Advocacy in Academic Libraries: A Case Study of Selected Academic Libraries in Southwest Nigeria

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Abstract - This study investigated advocacy in selected academic libraries in the southwest in order to ascertain methods used and challenges faced in the course of advocating for their libraries with possible solutions. It has become necessary to create awareness and also make our libraries visible to the world so that they can be supported in cash and kind. This enables librarians provide the necessary service hence patronage is encouraged. The study adopted a survey research design with two sets of questionnaire(s) which had 34 and 25 items respectively and interview. Random selection of the population comprised of two hundred and seventy seven (277) librarians (professionals and paraprofessionals) and library users mostly lecturers' from different departments from the University of Ibadan, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology Ogbomoso, Obafemi Awolowo, University Ile Ife and Lead City University Ibadan respectively. Results showed that all the academic libraries in this study have not started advocacy, do not have advocacy plan in their strategic objectives. Therefore, librarians and other library personnel ought to be sent for trainings, workshops and seminars to equip them for advocacy activities. The study recommended that similar study be carried out in other academic libraries across Nigeria to enable librarians understand its importance.
Keywords: Advocacy, Academic Libraries

I. INTRODUCTION

An advocate is a person who supports or speaks in favor of or of a public plan or action (Hornby, 2006). Therefore, advocacy is a calculated, thoughtful, continued determination to raise awareness of an issue(s), and hence, this can prevent libraries from being overlooked or taken for granted. It also means supporting a reason or way of action since in the academic library world everybody who works for the library (librarians, desk clerks, catalogers, bibliographers, student interns, even building maintenance workers) needs to think of herself or himself as an advocate (Cavill, 2001).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Relationship between Advocacy and Libraries: Library and information services have recognized the importance of strategic marketing within the profession. According De Saez (2002) librarians and information professionals must encourage and develop a marketing culture in their libraries and information centers, in addition they should be prepared to market their own very considerable talents, experiences and skills which emphasizes the need that the profession ought to embrace a marketing culture. Gibbons (2005)

suggested a parade of bookmobiles arranged as part of advocacy efforts, but for it to be a success they needed to advocate to library staff to join in. Whereas Dolan (2006) expounded the view that all staff members of the library should advocate the benefits of libraries wherever they find themselves. Hainer (2005) re-affirmed this by recommending that to be a successful advocate you need to get out and begin to talk to other professions and people outside of the library. While on the other hand, Todaro (2006) noted that frontline librarians and middle managers do not have extensive training in influencing, persuasion, or even advocacy.

B. Advocacy for Libraries or Librarian: Advocacy mostly focuses on the overall service or a library itself forgetting the librarians, the more reason why Berry (1996) stated that librarians need to promote themselves, more so, that library advocacy movement has been very effective at enlisting advocates for libraries from Bill Clinton to Bill Gates, but has sadly failed to define and promote the crucial role of librarians in the information future, either through benign neglect or conscious professional self-effacement. Nonetheless, Miller (2006) posited that Berry had misjudged the importance of enlisting Bill Gates as an advocate; however in 2006 the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation fully sponsored an intensive workshop on advocacy for one hundred and forty seven librarians from rural communities. According to Siess (2003) who wrote on "the visible librarian asserting your value with marketing of advocacy" stated that the text projected the image of librarians with the way they dress and behave, noting that the image and perception of the librarian or library staff reflects on the library service, and if they are representing the library, it is important that they represent it in a positive way.

C. Challenges of Advocacy in Libraries: Mlanga (2012) talked about the conservative nature of librarians which makes us less visible in institutions we serve, in particular and society in general. The library profession could be as old as human civilization but librarians are still rare species in the mainstream activities of modern society, generally speaking: our voices are hardly audible; we are rarely heard in politics, business, sports, industry, education and culture, instead we have clung to our nest in slumber. She mentioned that we hardly talk to people outside our profession; no wonder most people do not understand what

we do except ourselves and yet we wonder why our libraries are not accorded high priority in planning and location of resources by our institutions. Glass (1999) noted that some people consider speaking up for libraries to be unseemly and even dangerous owing to their perception that advocacy only focuses on particular points or special interests. This implies that it is possible to think that due to lack of awareness about what advocacy is and how it can be used misconception is construed. Todaro (2006) observed that front line librarians and middle managers do not have extensive training in influencing, persuasion, or even advocacy, therefore do not have the requisite experience needed to empower them speak for the library.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Academic libraries in some selected universities in the southwest do little or nothing about publicizing their libraries and so cannot easily attract goodwill. People have to know what operates in the library before they can be asked to render assistance or donate, since they want to know what their money is to be used for. For instance, academic libraries do not have any written plan for advocacy and so cannot adequately sell their library to potential customers. Nonetheless, if there is a written plan that is included in the strategies objectives of the library then everyone would participate in advocacy in order to ensure that libraries meet their mandate. Exhibition is another way of advocating, since it focuses on various activities operational within the library, unfortunately, the culture is fast fading away from the academic libraries while some of these other libraries do not even have space for exhibition therefore, cannot showcase what they have or what they can offer, hence no one knows what they do or how important they are to the society. Library bulletins, newsletters, brochures are hardly ever published; they have failed to note that these are good ways of advertising and selling the image of the library. Also libraries do not organize public lectures which they ought to be involved in, so as to help enlighten the academic community on their activities, values, and achievements. Sensitization during the lecture can be through the presentation of bookmarks, bags, pen, etc., embossed with captivating phrases on the library and its values.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives of the study are to
1. Examine the extent to which advocacy is practiced in the libraries;
2. Ascertain the opinion of professional and paraprofessional staff of the libraries on the need for advocacy; and
3. Examine the challenges of advocacy in academic libraries.

V. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the survey research design; it involved opinions of several individuals to be collected within a relatively short time. It also enabled the researcher obtain comprehensive data which in turn helped in a thorough research and analysis of the problems identified from the individuals randomly selected. Four selected academic libraries in the Southwest Nigeria were studied – Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan, Lead City University Library, Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Olusegun Oke Library, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, lecturers from the Faculties of Education, Social Science, Technology, Arts and Science of the above mentioned universities were also sampled.

Simple random sampling technique was adopted for the study, and the population was two hundred and seventy seven (277) while those interviewed were four (4). The data collection instruments for this research are questionnaire and interview. Information obtained from the interview was used to supplement the information from the questionnaire. Two sets of questionnaire comprising of sections A, B and C. were designed, for librarians and selected library users (lecturers) and were administered by the researcher and five trained research assistants then retrieved within a week after administration.

The university librarians of the three academic libraries studied were contacted via telephone and appointment were scheduled for the interview, while the university librarian of Lead City University was met personally by the researcher and informed of the interview so as to book an appointment. Data was analyzed using simple percentages and tables. Responses was tabulated due to the simplicity of the data analysis.

VI. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

TABLE I DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS (LECTURERS) BY SEX

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	100	61.3
Female	63	38.7
Total	163	100.0

Source: Primary data

Table I showed that 100 (61.3%) of the respondents were male while 63 (38.7%) were female; this revealed that male lecturers patronize the library more since they are more aware of the library's existence.

TABLE II DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY AGE

Age	Frequency	Percentage
25-35 years	18	11.0
36-45 years	93	57.1
46-55 years	46	28.2
56 & above	6	3.7
Total	163	100.0

Source: Primary data

Table II showed that 93(57.1%) were within the age range of 36-45 years which revealed that lecturers in active service fall within this age range.

TABLE III DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY YEARS WORKED IN DEPARTMENT

Years worked in department	Frequency	Percentage
1-3 years	34	20.9
4-6 years	41	25.2
7-9 years	39	23.9
10-12 years	36	22.1
13-15 years	13	8.0
Total	163	100.0

Source: Primary data

Table III revealed that 41(25.2%) had worked in the department for between 4-6 years, while 13(8.0%) had worked for between 13-15 years. It showed that those who had worked in the department for between 4-6 years are more experienced and conversant with the terrain hence, are much more aware of the library activities while those with between 13 to 15 years of experience have stayed too long in the system therefore, used to doing things the old way not likely going to move the profession forward.

TABLE IV APPROACHED BY STAFF TO TALK ABOUT LIBRARY NEEDS

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	15	9.2
No	148	90.8
Total	163	100.0

Source: Primary data

Table IV showed that 15(9.2%) stated that lecturers have been approached by library personnel to talk about their library while 148(90.8%) said they have never been approached. This revealed that the level at which advocacy is practiced by library personnel is poor. Siess (2003) advised that the image of librarians is related with the way they dress and behave, noting that the image and perception of the librarian or library staff reflects on the library service.

TABLE V PERCEPTION OF THE RESPONDENTS ON THE INVOLVEMENT OF UNIVERSITY LIBRARY IN ADVOCACY

	Frequency	Percentage
Very high	32	19.6
High	59	36.2
Low	51	31.3
Very low	21	12.9
Total	163	100.0

Source: Primary data

Table V revealed that 59(36.2%) stated that their libraries have been involved in advocacy. Comparing table IV and V, it showed that they still felt the library is reaching them as they engage in advocacy.

TABLE VI AWARENESS OF THE LIBRARY ACTIVITIES

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	17	10.4
Agree	61	37.4
Disagree	67	41.1
Strongly disagree	18	11.0
Total	163	100.0

Source: Primary data

Table VI revealed that 67 (41.1%) disagreed indicating that they are aware of the library activities and the library personnel practice advocacy to some extent which confirmed the positive response rate of 59(36.2%) in table V above. Hainer (2005) re-affirmed this by recommending that to be a successful advocate you need to get out and talk out of the professional box to and with people outside the library.

TABLE VII MATERIALS USED FOR LIBRARY ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN

S. No.	Materials used	No	Yes
1	Media	78 (82.1%)	17 (17.9%)
2	Posters	84 (88.4%)	11 (11.6%)
3	Flyers	83 (87.4%)	12 (12.6%)
4	Library bulletins/Newsletters	65 (68.4%)	30 (31.6%)
5	Face to face interaction	76 (80.0%)	19 (20.0%)

Source: Primary data

The result in Table VII revealed that 31.6% of the libraries use library bulletins / newsletters as a way of reaching out to their user. This appears to be the most readily available and effective means of catching the attention of their users as this enables them inform others of their needs.

TABLE VIII OPINION OF PROFESSIONAL STAFF TO ADVOCACY

	Frequency	Percentage
Poor	10	10.5
Good	35	36.8
Excellent	22	23.2
Indifferent	20	21.1
Not sure	8	8.4
Total	95	100.0

Source: Primary data

36.8% of the respondents as shown in Table VIII above are ready to move their libraries to greater heights through advocacy because they know what it means to gain recognition. This was emphasized by De Saez (2002), who encouraged librarians and information professionals to develop a marketing culture in their libraries and information centers, and also be prepared to market their talents, experience and skills. Dolan (2006) corroborated this view by emphasizing the need for all staff members of the library to consciously advocate for the benefit of libraries wherever they find themselves.

TABLE Ix Challenges Of Advocacy

Challenges faced	Frequency	Percentage
Those involved are inexperienced	36	37.9
Difficulty in convincing individuals and organizations	34	35.8
The library gets what is not needed from donour agencies	11	11.6
Lack of institutional support	8	8.4
Shortage of funds to raise flyers	6	6.3
Others	95	100.0

Source: Primary data

Table IX showed the challenges faced by these libraries when advocating: 36 (37.9%) faced challenges of inexperience by the library personnel, 34 (35.8%) faced difficulty in convincing individuals and organizations, 11(11.6%) faced difficulties of lack of institutional support, 8(8.4%) faced challenges of shortage of funds to raise flyers while 6(6.3%) faced other challenges respectively.

It showed that since 36 (37.9%) of the library staff are inexperienced it indicates that advocacy is not actually practiced in the libraries, no advocacy plan so are not prepared for it, hence; do not have designated offices for advocates. The analysis of the interview revealed that in the course of advocating they have met with people and organizations that have been very nasty, but with perseverance, what is needed was eventually be realized, this was mentioned by the University Librarian in the University of Ibadan. Meanwhile the University Librarian in Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library said that it takes courage for librarians to advocate since it is not what they are used to doing. The University Librarian in Olusegun Oke Library said that they cannot really do much without the involvement of the management since they may likely think that they would misuse the funds `they advocated for.

While the University Librarian of Lead City University Library said they do not have any challenges since they are not in the mainstream of advocacy. But Berry (1996) pointed out that librarians need to promote themselves, more so that library advocacy movement has been very effective at enlisting advocates for libraries but has miserably failed to define and promote the crucial role of the librarians in the information future, either through benign neglect or conscious professional self-effacement. While Dempsey (2002) made reference to the amusing stories about people showing ignorance of the profession and then cautions, stop laughing and start promoting yourselves.

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

From the study, it was established that advocacy was not effectively practiced by librarians in the academic libraries studied. Hence, the need to educate librarians of the need to market themselves as well as their products, also develop advocacy plan so they can be guided as on what to do every step of the way in order to create the necessary awareness for users and friends of the library. This could be achieved through exhibitions, production of newsletters, library bulletins, public lectures, social networks like Facebook, WhatsApp, etc. Furthermore, students should be taught courses in entrepreneurship so that by the time they are graduating they will be well equipped with the needed resources to effectively market libraries.

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