first and foremost a place to access information, making intellectual freedom central to the mission of the library profession. The library's historical role as an educational institution has been the provision of materials to enhance the development of individual's abilities, interests and knowledge. Therefore, the state of intellectual freedom in libraries is an important indication of the progress of democracy in a nation. In a speech delivered in the University of Lagos, Mass Communication (2013), Professor Ruqqayyat Ahmed Rufai, the former Minister of Education rightly observed that education vis-à-vis research productivity is a powerful weapon that could bring a change in the society.

According to Ahmed (2013) the ability of the child to read and develop the reading interest with the use of a library resource is a sine-qua-non- for achieving emotional stability, and for keeping abreast of what is happening in his immediate environment and the world at large. Access to library resources are so crucial to the overall intellectual, psychological development of the child while the agencies of educational developers, namely teachers, publishers, author's, parents and librarians must collectively be actively involved in the development of reading interest among the students to ensure that it becomes a lifelong legacy of the child (Gbaje, 2008). The creation of makers space in school learning environment gives children the opportunity of using their thinking skills in order to develop socially and emotionally, especially now skills acquisition is needed for self-reliance and library has a role to play in facilitating knowledge through access to information (Ejikeme, 2018).

Adeyeye and Oyewusi (2018) studied effect of therapy on behavior of young people in correctional homes thirty six female participants took part in the bibliotherapy sessions that made use of Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The girls were separated into two categories-

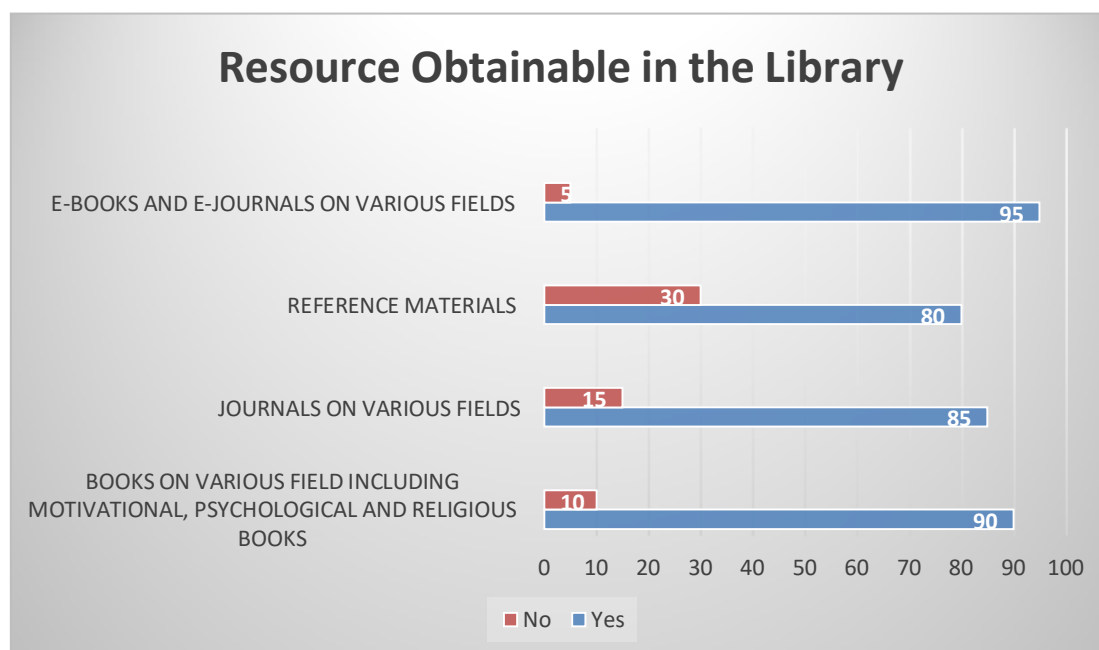
child offenders (17 girls) and out of parental control (19 girls). The study employed the use of a Nigerian authored story book which was read to them during FGD for ten (10) weeks. The study found that after reading and discussion of themes in the books, the participants had more understanding of what good behavior entailed. They became remorseful and sober which was evident during the discussions.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research survey. The population of the study comprised library users of both undergraduate and postgraduate students in Rivers State University. 120 copies of questionnaire were randomly administered to the undergraduate and postgraduate students, 100 were successfully completed and returned and used for the study. The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire. To determine the validity of the instrument, a draft copy of the questionnaire was given to an expert for scrutiny. To ensure reliability, one of the researchers administered the questionnaire with the help of staff of Rivers state University library giving no room for fake collation. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and frequency distribution and percentages were used to compute the data based on the number of questionnaires successfully completed and returned.

Results and Discussion

Fig. 1

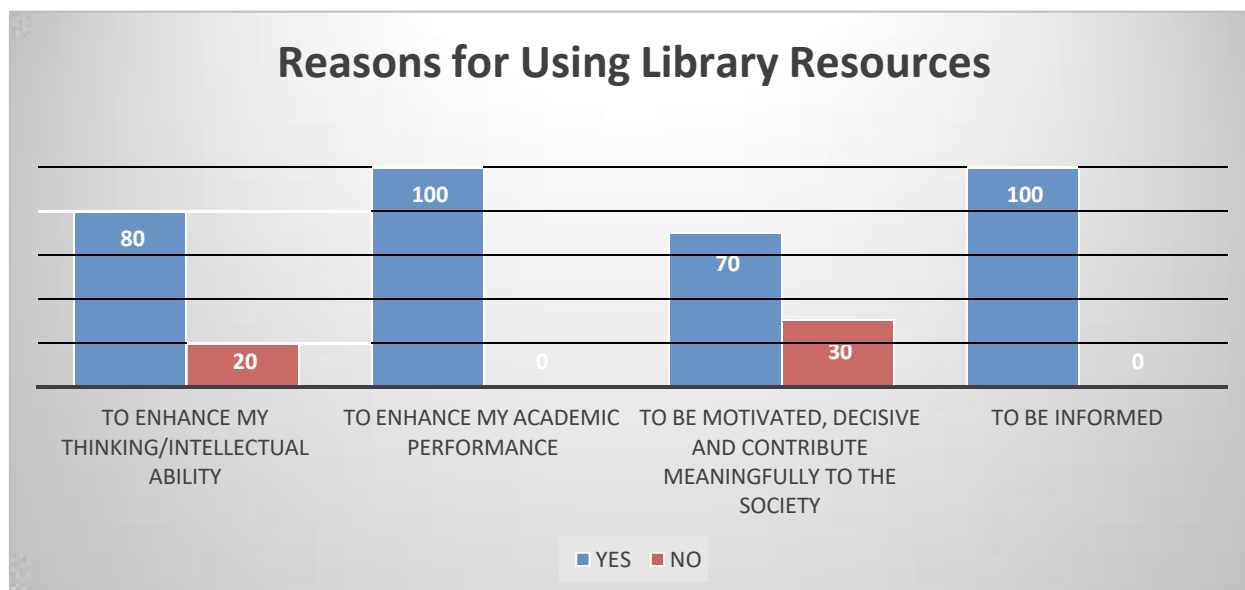


Source: Field survey, 2018

Fig. 1 shows the students response on the resources obtainable in the library as E-books and E-journals on various fields (95% -Yes) and (5%-No), Reference materials(80%-Yes) and (30%-No), journals on various fields ((85%-Yes) and (15%-No), books on various fields including motivational, psychological and religious books (90%-Yes) and (10%-No) respectively. This shows that the library is equipped with relevant books and journals on various fields, reference materials, e-books and e-journals. This study is therefore in line withthat of Osarome (2011) on library resources and their roles in education and stated that library collections have always contained a variety of materials. Contemporary libraries maintain collections that include not only printed materials such as manuscripts, books, newspapers, and magazines, but also art reproductions, films, sound and video recordings,

maps, photographs, microfiches, CD-ROMs, computer software, online databases, and other media resources.

Fig. 2



Source: Field survey, 2018

Fig. 2 shows the reasons for using library resources and the result shows as follows: to enhance thinking/intellectual ability (80%-Yes) and (20%-No), to enhance academic performance (100% Yes), to be motivated, decisive and contribute meaningfully to the society (70%-Yes) & (30%-No) and to be informed (100%-Yes). The result shows that respondents use the library to enhance their thinking/intellectual ability, to enhance academic performance, to be motivated, decisive and contribute meaningfully to the society and to be informed. The study therefore is in line with that of Igwela (2018) on her study, using the library for enhanced performance and examined that several factors play a part in enhancing students' performance. The extents to which students use the library appear to have been considered as a factor. The study showed that there was a significant association between library use and students' enhanced performance. According to Soria, Fransen & Nackerud (2013) library research scholarship within the last two decades has increasingly addressed important questions related to the impact of libraries on students' acquisition of information literacy skills and development of critical thinking skill.

Table 1.

Statement	Yes	No
Are your reasons for using library resources such as being informed, motivated, academic performance achieved	60%	40%

Fig. 3



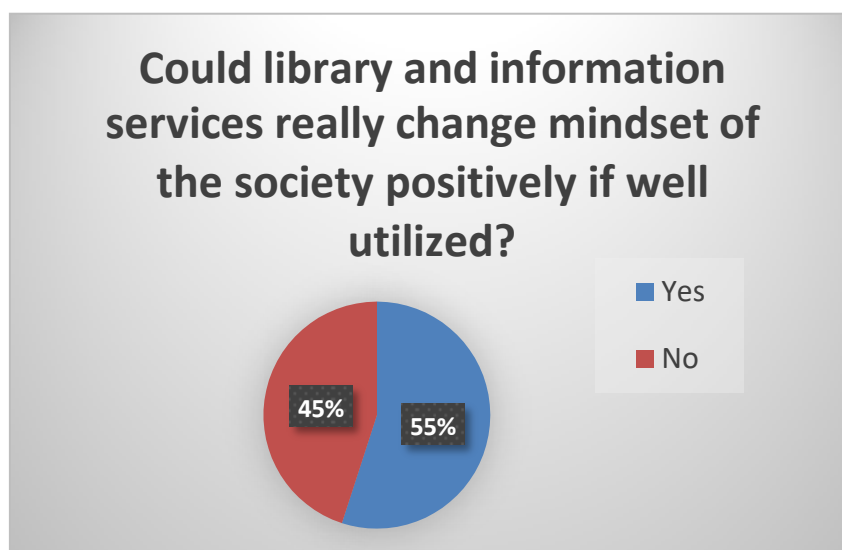
Source: Field survey, 2018

Table 1. Fig.3 shows whether the respondents' reason for using library resources was achieved, it shows that while 60% of the respondents says Yes that their reasons for using library resources was achieved, 40% were not satisfied. The result shows that the respondents' reasons for using library resources were achieved. This is in line with a study conducted by Saika and Gohain (2013) on users satisfaction with library information resources and services in Tezpur university, India and found that majority of the respondents were satisfied with library resources and services.

Table 2.

Statement	Yes	No
Could library and information services promote Intellectual freedom	55%	45%

Fig. 4



Source: Field survey, 2018

Table 2, Fig. 4. Shows whether library and information services could really promote intellectual freedom and change the mindset of the society positively if well utilized and revealed that a significant number of the respondents (55%) said yes that it could really do, however a considerable number of the respondents (45%) said no, that it could not. The study therefore shows that library and information services could really change the mindset of the society if well utilized but librarians need to aggressively improve on its services since a considerable number of the respondents disagreed that its services could change the mindset of the society. This study is in line with a statement by Gbaje (2008) that access to library resources are so crucial to the overall intellectual, psychological development while the agencies of educational developers, namely teachers, publishers, author's, parents and librarians must collectively be actively involved in the development of reading interest among the students to ensure that it becomes a lifelong legacy of the child and also, with that of Sophia and Fadekemi (2018) who studied effect of therapy on behavior of young people in correctional homes and found that after reading and discussion of themes in the books, the participants had more understanding of what good behavior entailed. They became remorseful and sober which was evident during the discussions.

Conclusion

We cannot talk about changing the society if the people lack intellectual freedom and no change will take place if the mind is not reset for positive change. Positive change requires positive information and the function of an individual is dependent on the amount of information available and accessible to that individual and the library which is equipped with variety of resources and in addition to its information services could really reset the mind to positivity thereby liberating one from mental slavery and promoting intellectual freedom. It is therefore recommended that the society should see library and information services as a tool to intellectual freedom and the library on its part should as a matter of necessity and obligation, be committed to services geared towards informing and motivating the society to engage in the activities that could contribute meaningfully to the society.

References

- Adeyeye, S and Oyewusi, F (2018). Effect of therapy on behavior of young people in Correctional homes. *Compendium of Nigerian Library Association NLA 2018 Conference papers*. 275-291
- Bryan, A. (n.d) Promoting Intellectual Freedom Globally through Libraries: the Role of IFLA/IFLA Statement on Libraries and Intellectual Freedom. Retrieved April 3, 2019 from <https://www.ifla.org/publications/ifla-statement-on-libraries-and-intellectual-freedom>
- Fakomogbon, M. A; Bada, A. A. & Omiola, M. A. (2012). Assessment of school library resources in public secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis. *Institute of Interdisciplinary Business Research* Vol. 3, No. 10
- Farwa, I. (2017) what does reading books do to your brain? Retrieved December 11, 2018 from <https://www.quora.com/What-does-reading-books-do-to-your-brain>

- Fredrick O. A., & Veronica O. A. (2015) the library's role in developing information literacy and societal growth. *International journal of Library and Information Science*
- GARPH Publication (n.d). The role of libraries and librarians in our social change, *International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and Social Sciences*. https://www.academia.edu/5450729/Role_of_Libraries_and_Librarians_in_our_Social_Changes.
- Gbaje, E. S. (2008). Basic library skills for teacher librarian department of library and \ information science, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, presented at capacity building programme for teacher librarians organized by Universal Basic Education Board Gusau, Zamfara. State. 5th-8th May, 2008.
- Igbinovia, M. O., Ishola, C.B. & Alex-Nmecha, J.C. (2018) library and information services for the attainment of sustainable development goals in Osun state. *Compendium of Nigerian Library Association NLA 2018 Conference papers*. 108-123
- Igwela, J.N.B. (2018). Using the library for enhance performance. Being a paper presented at the orientation programme of undergraduate students 2017/2018 academic session at the convocation arena Rivers State University, Port Harcourt.
- Igwela J.N.B & Nsirim, O. (2017). Libraries and promotion of national development. *Delta Journal of Library and Information Science*. Volume 11 (1&2). 267-276
- Igwela, J.N.B., & Nsirim O. (2018) Library and information services for national development and fight against insurgency. *Compendium of Nigerian Library Association NLA 2018 Conference papers*. 124-140.
- Kaye, D. (n.d) importance of information. *Library management* vol.16 (5) retrieved December 12, 2018 from <https://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/abs/10.1108/EUM00000000003897>
- Ogbebor, O. (2011) Library resources and their roles in education. Retrieved December 13, 2018 From <https://osarome.blogspot.com/2011/12/library-resources-and-their-role-in.html>
- Sayenko, P. 2002. Conception of intellectual freedom as the essential principle of library and Information Science in the democratic society. Copenhagen: IFLA. Available at: <http://archive.ifla.org/faife/papers/others/sayenko.htm>
- Saika, M. & Gohain, A. (2013). Use and users satisfaction on library resources and services in Tezpur University, India. A study. *Library Philosophy and Practice*.
- Solanke and Osuchukwu (2018) examined the level of libraries involvement in facilitating public access to information in Nigeria society. *Compendium of Nigerian Library Association NLA 2018 Conference papers*. 200-211
- Soria, K. M., Fransen, J., & Nackerud, S. (2013). Library use and undergraduate Students"

Outcomes: New evidence for students' retention and academic success.
Libraries and the Academy, 13(2), 147-164

Stuart, B. (1999). The Library as an Agent of Change: Pushing the Client Institution Forward *Journal of the Special Libraries Association*, Vol. 3, No. 8, August 1999, pages 37-40.

Sturges, P. (2008) Libraries and intellectual freedom. A lecture Delivered at Human Rights Conference, Olsztyn, Poland, May 2008.

Sutton, L. 2001. Advocacy for intellectual freedom in academic library. ACRL Tenth National Conference.

University of Lagos, Mass Communication. (2013). I will turn brain drain to brain gain. Speech
Delivered by Professor Ruqqayyat Ahmed Rufai, the former Minister of Education at the Golden Jubilee celebration and convocation of the 2011/2012. University of Lagos, Lagos. Retrieved from unilagmasscomm.com/index.php?option=com.

Vijayakumar, J.K. & Manju, V. (200) Information freedom in a Democratic World and the role of Librarians in cyber era. Retrieved December 13, 2018 from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/28804339_Information_freedom_in_a_Democratic_World_and_the_role_of_Librarians_in_cyber_era

Zezeza, P.T. (2002 "The Dynamics of book and library development in Anglophone Africa." *The book chain in Anglophone Africa: A survey and directory*, INASP, Oxford) <http://hdl.handle.net/11732/162>.