



NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NIGERIA

“STRENGTHENING BRIDGES”

THE PRESS CONFERENCE OF PROFESSOR CHINWE VERONICA ANUNOBI THE NATIONAL LIBRARIAN/CEO SHOWCASING THE SCORECARD OF HER STEWARDSHIP IN THE LAST TWO YEARS HOLDING AT THE BOARDROOM OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NIGERIA, CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS ON 14th SEPTEMBER, 2023.

Protocol

The Management and Staff of the National Library of Nigeria,

Gentle Men of the Press, h

Good afternoon everyone.

With gratitude to God Almighty, I am delighted to welcome you to the second anniversary of my tenure as the Chief Executive Officer of this apex library in Nigeria. The press conference is organized to communicate to Nigerians the scorecard of the stewardship of this administration in the last two years. I most especially express my sincere appreciation to our partners in progress, the Journalists who convey our messages to Nigerians, our target audience. This administration will eternally be grateful for your support and cooperation to the success of our Organization.

You will recall that on my appointment in September 2021, I addressed a Press Conference where I shared my vision and the thrust of my administration which revolves around 8-point agenda. That was followed by another press conference termed “Building Bridges” on **TUESDAY, 20th SEPTEMBER 2022, to mark my first year in office**, where my report card on the 8-point agenda was presented.

The building material of my administration that is the eight-point agenda was derived from our vision and mission “**Connect and build an informed citizenry; and to collect, preserve and provide easy access to Knowledge Leveraging ICT.**”

Since the bridges were built during my first year, what then was the focus during my second year? My administration spent the last one year strengthening the already built bridges with many success stories and challenges which I want to share with you. Thus, informed the title of my briefing - **Strengthening the Bridges.**

Strengthening the bridges implies reinforcement. In other words, we are giving strength to what we set out to do. It implies reinforcing the 8-point agenda: reinforcing transition from: analog to technology driven operations and services, none reading to a reading nation and none reach of ‘hard to reach’ to consolidating our reach, old competencies needed to actualize the 8 point to new competencies, Low sensitization on documentation of family history to full engagement, all touching the bridges we have built. So how have we fared along this line?

Strengthening the Technology Driven Bridge: Technology driven operations and services are rooted on preservation of our heritage and providing global and easy access to the Nation’s heritage. Within the year, we have deployed all digitization equipment including robotics and flatbed scanners to commence

digitization with emphasis on rare and vulnerable resources in our Lagos strong room. Presently more than one thousand (1,000) records (monographs, journals, documents etc.) have been digitized.

The State-Of-The-Art National Repository of Nigeria <https://nigeriareposit.nln.gov.ng/> provides either full or restricted access to over 600 records of the already digitized resources.

The National Virtual Library of Nigeria (NVLNG) www.virtuall.nln.gov.ng which was created in September, 2022 and serves as the “**National Library of Nigeria without walls**” has been strengthened as a gateway to all our physical and technology driven services, current awareness window for all newly acquired resources (Nigeriana and Foreign), links to Open Access databases, books, reference materials and top Nigerian newspapers. (23 links to Open Access Book databases, 30 Open Access Reference Material databases, 113 links to open access journals, 432 links to monographs etc.).

Automated cataloguing has been strengthened. Rather than the traditional use of print cataloguing tools with its attendant challenges, processing of acquired (4,688 volumes) and legally deposited (53,360 volumes) resources are easily processed electronically as a result of our subscription to online cataloguing tools namely: Web Dewey, Library of Congress, Online cataloguers’ desktops, Open Resource Description and Access (RDA).

All modules of KOHA integrated Library software was fully deployed for all round processing of both legal deposit and purchased resources. This translates to online visibility of the bibliographic records of all resources available in National Library irrespective of the branch location through the Online Public Access Catalogue <http://opac.nln.gov.ng/>.

Technology deployment for the provision of standard identities and verifications have been strengthened, thereby easing off the rigors/ challenges of processing and issuance of International Standard Book Numbers (ISBN), International Standard Serial Numbers (ISSN), Barcodes and Catalogue In Publication(CIP) details through our platforms (<https://isbn.nln.gov.ng> & <https://isbn.nln.gov.ng/search> respectively). Hence within the year under review over 17,001 International Standard Book Numbers (ISBN) and 1000 International Serial Numbers (ISSN) were issued to publishers and printers. It is also cheering that technology has enabled us to provide “Catalogue In Publication” (CIP) for over 1,767 resources during request for ISBN rather than the embarrassing statement ‘CIP collect from National Library of Nigeria’.

Providing back issues of Nigerian Newspapers for research, Subpoena and litigation is a mandate of the National Library which deployment and strengthening of its automation has yielded enormous fruits. The Newspaper indexing and abstracting platform deployed in May 2022 (nln.gov.ng/newspaperindex/) houses over 1,500 indexes and abstracts derived from articles of great value to Nigerians and beyond for research.

Strengthening the Bridge of Reading and Reaching the ‘Hard to Reach’ Communities.

All our efforts cannot yield fruit if Nigerians remain illiterates, uninformed and the country cannot achieve the SDG4 goal. Within this period, reaching the rural communities where the “hard to reach” are located and encouraging them to read was vigorously pursued. Readership Promotion Campaign of 2022 was implemented in remotely located local government areas in the 34 states of the Federation where over 43 book clubs were established with focal persons

nominated by the communities under the supervision of National Library Heads of Branches in the respective states. Thirty three (33) Literacy Centers were established and basic textbooks, exercise books, writing boards and other literacy materials were provided for the communities. Branches of the National Libraries are mandated to sensitize and motivate artisans, market men and women and school children through programs and distribution of basic books to encourage reading. Every branch of the National Library has a book club which meets regularly in the branches.

To ensure optimal reach to ‘the Hard to Reach’, we continue to engage remote communities during the International Literacy Day celebrations. Consequently, the 2023 International Literacy Day was celebrated in Karshi Community near Karu all with a view to make donation of literacy materials and sensitize them on the importance of reading and literacy.

Holiday programs are among the strategies deployed by my administration to encourage reading in all the states of the Federation. A lot of success stories are available online and physical in our branches in Kano, Kaduna, Jos, Enugu, Ilorin and Lagos etc where many of these programs are still ongoing as we speak. It is cheering that the National Library user (John John Obot) is involved in the **Readmania Contest** (World Longest Marathon Reading Aloud for 145hrs) which is still on going and at its 3rd day haven read for 43 hours none stop.

Literacy Sensitization and Encouraging Documentation of Family Heritage in Indigenous Languages

My administration continues to strengthen the need to encourage documentation of family heritage in indigenous languages. Presently we have positioned that one can only be considered illiterate if one cannot speak and write in any of the Nigeria

indigenous languages. Within this period, we have commissioned the documentation of some unexploited Nigerian heritage in Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo and Pidgin. These documentations which are already in video and pamphlet will be available in published form soon. My administration is also engaging Nigerians through the UNESCO Participatory Programme Workshop on the importance, ways and means of documenting family heritage. The workshop which was held at the Centre for Advanced Library Management Enugu from September 6th – 8th, 2023 was sponsored by UNESCO to serve as train the trainers with four Heads of Branches from Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, Pidgin languages where other participants were drawn.

Strengthening of the National Library Archives.

The National Library of Nigeria serves as the Nation's memory. We have commenced bringing into the Library some of our cherished and rich heritage that are being lost to modernity. We are reaching out to custodians of such resources; the traditional institutions, government and families. To achieve this goal, a Division has been created to fast track this important aspect.

Strengthening of Staff Competencies

Reinforcement of the 8-point agenda cannot be effective without the human element. It is stating the obvious that personnel and of course competent personnel are the columns of any organization's wall. Within this period we were able to strengthen the number of personnel by engaging over 100 new staff to man our operations and services. It was realized that new competencies, reorientation and a new way of engaging operations and services are requirements for the realization of the 8-point agenda. Thus, within the period, my administration with the support of my Management team engaged the staff in massive training within and outside

the National Library. Staff were trained on the use of indexing platform, technical and operational aspects of the National Repository and Virtual Library, Manual and Automated Cataloguing using Koha, and use of robotic scanner for digitization. A complete transformation training for the use of digital facilities was provided by the Digital Bridge Institute through three (3) weeks training sponsored by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC).

We have started engaging staff of branch libraries in training on Cataloguing and Classification of Legal Deposit resources. This will enable the National Library to decentralize processing of Legal Deposit resources which ab initio emanate from the branches, transported to the headquarters for processing and then back to the branches.

Strengthening the Enhancement of Branch Library Environment

Apart from the National Library Headquarters which must serve as a memory /heritage store house, the thirty-three (33) branches and FCT are positioned to serve as a **Learning Space** for the entire Nigerian Public. Consequently, a unique ambiance is expected in these environments. Thus, within these periods, efforts were made to renovate existing buildings in Sokoto, Niger, Kwara and Calabar. Within the period, we are making frantic efforts to have the six (6) prototype branch buildings in Abeokuta, Ilorin, Yenagoa, Jalingo, Ibadan and Oshogbo completed. We are hopeful that the current administration will achieve their completion many of which have only their external works pending.

To support efforts of the Library as a learning environment, Starlink through the **Gigabit Library Project** on June 2023 provided internet access for one year to three of our branches namely: Lagos, Kaduna and Abuja.

Strengthening the Establishment and Management of School Libraries for Promotion of Reading.

The Act establishing the National Library mandates it only to give advice on library development to any agency of the Federation or State that calls on her thereby denying her the power to supervise or direct on library development or use. This hinders the capacity of the National Library to ensure that school libraries are functional. However, within this period, branches are directed to visit schools and sensitize them on the need for library use and reading by students.

It is saddening to note that library hour is no longer implemented in many schools in Nigeria - primary and secondary schools. To this end, efforts is being made to resuscitate implementation of library hour in schools. To achieve this, a memo has been sent to the JCCE of the Federal Ministry of Education to consider it as a policy.

Strengthening the Bridge of collaboration.

The task is enormous in carrying out library services in 33 states and headquarters with little budgetary allocation. Efforts are being made to look for stakeholders to collaborate for effective and efficient service delivery. This collaboration is in line with the mandate of the institution. In my bid to attract stakeholders in education industry, we have also established collaboration with Coderina, Primeguage, Boldscholar, NCC, UNESCO, Bulgaria and China embassies in areas of literacy, family history, digitization and digital learning. We will not fail to emphasis the support provided to Nigeria for reading by the HAVILLAH Group which donated 11,305 volumes of books worth N50m during the National Library of Nigeria Readership Promotion Campaign flag-off of 2023.

Ladies and gentlemen of the press, I will not close without reiterating that the actualization of our Mandate has been impeded by the moribund Act of 1970 which the National Library has been operating under. It is cheering that my

administration's effort to ensure the repeal and enactment of a new Law of 2023 was vigorously pursued. Unfortunately, it was not assented to before the 30 days' time elapsed. We are optimistic that Senate on return from her break will address all the outstanding issue to enable its assent.

Our special thanks goes to the HONouable minister of Education Prof. Tahir Mamman and Honour minister of state for education Dr Yusuf Sununu for their reaffirmation and commitment to ensure that National Library Headquarters Building which was started in 2007 become a flagship project that must be completed by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration.

Conclusion

I must express my sincere gratitude to our partners in progress, the Journalists who have given the Organization the needed cooperation to educate Nigerians on the activities of the National Library of Nigeria. The Organization is also successful in the production of the In-House News Letter/Bulletin and Annual Magazine showcasing the functions and activities of the Organization toward creation of more understanding between National Library and Nigerian Public.

Though the National Library is bedeviled with enormous challenges ranging from accommodation through funding for the support of the 34 branches, to lack personnel, we will continue to work within our little capacity to preserve our heritage and get Nigerians reading thereby justifying the strength of the bridges we have built. This is also important as the National Library of Nigeria will be Mama of our heritage at 60 by November 2024.

I appeal to the press to give wider coverage to our activities. I believe that if you don't say here I am, nobody will say there you are. The National Library is doing great but little was reported.

To the Management team I thank you for tolerating my impatience to get the work done and to the entire staff, I thank you for total support.

Let us build the National Library the Country will be proud of.

Ladies and gentlemen of the press, this is my account of stewardship to the Nation in the last two years.

To me a great National Library of Nigeria is possible for us to build.

Long Live the Federal Republic of Nigeria

Thank you

Professor Chinwe Veronica Anunobi
National Librarian/CEO