# Advocacy and Marketing of the National Library of Nigeria

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## Abstract

The National Library of Nigeria plays a pivotal role in preserving the nation's intellectual heritage, promoting literacy, and supporting lifelong learning. However, limited public awareness and inadequate visibility have constrained optimal utilization of its resources and services. This position paper examines the importance of strategic advocacy and marketing as essential tools for repositioning the National Library of Nigeria in the digital and knowledge-driven era. The paper argues that effective advocacy through stakeholder engagement, policy influence, and community outreach can strengthen institutional support and funding. It further highlights innovative marketing approaches such as social media engagement, user-centered service promotion, partnerships with educational institutions, and branding initiatives as mechanisms for enhancing the library's public image and relevance. The paper concludes that a coordinated advocacy and marketing framework, supported by skilled personnel and modern communication channels, is necessary for expanding the National Library of Nigeria's visibility, accessibility, and impact on national development. Practical recommendations are offered for library managers, policymakers, and information professionals to drive sustainable transformation.

Keywords: Advocacy, Marketing, National Library of Nigeria, Library Visibility, Information Services

## Introduction

National libraries occupy a unique position within a country's educational, cultural, and information infrastructure. As apex library institutions, they are mandated to collect, preserve, organize, and provide access to a nation's published intellectual and cultural heritage while supporting research, education, policy formulation, and national development. They also serve as legal deposit institutions responsible for preserving documentary heritage for present and future generations. In the contemporary knowledge society, national libraries have expanded their traditional roles by embracing digital technologies, facilitating access to electronic information resources, supporting digital preservation, and promoting equitable access to knowledge (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions [IFLA], 2024).

The National Library of Nigeria (NLN), established by the **National Library Act No. 29 of 1970** (now Cap. N56, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004), is the country's foremost library institution with statutory responsibility for implementing the legal deposit system, developing the national bibliography, preserving Nigeria's published heritage, promoting reading culture, and providing national bibliographic and information services. Over the years, the National Library has expanded its services through state branches, literacy programmes, ISBN and ISSN administration, and support for researchers, policymakers, students, and the general public. These functions position the institution as a critical pillar for knowledge preservation, literacy development, and national intellectual advancement (National Library of Nigeria, 2024).

Globally, national libraries are increasingly repositioning themselves as dynamic knowledge institutions through advocacy, digital transformation, strategic partnerships, and innovative public engagement. Modern national libraries now utilize digital repositories, online catalogues, virtual exhibitions, institutional digitization programmes, social media platforms, and user-centered information services to improve accessibility and public participation. These innovations have enabled national libraries to remain relevant in rapidly changing information environments characterized by digital technologies, artificial intelligence, and evolving user expectations (UNESCO, 2023).

Despite its strategic mandate, the National Library of Nigeria faces considerable challenges relating to public visibility and utilization. Many Nigerians remain unaware of the institution's statutory functions, available information resources, literacy programmes, research support services, and digital initiatives. Consequently, library patronage remains below its potential, while opportunities for public engagement, collaboration, and knowledge dissemination are often underutilized. Limited awareness also affects public support for the institution and reduces recognition of its contribution to education, research, cultural preservation, and national development (Aina, 2021).

Advocacy has therefore become an indispensable strategy for strengthening institutional recognition and policy support for the National Library of Nigeria. Library advocacy involves deliberate efforts to influence policymakers, government agencies, educational institutions, development partners, and the general public regarding the value of library services and the need for sustained investment. Effective advocacy can facilitate increased funding, stronger policy implementation, enhanced institutional partnerships, and improved public appreciation of the library's role in national development. According to the American Library Association (ALA, 2023), successful advocacy depends on continuous stakeholder engagement, evidence-based communication, and demonstrating the measurable social, educational, and economic impacts of library services.

Closely related to advocacy is the concept of library marketing, which has become increasingly important in the digital era. Marketing in libraries involves identifying user needs, promoting available services, communicating institutional value, and developing long-term relationships with users and stakeholders. Contemporary library marketing extends beyond traditional publicity to include branding, social media engagement, digital communication, customer relationship management, community outreach, user education, and strategic partnerships. Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan (2021) argue that modern marketing emphasizes value creation, user engagement, and relationship building, principles that are highly relevant to library and information services. By adopting user-centered marketing approaches, libraries can enhance service visibility, attract new users, and improve user satisfaction.

Furthermore, rapid technological advancement has transformed how information users discover and consume information. The widespread use of smartphones, social media, online learning platforms, and artificial intelligence has increased expectations for instant, personalized, and technology-enabled information services. Consequently, the National Library of Nigeria must leverage digital communication channels and innovative service delivery models to reach diverse audiences, particularly young people, researchers, educators, entrepreneurs, and policymakers. Digital advocacy and marketing through websites, social media platforms, mobile applications, virtual programmes, and online exhibitions can significantly enhance institutional visibility and public engagement (IFLA, 2024).

In addition, collaboration with schools, universities, professional associations, publishers, civil society organizations, media organizations, and government agencies can expand the reach and impact of the National Library's advocacy and marketing initiatives. Such partnerships can promote reading culture, information literacy, cultural preservation, and lifelong learning while strengthening public confidence in the institution. Continuous staff capacity building in advocacy, strategic communication, public relations, digital marketing, and customer engagement is equally important for ensuring the successful implementation of these initiatives.

This position paper argues that advocacy and marketing are essential instruments for repositioning the National Library of Nigeria as a visible, accessible, and impactful national knowledge institution. Strengthening advocacy efforts, embracing innovative marketing strategies, and leveraging digital technologies will not only improve public awareness and utilization of the Library's services but also enhance institutional support, promote national literacy, preserve Nigeria's documentary heritage, and contribute to sustainable national development in the knowledge economy.

## Statement of the Problem

The National Library of Nigeria (NLN) occupies a strategic position as the apex library institution responsible for preserving Nigeria’s intellectual heritage, promoting literacy, supporting research, and providing access to national information resources. Through its legal deposit mandate, national bibliography services, ISBN/ISSN administration, literacy promotion programmes, and information services, the institution plays a significant role in supporting education, scholarship, cultural preservation, and national development. However, despite these important responsibilities, the level of public awareness, visibility, and utilization of the services provided by the National Library remains considerably below its potential (National Library of Nigeria, 2024).

One of the major challenges confronting the National Library of Nigeria is inadequate public awareness of its functions, resources, and services. Many citizens, including students, researchers, educators, and policymakers, have limited knowledge of the institution's mandate and the wide range of services available to them. This limited visibility has contributed to low patronage, reduced stakeholder engagement, and insufficient public recognition of the Library's contributions to national information development. In an era where information institutions compete for users' attention within a highly digital environment, the inability to effectively communicate institutional value presents a significant challenge to the continued relevance of the National Library (Aina, 2021).

Furthermore, the changing information landscape has created new expectations among library users. The widespread adoption of digital technologies, social media, online information platforms, and artificial intelligence-driven services has transformed how individuals discover, access, and consume information. Contemporary users increasingly expect libraries to provide convenient digital access, interactive communication channels, personalized services, and technology-enabled learning opportunities. However, limited digital marketing strategies, inadequate online visibility, and insufficient user-centered promotional activities may restrict the ability of the National Library of Nigeria to effectively engage modern information users (IFLA, 2024).

Another critical problem is the weak culture of strategic advocacy for libraries within Nigeria's policy and development environment. Although the National Library contributes significantly to literacy development, knowledge preservation, research support, and educational advancement, these contributions are not always adequately communicated to government agencies, funding bodies, development partners, and the general public. Limited advocacy efforts may affect institutional recognition, budgetary support, partnership opportunities, and the overall sustainability of library programmes. Effective advocacy is therefore necessary to demonstrate the social, educational, and economic value of the National Library and secure stronger institutional support (American Library Association [ALA], 2023).

In addition, inadequate application of modern marketing approaches remains a concern. Many library institutions traditionally rely on conventional publicity methods, which may not effectively reach contemporary audiences. In the digital era, libraries need to adopt innovative marketing strategies such as social media engagement, digital storytelling, branding, community outreach, user experience promotion, and strategic partnerships to improve visibility and strengthen relationships with users. Without effective marketing frameworks, valuable library resources and services may remain underutilized despite their potential contribution to national development (Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2021).

Although previous studies have examined library advocacy, marketing, and service promotion, limited attention has been given specifically to advocacy and marketing strategies for repositioning the National Library of Nigeria in the digital knowledge environment. Existing discussions often focus on general library development challenges without sufficiently examining how strategic communication, branding, stakeholder engagement, and digital marketing can enhance the visibility and impact of the National Library.

It is against this background that this position paper examines advocacy and marketing as essential strategies for strengthening the visibility, accessibility, and relevance of the National Library of Nigeria. The paper emphasizes the need for coordinated advocacy frameworks, innovative

marketing approaches, digital transformation, and stakeholder collaboration to reposition the institution as a highly visible and impactful national knowledge hub.

## Objectives of the Study

1. Examine the roles and contributions of the National Library of Nigeria in promoting literacy, preserving national intellectual heritage, and supporting information access and lifelong learning.
2. Identify the challenges affecting the visibility, public awareness, and utilization of the services and resources of the National Library of Nigeria.
3. Propose effective advocacy and marketing strategies for repositioning the National Library of Nigeria as a visible, accessible, and impactful national knowledge institution.

## Research Questions

1. What roles and contributions does the National Library of Nigeria play in promoting literacy, preserving national intellectual heritage, and supporting information access and lifelong learning?
2. What challenges affect the visibility, public awareness, and utilization of the services and resources of the National Library of Nigeria?
3. What advocacy and marketing strategies can be adopted to reposition the National Library of Nigeria as a visible, accessible, and impactful national knowledge institution?

## Literature Review

**Concept of National Libraries and their Strategic Roles:** National libraries represent the highest level of library institutions within a country and serve as central agencies responsible for collecting, preserving, organizing, and providing access to national knowledge resources. Unlike other types of libraries, national libraries have unique responsibilities that include legal deposit management, preservation of documentary heritage, development of national bibliographies, support for research, and promotion of literacy and lifelong learning. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA, 2024) describes national libraries as essential knowledge institutions that preserve a nation's intellectual memory while facilitating access to information resources necessary for education, research, innovation, and cultural development.

The National Library of Nigeria (NLN) occupies this strategic position as the apex library institution established to serve as the custodian of Nigeria's intellectual and documentary heritage. Its responsibilities include receiving legal deposit materials, compiling the Nigerian National Bibliography, administering ISBN and ISSN services, supporting research activities, promoting reading culture, and providing information services to diverse categories of users. Through these functions, the institution contributes significantly to knowledge preservation, educational advancement, and national development (National Library of Nigeria, 2024).

In the contemporary knowledge economy, the role of national libraries has expanded beyond traditional collection preservation to include digital preservation, open access initiatives, online information services, digitization of cultural resources, and public engagement through innovative communication channels. Modern national libraries are expected to operate as dynamic knowledge platforms that connect citizens with information and promote inclusive access to knowledge resources (UNESCO, 2023).

**Concept of Library Advocacy and its Importance:** Library advocacy refers to deliberate activities aimed at creating awareness, influencing decision-makers, securing support, and demonstrating the value and impact of library services to stakeholders. Advocacy enables libraries to communicate their contributions to education, research, literacy development, innovation, and social transformation. According to the American Library Association (ALA, 2023), effective advocacy involves building relationships with policymakers, communities, institutions, and funding bodies while using evidence-based communication to demonstrate library impact.

For national libraries such as the National Library of Nigeria, advocacy is particularly important because their effectiveness depends significantly on government support, policy recognition, adequate funding, and public participation. Through strategic advocacy, national libraries can strengthen institutional visibility, attract partnerships, influence policy decisions, and enhance public appreciation of their services. Advocacy also enables libraries to demonstrate their relevance in addressing contemporary challenges such as information inequality, digital exclusion, and limited access to reliable knowledge resources.

Research indicates that libraries that engage in consistent advocacy activities are more likely to receive stronger institutional support and community recognition. Advocacy efforts such as stakeholder meetings, literacy campaigns, public awareness programmes, media engagement, policy dialogue, and collaboration with educational institutions can significantly improve library visibility and service utilization (IFLA, 2024).

**Library Marketing and Service Promotion in the Digital Era:** Library marketing has become increasingly important as information institutions compete for users' attention in a highly digital environment. Marketing in libraries involves identifying user needs, promoting available resources and services, improving user experiences, and establishing meaningful relationships with communities. Unlike commercial marketing, library marketing focuses on increasing awareness, accessibility, and utilization of information services rather than generating profit (Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2021).

The digital transformation of society has significantly changed how libraries promote their services. Traditional promotional methods such as posters, newsletters, and physical announcements are increasingly complemented by digital marketing approaches, including social media platforms, websites, online exhibitions, email communication, mobile applications, and virtual engagement programmes. These tools allow libraries to reach wider audiences, particularly younger generations who increasingly rely on digital platforms for information discovery and communication.

For the National Library of Nigeria, adopting modern marketing strategies is essential for improving public awareness of its services. Digital branding, social media storytelling, online user education, virtual tours, digital exhibitions, and targeted communication campaigns can help promote the institution's collections, literacy programmes, research support services, and cultural preservation initiatives. Effective marketing can transform the perception of the National Library from a traditional information repository into an accessible and innovative knowledge institution.

**Visibility Challenges Facing the National Library of Nigeria:** Despite its national importance, the National Library of Nigeria faces several challenges that affect its visibility and utilization. One major challenge is limited public awareness regarding the institution's mandate and available services. Many Nigerians are unfamiliar with the wide range of services provided by the National Library, including legal deposit services, bibliographic control, research support, literacy

programmes, and access to national information resources. This lack of awareness reduces user engagement and limits the institution's impact on society (Aina, 2021).

Another challenge is inadequate funding and resource limitations. Insufficient financial support affects infrastructure development, acquisition of current information resources, digitization projects, technological advancement, and implementation of innovative service delivery models. Without adequate resources, the ability of the National Library to compete within the modern digital information environment becomes constrained.

The literature also identifies technological challenges as important factors affecting library visibility. Modern users increasingly expect online access, digital collections, interactive platforms, and instant communication channels. However, limited technological infrastructure and inadequate digital transformation initiatives may reduce the capacity of national libraries to effectively engage users in the digital era (IFLA, 2024).

Additionally, limited marketing expertise and weak institutional branding may contribute to reduced public recognition. Many libraries have traditionally focused more on service provision than on actively promoting their achievements and communicating their value to stakeholders. Developing professional marketing skills among library personnel is therefore essential for improving institutional visibility and strengthening user relationships.

**Strategic Approaches for Strengthening Advocacy and Marketing:** The literature suggests several strategies for improving library advocacy and marketing effectiveness. First, libraries should develop structured advocacy frameworks that identify key stakeholders, define communication objectives, and establish measurable outcomes. For the National Library of Nigeria, this involves engaging government agencies, educational institutions, researchers, media organizations, professional associations, and community groups.

Second, libraries should embrace digital marketing strategies to increase public engagement. Social media platforms, websites, mobile communication tools, and online content creation provide cost-effective methods for reaching diverse audiences. Through consistent digital presence and interactive communication, the National Library can improve awareness and encourage greater utilization of its resources and services.

Third, partnerships and collaborations are essential for expanding library influence. Collaboration with universities, schools, publishers, technology organizations, and cultural institutions can strengthen literacy programmes, digitization initiatives, research support services, and public engagement activities. Such partnerships can also enhance resource sharing and institutional sustainability.

Finally, continuous professional development of library staff is necessary for successful advocacy and marketing implementation. Librarians require competencies in strategic communication, public relations, digital marketing, branding, social media management, and stakeholder engagement. Building these skills will enable library professionals to effectively promote services and demonstrate institutional value.

## Discussion

The quality of legislation is closely associated with the extent to which lawmakers have access to credible information, empirical evidence, and diverse stakeholder perspectives during the legislative process. In modern democracies, effective legislation is no longer viewed solely as a

political function but as a knowledge-driven process that requires continuous interaction between legislators, researchers, information professionals, and the public. The findings from the reviewed literature indicate that countries with strong legislative research systems and institutionalized stakeholder engagement tend to produce more responsive, transparent, and sustainable legislation (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2022).

In Nigeria, although the National Assembly and State Houses of Assembly possess constitutional authority to enact laws, legislative effectiveness is often constrained by inadequate research support, limited access to quality information, and weak integration of evidence into policymaking. This situation contributes to policy inconsistencies, ineffective implementation of laws, and reduced public confidence in democratic institutions. As noted by Edet and Attai (2014), legislative responsibilities have become increasingly complex due to emerging economic, technological, environmental, and social challenges, making access to reliable information indispensable for informed decision-making.

A major issue emerging from this paper is the underutilization of libraries and information professionals in legislative processes. Traditionally, libraries have been perceived primarily as repositories of books and archival materials. However, contemporary libraries have evolved into strategic knowledge institutions capable of providing research support, policy analysis, information synthesis, knowledge management, and evidence retrieval services. Information professionals possess competencies in organizing, evaluating, and disseminating authoritative information that can significantly improve legislative deliberations and policy formulation (Pawar, 2026). Their involvement would strengthen the quality of legislative debates and reduce reliance on assumptions, partisan interests, or incomplete information.

The discussion also highlights the growing importance of legislative libraries and parliamentary research services in promoting evidence-informed governance. International best practices demonstrate that parliamentary libraries provide lawmakers with objective policy briefs, comparative legislative analyses, background studies, and access to national and international information resources that improve the quality of legislative outputs (Ikokoh, 2026). Strengthening similar structures within Nigeria's legislative institutions would enhance lawmakers' capacity to address increasingly complex governance issues through informed and balanced decision-making.

Another important issue is stakeholder engagement. Effective legislation requires active participation from universities, research institutes, professional associations, civil society organizations, development partners, community groups, and citizens. Such collaboration enriches legislative debates by incorporating practical experiences, scientific evidence, and community perspectives into policy development. Inclusive engagement also promotes transparency, accountability, and public ownership of legislative outcomes, thereby strengthening democratic governance (OECD, 2022). Unfortunately, existing consultation mechanisms in Nigeria remain relatively weak and often occur only after critical legislative decisions have been made.

The paper further argues that librarians and information professionals should reposition themselves as active policy advocates rather than passive custodians of information resources. This involves producing policy briefs, legislative digests, evidence summaries, research syntheses, and knowledge translation products specifically designed for policymakers. In addition, librarians can organize policy dialogues, stakeholder consultations, legislative information forums, and capacity-building programmes that improve legislators' access to credible evidence and enhance information literacy among public officials (Gbotosho et al., 2026). Such proactive engagement

would strengthen the visibility and relevance of the library profession within national governance structures.

Furthermore, the increasing complexity of governance in the digital age demands stronger collaboration between legislative institutions and knowledge organizations. Emerging issues such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, climate change, digital economy, public health, and sustainable development require multidisciplinary expertise that extends beyond the traditional competencies of legislators. Partnerships with libraries, universities, think tanks, and research institutions would therefore provide lawmakers with timely, reliable, and interdisciplinary evidence needed to formulate forward-looking legislation that responds effectively to contemporary societal challenges (Goar et al., 2025).

Overall, this position paper demonstrates that engaging legislators through structured research support, strengthened library services, institutionalized stakeholder participation, and evidence-based advocacy can significantly improve legislative quality in Nigeria. Such an approach would enhance transparency, accountability, policy effectiveness, and public trust while positioning libraries and information professionals as indispensable partners in democratic governance and sustainable national development (Aremu, Reynolds, & Sager, 2026).

## Conclusion

This paper has examined advocacy and marketing as essential strategies for enhancing the visibility, accessibility, and relevance of the National Library of Nigeria in the contemporary knowledge environment. The discussion established that the National Library plays a critical role in preserving Nigeria's intellectual heritage, promoting literacy, supporting research, and facilitating access to national information resources. However, despite its strategic importance, limited public awareness, inadequate visibility, weak promotional efforts, technological challenges, and insufficient stakeholder engagement have constrained the optimal utilization of its services.

The paper concludes that the sustainability and continued relevance of the National Library of Nigeria depend not only on the availability of information resources but also on the institution's ability to effectively communicate its value to users, policymakers, and society at large. Advocacy and marketing should therefore be integrated into the strategic management of the Library to strengthen public awareness, improve service utilization, attract institutional support, and enhance its contribution to national development.

A coordinated approach involving digital transformation, stakeholder partnerships, professional capacity development, and innovative communication strategies is necessary to reposition the National Library of Nigeria as a visible, accessible, and dynamic knowledge institution capable of meeting the information needs of citizens in the twenty-first century.

## Recommendations

1. The National Library of Nigeria should develop and implement a comprehensive advocacy framework that targets government agencies, educational institutions, policymakers, researchers, and communities to increase awareness of its mandate, resources, and contributions to national development.
2. The Library should strengthen its marketing and digital engagement strategies through active use of social media platforms, improved website services, digital exhibitions, online awareness campaigns, and user-centered communication approaches to promote its resources and services to diverse user groups.
3. Government and relevant stakeholders should provide adequate financial, technological, and policy support to enable the National Library of Nigeria to modernize its services, improve digital infrastructure, train library professionals in advocacy and marketing skills, and sustain innovative programmes that enhance visibility and public impact.

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