

## **Enhancing Library Service Delivery through Innovative Design Imperatives in Rivers State Library**

**NYOBANA, Dum Livinus<sup>1</sup>,**

<sup>1</sup>Department of Architecture  
Rivers State University, Nkpolu Oroworukwo,  
Port Harcourt, Rivers State

**Arc. (Dr) T. D. Pepple<sup>2</sup>,**

<sup>2</sup>Department of Architecture  
Rivers State University, Nkpolu Oroworukwo,  
Port Harcourt, Rivers State

**Arc. (Dr) Ferdinard F. O. Daminabo<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>3</sup>Department of Architecture  
Rivers State University, Nkpolu Oroworukwo,  
Port Harcourt, Rivers State

### **Abstract:**

Library does not only provide leisure reading materials, but important information materials for divers' users. However, the existing libraries in the state lack modern facilities, and sufficient learning spaces. The inadequate facilities or lack of functional library has affected the literacy level of its users in the state. This study therefore aim to provide an innovative design for enhancing a conducive, standard and functional library for the general public in Rivers State. In this research work, innovative design imperatives were adopted and synthesized towards enhancing the overall library services and delivery. This was achieved through exploring the changing design trends of libraries as learning environment and highlighting the deficit in service delivery in public libraries. Case studies of existing structures was conducted following current trends that enhance the service delivery of such libraries and subsequently synthesizing all information gathered towards the design of a public library that will cater for the needs of the contemporary users whilst maintaining relevance in future. Deductive research method was used which involved collection of data from primary sources, case studies and appraisals of existing facilities. Results of the case studies shows that there is need for incorporation of universal design principles, use of simple circulation plans, and application of innovative design ideas such as: incorporation of technologies, and learning common spaces greatly enhances the outcome of public library service delivery. The research recommends that for public library to be relevant in contemporary dispensation, there need to be rapid adoption of innovative design imperative through the whole building design which emphasizes the need for efficient functional spaces, visual balance, and emphasis, aesthetically pleasing and user friendly environmental.

**Key words:** *Innovation, Service Delivery, Library, Rivers State.*

### **Introduction:**

Libraries in general, play an important role in all aspects of societal development especially when viewed against its users, which consists of all categories of people in the society. Andrew Carnegie in (IDEO, 2015) reaffirms that “a library outranks nay other one thing a community can do to benefit its people. It is a never failing spring in the desert”

UNESCO defines library as any organized collection of printed books and periodical or any other graphic or audio-visual materials with a staff to provide and facilitate the use of such materials as are required, to meet the informational, research, educational and recreational needs of users. (UNESCO, 2022)

The library was viewed as a public space that provided a quiet and safe place to independently gather and study. The public library is the local center of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users. The services of the public libraries are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, sex, religion, language or social status. All age groups must find materials relevant to their needs. Collections and services have to include all types of appropriate media and modern technologies as well as traditional materials. Materials must reflect current trends and to the evolution of society, as well as the memory of human endeavor and imagination. Libraries preserve valuable records of culture and other histories that can be passed down to succeeding generations. In planning and designing of a public library, the building structure, space needs of users, social interaction and use of technology in the library learning environment, must be considered.

Library plays a very important role as a tool used to assess the impact of its services on the literacy level in Rivers State. Library is a service institution that is intended to serve the public (users). Inadequate facilities or lack of functional library will definitely affect the literacy level of its users. People need to have access to adequate source of information when they visit the library. The existing libraries in the state lack modern facilities, sufficient learning space to fit into the trend of development. The contemporary methods of knowledge dissemination threatens the overall efficacy of libraries which, over centuries have served as monuments for knowledge dissemination and preservation.

They also lack, proper landscape of the environment, parking spaces, digital gadget, inadequate circulation spaces, lack of staff accommodation, inadequate conveniences and no internet services. This research tends to solve the problems of need of users, emphasized on the changing information, it will provide design innovation in terms of space user, social interaction and users' expectations. It will also take into consideration learning commons and requirements and expectations for a standard and modern public library for contemporary and future users.

## **Literature Review**

The online dictionary of Library and Information Science (ODLIS) also presents library as thus: “Library derived from the Latin word liber, meaning "book." In Greek and the Romance languages, the corresponding term is bibliotheca. A collection or group of collections of books and/or other print or non-print materials organized and maintained for use (reading, consultation, study, research, etc.). Institutional libraries, organized to facilitate access by a specific clientele, are staffed by librarians and other personnel trained to provide services to meet user needs. By extension, the room, building, or facility that houses such a collection, usually but not necessarily built for that purpose. (American Library Association, 2019)

For the purpose of emphasis, the Institute for Museum and Library Services outlines key elements that define a public library and these are:

A public library is established under state enabling laws or regulations to serve a community, district, or region, and provides at least the following:

- An organized collection of printed or other library materials, or a combination thereof;
- A paid staff;
- An established schedule in which services of the staff are available to the public;
- The facilities necessary to support such collection, staff and schedule and
- Is supported in whole or in part with public funds.

The above definition does not wholesomely cater for the advancement of the library as a service delivery hub; rather it provides for a space upon which the services of providing information is made possible. The rapidly changing landscape of knowledge and service delivery across all other sectors greatly threatens the impact for which such monumental structures often termed ‘libraries’ have on her contemporary users. This presents the need to drastically rethink the approach to design and provision of services in the library so as to compliment her users and project for future needs.

## **Library service Delivery**

Over time, the delivery of services by libraries was mainly bordered on provision of written and un-written resource materials, places for storage and consumption of such materials. In recent times, with the advances in the methods of dissemination and assimilation of knowledge across different platforms, the library is faced with a greater challenge of updating its methods of service delivery so as to operate in tandem with the contemporary systems whilst projecting the future trends.

As with other fields of endeavor, the library is witnessing new trends in her service delivery systems and is constantly evolving to fully incorporate these new trends. Some of which are: Information and communication technology; smart and self-service systems, and others. A study carried out using the early librarians reviewed that, librarians used to think being trendy was a bad thing and a sign of someone who lacks individuality and perhaps is inconsistent. Today, this position of the ancient librarians is inconsequential as libraries are switching over to use of ICTs, electronic resources and offering of digital services and other emergent technologies at an accelerated pace. These ICTs cut across computers, digital systems, multimedia technologies, storage devices and platforms, communication systems, the Internet, printers, closed circuit television, photocopier, scanners, servers, projectors, television, e-journals, e-books, CD-ROM and a variety of other ICTs. (Onuoha & Chukwueke, 2019)

### **Concept of Innovation**

**Design Thinking:** Design thinking as a concept of innovation is a creative approach, or a series of steps that will aid in designing meaningful outcomes for products and services. Jennifer Killian in (Hobcraft, 2017) defines Design thinking as ‘a methodology that is utilized to solve complex problems, and it is a way of using systemic reasoning and intuition to explore ideal future state. This is carried out with the end user or the customer in mind, first and foremost’.

Design thinking evolved at many organizations as the way to solve problems in creative and innovative ways. Much of the thinking behind the Design thinking process focuses on challenging assumptions and redefining problems for products, services or customer experiences.

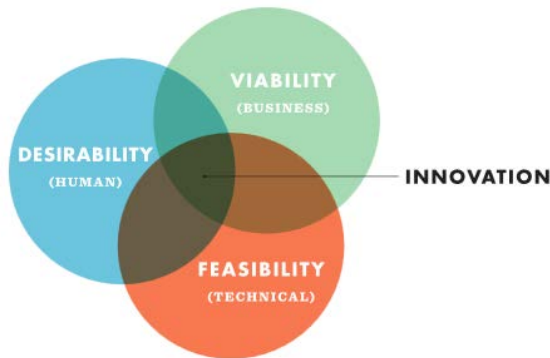
Design thinking (DT) is regarded as a system of three overlapping spaces: Viability, Desirability and Feasibility.

*Viability* refers to the business perspective of Design thinking

*Desirability* refers to the user’s perspective

*Feasibility* encompasses the technology perspective.

Innovation increases when all three perspectives are addressed. The Design thinking's ability to solve complex problems has designated it in the business milieu as a promising approach for innovation.



**Fig. 1:** Design Thinking: the intersection of three major factors of Design Thinking

Source: (IDEO, 2015)

### Design Thinking Process

- Design thinking starts with empathy, a deep human centered focus to gain insights which may reveal new and unexplored ways of seeing, and courses of action to follow in bringing about preferred situations for business and society.
- It involves reframing the perceived problem or challenge at hand, and gaining perspectives, which allow a more holistic look at the path towards these preferred situations.
- It encourages collaborative, multi-disciplinary teamwork to leverage the skills, personalities and thinking styles of many in order to solve multifaceted problems.
- It initially employs divergent styles of thinking to explore as many possibilities, deferring judgment and creating an open ideation space to allow for the maximum number of ideas and points of view to surface.
- It later employs convergent styles of thinking to isolate potential solution streams, combining and refining insights and more mature ideas, which pave a path forward
- It engages in early exploration of selected ideas, rapidly modelling potential solutions to encourage learning while doing, and allow for gaining additional insights into the viability of solutions before too much time or money has been spent
- It tests the prototypes which survive the processes further to remove any potential issues.
- It iterates through the various stages, revisiting empathetic frames of mind and then redefining the challenge as new knowledge and insight is gained along the way.

- It starts off chaotic and cloudy steamrolling towards points of clarity until a desirable, feasible and viable solution emerges.

### **Innovation as a concept of enhancing library service delivery**

Change is the only constant yet dynamic concept. It seems paradoxical but in reality, it is the moving force of growth. Libraries over time have been evolving, rather very slow paced, yet the rate of change of other sectors of life threatens her existence. For the library to be apace with the rapid rate of change in service delivery as well as overall performance, there needs to be the element of innovation.

The most important thing for scientists and developers to understand what kind of innovation should be used in the production, scientific discoveries, in project activity and the creation of new high-tech products, the provision of services and execution of works.

In the research work of (Kogabayev & Maziliauskas , 2017) “the definition and classification of innovation, they outline the various definitions and classification of innovation.

Schumpeter (1982) in Kogabayev & Maziliauskas , (2017), considered the founder of the theory of innovation in the economic field, regarded innovation as the economic impact of technological change, as the use of new combinations of existing productive forces to solve the problems of business.

Also, Swiss (1989) considers Innovation as a process that combines science, technology, economics and management, as it is to achieve novelty and extends from the emergence of the idea to its commercialization in the form of production, exchange, consumption.

Afuah (1998) refers to innovation as new knowledge incorporated in products, processes, and services. He classifies innovations according to technological, market, and administrative/organizational characteristics. Kogabayev & Maziliauskas , (2017)

Innovation consists of the generation of a new idea and its implementation into a new product, process or service, leading to the dynamic growth of the national economy and the increase of employment as well as to a creation of pure profit for the innovative business enterprise (in this case library service). Innovation is not a one-time phenomenon, but a long and cumulative process of a great number of organizational decision-making processes, ranging from the phase of generation of a new idea to its implementation phase. New idea refers to the perception of a new customer need or a new way to produce. It is generated in the cumulative process of information-gathering, coupled with an ever-challenging entrepreneurial vision. Through the implementation process the new idea is developed and commercialized into a new marketable

product or a new process with attendant cost reduction and increased productivity (Kogabayev & Maziliauskas , 2017)

Siauliai (2013) outlined the approaches to defining innovation, by pointing out three different elements: process, change, result. Change is not always spontaneous, it is deliberate, follows a process of creative iteration before generating results. When and if such results are examined and re-evaluated and it does not meet prescribed needs, the cycle loops until the desired result is met.

### **Universal Design – An Innovative Design Approach**

A multidisciplinary group of experts wrote The Principles of Universal Design in 1997 to clarify the scope of universal design, as it was perceived in the mid-1990s, and to provide guidance in both design and evaluation activities (Center for Universal Design 1997; Connell et al. 1997). (Steinfeld & Maisel, 2012)

- **Equitable use.** The design does not disadvantage or stigmatize any group of users.
- **Flexibility in use.** The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
- **Simple and intuitive use.** Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.
- **Perceptible information.** The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.
- **Tolerance for error.** The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.
- **Low physical effort.** The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.
- **Size and space for approach and use.** Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use, regardless of the user's body size, posture, or mobility.

However, experience has proven that there is a need to clarify the concept further and provide more extensive information resources for all the design disciplines. Over the years, nine criticisms of the Principles have been developed suggesting that the Principles be evidence-based and tied to a body of knowledge and consensus on best practices.

- **Fit with needs in the field.** Even as the Principles were being developed, several of the authors argued that they were more suited for product design than other design disciplines and that they were not readily applicable to specific design problems because the Guidelines lack detail. Since the Principles were published, many variants have appeared in the literature, suggesting that they do not quite fit all stakeholders' needs.
- **The issue of appearance.** Universal design requires more than just functional benefits. It extends the concept of inclusion to consumer “appeal” and benefits to people beyond those who have disabilities. Universal design would not be successful if other users found its appearance to be stigmatizing, if it made the user look awkward, or if it attracted undesirable attention.
- **Language.** The Principles should be clear and translate well into other languages. The Principle called “Tolerance for Error” seems to imply that errors should be tolerated; the intent of this Principle was to reduce errors in the use of a product and environment. The “Equitable in Use” Principle translates literally in at least one language (Japanese) to “equal opportunity,” which is a legal term and thus confuses a voluntary design practice with legal mandates. The “Flexibility in Use” Principle seems to imply that objects should bend during use.
- **Goals.** The Principles and guidelines lack clarity of purpose. The “Equitable in Use” Principle focuses on a social justice goal; “Flexibility in Use” is a design strategy; and the rest focus on human performance goals. Some Principles overlap in objectives.



- **Scope.** The Principles do not explicitly address several important issues, such as health promotion and disease prevention. The “Equitable Use” Principle addresses only two social participation issues in a limited way—segregation and stigma. Other social participation issues, such as social interaction and friendship formation, support for social role engagement, and accommodation of cultural differences, are missing.
- **Fit with context.** The Principles do not address the constraints imposed by context. There is a need to address contextual issues, such as historic preservation, sustainability, and urbanism, and constraints, such as available finances, human resources, and construction technology.
- **Narrow focus on personal empowerment.** The Principles focus on human performance and ignore personalization and customization, which address broader diversity issues and social identity in a more inclusive manner.
- **Difficulty for benchmarking.** The Principles and guidelines do not provide metrics or standards against which one can measure whether an environment, product, or service is indeed a good example of universal design. The terminology is not amenable to benchmarking. Thus, it is difficult to compare a universal design to one that is not and to establish best practices other than by professional judgment.
- **Lack of an evidence base.** The lack of a body of evidence tied to the Principles is a serious barrier to their use in practice. Terminology related to established domains of knowledge would overcome this gap. The problem becomes apparent when trying to do an Internet search for information on “Flexibility in Use,” “Tolerance for Error,” or “Equitable Use.”  
Steinfeld & Maisel, (2012)

The principles of Universal design together with the concepts of innovation with regards to the library will be adopted towards enhancing the library service delivery.

## **Research Methodology**

**Deductive Research:** deductive research method involving the collection of data from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources of information include physical visit, physical examination of existing conditions. Secondary sources of data collection include textbooks, publications, magazines, journals, internet sources, thesis reports.

**Case Study:** Case study method was adopted to appraise the existing Rivers state library to assess the present conditions of services, service delivery as well as effect of current technological trends in the overall service delivery of the Library.

## **Data Presentation and Analysis**

Case study of the existing Rivers state public library was conducted and the outcome of such is presented in this section.

**Project Name:** Rivers State Library

**Project Location:** #3 Bernard Carr Street, Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

## **Project Background**

The Library was built on 9<sup>th</sup> September, 1961 by the then Honorable Dr. Michael Iheonokara. She boasts a rich collection of literary works from all sectors of life, and has been a bedrock of literacy for the Rivers State populace.

Nonetheless, a recent visit to the library showed a well renovated structure but with obsolete materials in it. The library also is suffering from a shortage of man-power resources, as there are no adequate personnel to attend to readers.

Lamenting over the ordeal of the library, one of the senior management staff who pleaded anonymity said, "There is no electricity in the library, because we could not pay our bills. We have not received overhead cost in the past ten months, we are just using our wisdom to do

things here” The staff regretted that the library did not feel the impact of the city’s reign as the world book capital.

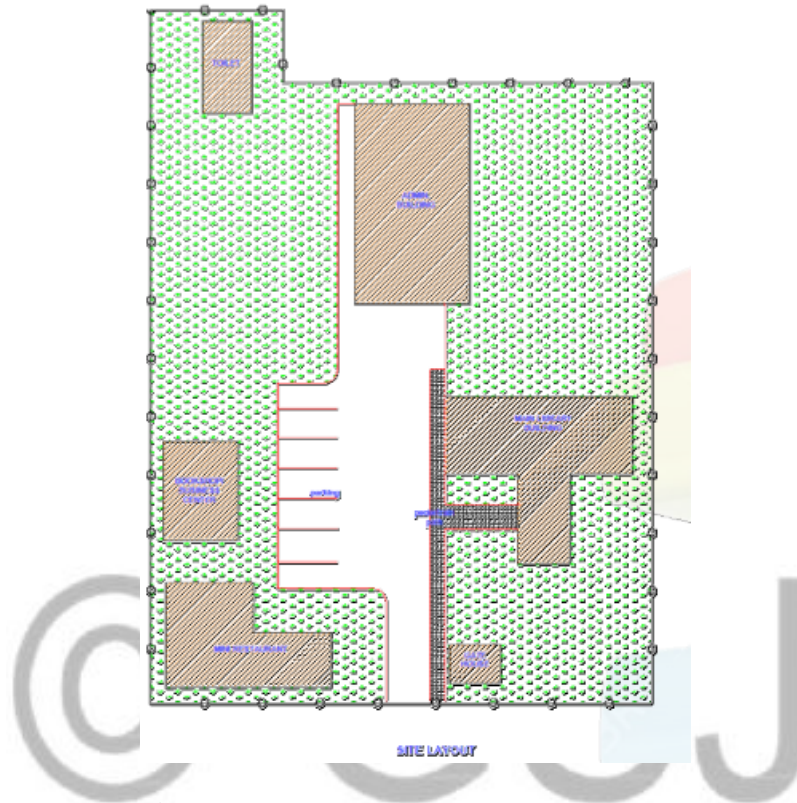
What is our gain in painting a structure, but no sheet called book since the reign” “The whole celebration started at presidential hotel, and ended in the same hotel. Is that progress? It’s so pathetic the condition we are subjected here. (Godwin, 2015)

Above is an excerpt from a national newspaper on the current state of service delivery in Port Harcourt public library which further reinforces the need to creatively think into ways to adopt innovation as a means of enhancing the overall service delivery standards.

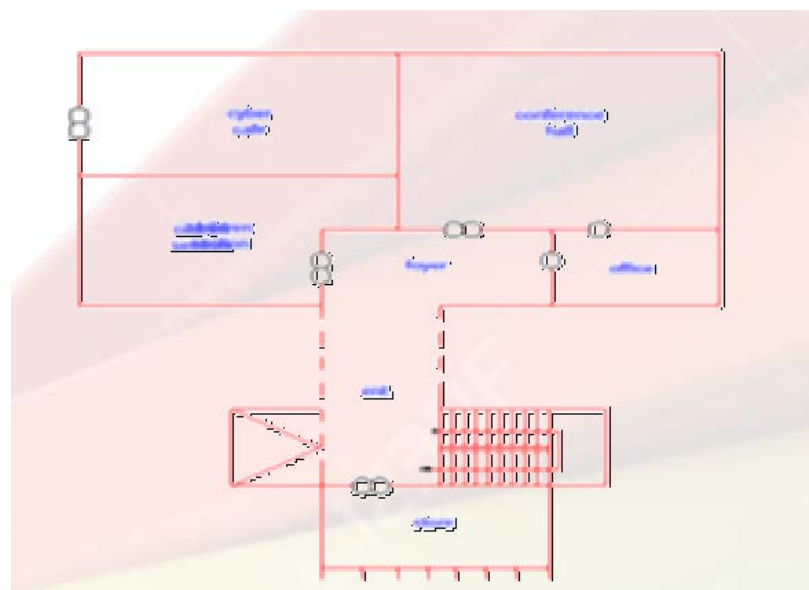
The following facilities are available in the library:

- Administrative building
- Acquisition office
- Director’s office
- General reception
- Cataloguing office, etc.
- Main library
- Conference area
- Children area
- Lending area
- Reference area
- Readers area
- Internet café area
- Book shop
- Sales area
- Computer training area
- Mini Restaurant

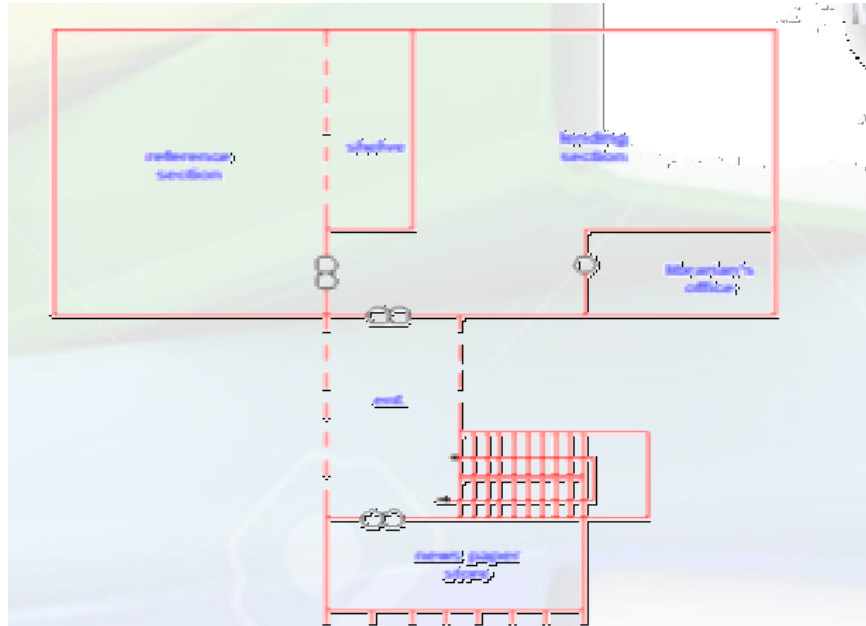
- Cart, kitchen
- Dining area
- Security post.



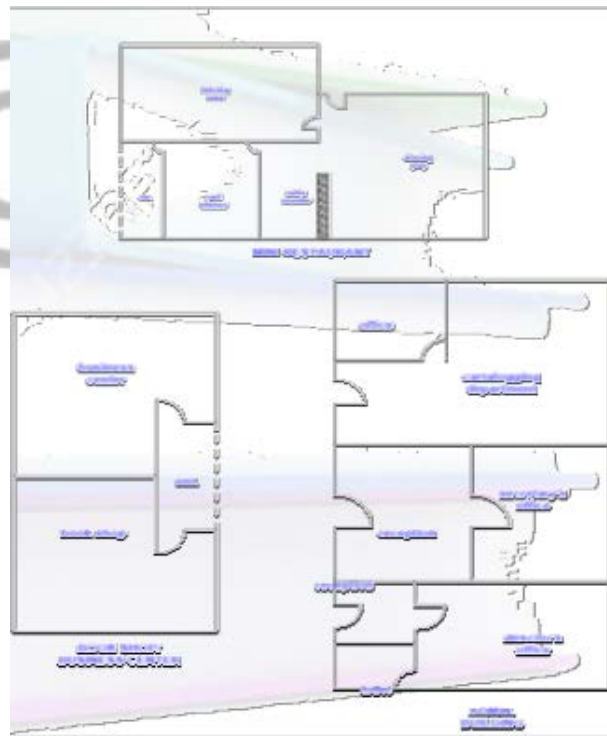
**Fig. 2:** Site layout of Port Harcourt Library  
**Source:** Author's field visit



**Fig. 3:** Ground Floor layout of Public Library  
**Source:** Author's sketch



**Fig. 4:** First Floor Layout of Rivers State Library  
Source: Author's sketch



**Fig. 2:** Anciliary Facilities  
Source: Author's sketch



Fig. 6: Interior of library - book shelves and reading area  
Source: ng.infoaboutcompanies.com



Fig. 7: Exterior view of public library  
Source: <https://guardian.ng/saturday-magazine/rivers-public-library-deteriorates-questions-over-pharcourts-reign-as-world-book-capital/>

## Appraisal

The public library experienced extensive overhauling of the infrastructure to suit the contemporary trends in building and technology, but had not incorporated the same technique into the service delivery sector of the library.

The library still runs a manual cataloguing system, analogue methods of sorting and categorizing information, are still adopted.

The library depends solely on the monumental design strategy of creating spaces that serve only for the core functions; whilst neglecting the changing trends such as: learning commons, lounges, cafes, ITC infrastructure, designing the library as a communal space as opposed to an educational enclave.

The library design lack in the adoption of simple and intuitive design strategies.

### Conclusion

Public libraries have, over time, served an invaluable component in the development of societies. But in recent years, the library sector, of which the public library is paramount is facing serious threats in her delivery of service to visitors due to the rapid advances in the standards and methods of service delivery across all other sectors of human endeavor. It was argued that the library will be obsolete as other means of knowledge acquisition takes center stage but this has not been the case. The library sector is greatly seeking avenues to stay relevant in present dispensation and this has instituted the creative approach towards enhancing the service delivery standards of such libraries through the adoption of innovative imperatives. Such imperatives as: learning common spaces, use of flexible spaces, universal design approaches were explored and researched upon. The results of the research was presented graphically through design. It was evident that, with the adoption of innovative imperatives in the design of public libraries, the level of services delivery is greatly improved.

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