VOL. 10 NO. 9,
NOVEMBER, 2025
E-ISSN 3026-958X
P-ISSN 3027-1169

African Scholar Publications & Research International
www.africanscholarpub.com

Journal of Science Innovation & Technology Research (JSITR)

Revitalizing Nigerian Libraries through Digital Infrastructure: A Blueprint for Equitable National Knowledge Access

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.70382/ajsitr.v10i9.073

Abstract
Nigeria's libraries, once vital to education and national development, are facing a deep relevance crisis in the digital age. Years of underfunding, obsolete infrastructure, and fragmented policies have left them unable to meet the information and learning needs of a knowledge-driven society. This study adopts a documentary research design, analyzing policy papers, institutional reports, and scholarly literature to examine the structural and governance barriers hindering library digitization in Nigeria. Anchored in the knowledge society and digital inclusion paradigms, the study identifies three key constraints: weak policy coherence, uneven ICT capacity across regions, and limited investment in human and technological infrastructure. Findings reveal that while policy frameworks exist, their implementation remains inconsistent and poorly aligned with national digital economy goals. The paper develops a digital infrastructure revitalization blueprint, proposing integrated strategies for capacity building, sustainable funding, and coordinated governance. The study contributes theoretically by linking library modernization to the broader discourse on knowledge equity and practically by offering a roadmap for transforming Nigerian libraries into inclusive digital knowledge ecosystems.

Keywords: Information Equity, Policy Coherence, Knowledge Ecosystem, Institutional Resilience, Capacity Enhancement.

Introduction

Libraries have long served as pivotal institutions for the preservation, dissemination, and democratization of knowledge. In Nigeria, the history of library development dates back to the colonial era, when mission schools and government institutions established rudimentary collections to support literacy and administration. The institutionalization of library services began with the formation of the Nigerian Library Association in 1962 and the enactment of the National Library Act of 1964, which created the National Library of Nigeria as the apex bibliographic agency (Aguolu & Aguolu, 2002). These milestones positioned libraries as integral components of the national education and development agenda, envisioned to provide equitable access to information for learning, innovation, and cultural preservation.

However, decades of underinvestment, weak policy implementation, and poor technological adaptation have eroded the effectiveness of Nigerian libraries. Once regarded as democratic spaces for civic learning and public enlightenment, most public and academic libraries now suffer from obsolete infrastructure, inadequate funding, and insufficient digital capacity (Oyedun, 2016). The National Library of Nigeria (2019) reports that more than 70% of public libraries operate with outdated materials, minimal ICT facilities, and limited professional staffing. These deficiencies have created a persistent digital divide, with rural and peri-urban areas particularly disadvantaged. While some universities have advanced digitization through donor-supported projects, progress remains fragmented, poorly coordinated, and unsustainable (Edewor et al., 2016). This reflects a broader absence of a cohesive national digital library framework linking information access to Nigeria's evolving digital economy and sustainable development goals.

In the context of a global information society, access to knowledge now depends on robust digital infrastructure and institutional readiness. Yet, Nigeria continues to rank low in global digital competitiveness and information readiness indices (World Bank, 2021), revealing systemic barriers to digital inclusion and knowledge equity. Against this backdrop, this study adopts a documentary research design to critically examine the structural, policy, and technological challenges hindering the digital revitalization of Nigerian libraries. It introduces a digital infrastructure revitalization blueprint, a strategic framework integrating infrastructural renewal, capacity building, and coordinated policy reform to transform libraries into smart knowledge ecosystems that drive innovation and inclusive national development.

This paper therefore seeks to analyze existing evidence and policy frameworks on library digitization in Nigeria, identify key institutional and infrastructural gaps, and propose implementable strategies for sustainable library modernization aligned with the Federal Government's digital economy agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4 & 9).

Problem Statement/Justification

Libraries are universally recognized as catalysts for knowledge creation, learning, and national development. Yet in Nigeria, the majority of public and institutional libraries remain trapped in an analog system that no longer meets the demands of a digital knowledge economy. Decades of inadequate investment, obsolete infrastructure, and inconsistent policy implementation have resulted in widespread technological stagnation (Edewor et al., 2016). While the global information environment increasingly depends on digital connectivity and online learning platforms, Nigerian libraries continue to operate with limited ICT capacity, unreliable internet access, and minimal digital content. These deficiencies have widened the information access gap between Nigeria and digitally advanced societies, excluding millions of citizens—particularly students, researchers, and rural populations—from vital knowledge resources.

The absence of a coherent national framework for library digitization has further fragmented progress, leaving digitization efforts sporadic, donor-driven, and urban-centered. This policy vacuum undermines Nigeria's aspirations for educational innovation, human capital development, and sustainable growth. Urgent digital revitalization is therefore imperative to reposition libraries as inclusive knowledge infrastructures that drive lifelong learning and national competitiveness. Proposing a digital infrastructure revitalization blueprint is justified as a strategic response to this systemic stagnation—one that aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4 and SDG 9) and the Federal Government's digital economy agenda by promoting equitable access to information, innovation, and digital literacy.

Objectives of the Study

The general aim of the study is to examine the current state of library infrastructure in Nigeria and develop a strategic blueprint for revitalizing Nigerian libraries through digital technologies to enhance equitable national access to knowledge and information resources. Specific objectives:

1. To assess the existing level of digital infrastructure and technological integration in public and academic libraries across Nigeria.
2. To identify key challenges and barriers hindering the digitization and modernization of library services in Nigeria.
3. To propose a sustainable and scalable digital infrastructure framework aimed at transforming Nigerian libraries into modern knowledge access hubs.

Literature Review

Libraries, Knowledge, and National Development

Libraries are universally acknowledged as vital institutions for the generation, preservation, and dissemination of knowledge. They serve as intellectual infrastructures that facilitate literacy, research, innovation, and socio-economic advancement (Aguolu & Aguolu, 2002; IFLA, 2020). Globally, libraries have evolved beyond being mere storehouses of books to

become catalysts of knowledge economies and digital citizenship. They play a fundamental role in sustaining the democratization of knowledge by bridging social divides through equitable access to information resources (Kargbo, 2019).

In the Nigerian context, the evolution of libraries mirrors the trajectory of the country's educational and development planning. The earliest libraries were established during the colonial period by missionary and government institutions to promote literacy among the elite. However, the institutionalization of library services occurred post-independence with the establishment of the Nigerian Library Association (1962) and the National Library of Nigeria (1964) under the National Library Act. These developments marked the birth of a national information infrastructure aimed at fostering literacy, national consciousness, and intellectual growth (Aguolu & Aguolu, 2002).

Nevertheless, this early promise has been undermined by decades of neglect, inadequate funding, weak governance, and a slow response to global digital transitions. Public libraries—once viewed as engines of enlightenment—have become relics of the analog era, characterized by outdated collections, poor staffing, and obsolete technologies (Oyedun, 2016; Edewor, Okite-Amughoro, & Egharevba, 2016). The National Library of Nigeria (2019) reports that over 70% of public libraries operate without modern ICT facilities or updated materials. Consequently, millions of Nigerians—especially students, researchers, and rural dwellers—are excluded from accessing contemporary digital knowledge resources, deepening the information poverty gap in the country.

From Traditional Libraries to Digital Knowledge Infrastructures

The global shift from traditional to digital libraries represents a paradigmatic transformation in how knowledge is created, stored, and accessed. The digital library paradigm emphasizes interactivity, user-centric service delivery, and seamless connectivity across repositories, databases, and institutional networks (IFLA, 2020). Digital infrastructures—encompassing hardware, software, connectivity, and human capacity—serve as the backbone of this transformation, enabling the creation, preservation, and dissemination of information in digital formats (Okon, 2021). This transition, however, has been uneven across the Global South. In Nigeria, several digitization initiatives such as the Nigerian Virtual Library Project, the National Universities Commission (NUC) e-Library, and TETFund-supported digital repositories have emerged (Ezeani & Ekere, 2009; Nwafor & Uduakobong, 2023). Yet, these efforts remain fragmented, donor-dependent, and rarely institutionalized due to weak policy coordination, poor maintenance culture, and unreliable power and internet infrastructure (Ogbomo, 2010; NITDA, 2020). Consequently, while some academic libraries have achieved partial integration into the digital ecosystem, most public libraries remain disconnected from the global digital knowledge network.

Challenges Hindering Library Digital Transformation in Nigeria

1. **Inadequate Funding and Policy Gaps:** The literature consistently identifies poor funding as the most critical constraint to library modernization in Nigeria. Public libraries receive meager allocations compared to other sectors in the educational system, making it difficult to procure ICT equipment or sustain digital projects (Ezeani, 2011; Nwalo, 2003). Funding scarcity often leads to reliance on donor-funded, short-term interventions that lack sustainability mechanisms. Furthermore, national information and ICT policies—though rhetorically supportive of digital transformation—seldom include clear legislative mandates or budgetary frameworks for library digitization (Oyedun, 2016). The absence of a coordinated national policy framework has perpetuated disjointed implementation across states and institutions.
2. **Obsolete Infrastructure and Limited Technical Capacity:** The technological infrastructure of most Nigerian libraries is severely outdated. Basic ICT tools such as functional computers, broadband internet, and digital cataloguing systems are either unavailable or underutilized (Anyaoku, Osuigwe, & Ezeani, 2019). Compounding this challenge is the limited digital competence among library personnel. Studies by Oyesiku and Oduwole (2004) and Anyaoku et al. (2019) reveal that many librarians lack the technical expertise to manage digitization processes, metadata creation, and cybersecurity. This skills deficit perpetuates dependency on external consultants, leading to unsustainable digitization efforts once external funding ceases.
3. **The Digital Divide and Power Deficits:** Nigeria's digital divide mirrors broader socio-economic inequalities. Rural and peri-urban areas lag far behind urban centers in terms of digital infrastructure, access to electricity, and internet connectivity (World Bank, 2021; Okon, 2021). Many public libraries, particularly in rural communities, operate without reliable electricity or internet, severely limiting users' access to e-resources and online learning platforms. Frequent power interruptions not only disrupt library operations but also threaten data security and preservation (Nwalo, 2003). These infrastructural barriers collectively undermine the capacity of libraries to function as inclusive knowledge centers in the digital age.

Opportunities and Strategic Rationale for Digitization

Despite persistent challenges, digitization presents a viable pathway to revitalizing Nigeria's libraries and advancing equitable knowledge access. Digital libraries enhance the democratization of information by enabling remote access to materials, regardless of geographical or physical barriers (Aguolu, 2002). They also facilitate the preservation of indigenous knowledge, safeguarding oral traditions, cultural artifacts, and historical archives for future generations (Igun, 2006). Furthermore, digital infrastructures enable collaborative networks—inter-library partnerships that promote shared catalogues, joint digitization projects, and cloud-based resource sharing (Anunobi & Ezejiofor, 2014).

Aligning digitization with Nigeria's National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS) can reposition libraries as central actors in national digital transformation. This approach emphasizes inclusion, innovation, and human capital development as key drivers of socio-economic progress (Federal Ministry of Communications & Digital Economy, 2020). In this context, libraries are not peripheral cultural institutions but core elements of the digital ecosystem—bridging the gap between education, innovation, and national development.

Empirical Evidence from Nigerian Library Studies

Empirical investigations on library development and digitization in Nigeria provide valuable evidence of both progress and persistent structural limitations that shape the country's knowledge access system. Collectively, these studies reveal a sector marked by innovation potential but constrained by weak institutional frameworks, inadequate funding, and uneven policy execution.

Ezeani and Ekere (2009) conducted one of the earliest systematic assessments of digital library implementation in southeastern Nigeria, uncovering that most digitization initiatives were severely hampered by chronic underfunding and limited staff capacity. Their findings emphasized that while the introduction of digital library systems had begun in select academic institutions, the absence of sustainable financing models and skilled personnel led to project stagnation. This study highlighted the need for institutionalized training and long-term infrastructural investment—issues that remain central to the digital inclusion debate.

Building on this perspective, Ogbomo (2010) examined user engagement in rural public libraries and found that such libraries experienced acute underutilization due to poor ICT access, minimal awareness of digital resources, and widespread digital illiteracy among users. The study revealed that, in rural Nigeria, libraries still function largely as static book repositories rather than interactive knowledge environments. From a *digital inclusion* standpoint, this underscores how infrastructural deficits and socio-economic disparities jointly reinforce the digital divide, excluding rural populations from the national information ecosystem.

In a broader institutional analysis, Anyaoku, Osuigwe, and Ezeani (2019) identified significant disparities in digital library development across Nigerian universities. They attributed these inconsistencies to fragmented policy frameworks, lack of government oversight, and inadequate coordination among tertiary institutions. The study revealed that universities with proactive ICT policies and administrative support exhibited stronger digitization outcomes, while others lagged due to bureaucratic inertia and poor alignment with national information strategies. This finding aligns with the *knowledge society* paradigm, which posits that institutional coherence and governance quality are critical determinants of a nation's capacity to produce and disseminate knowledge.

Expanding the scope to emerging technologies, Okon (2021) investigated the adoption of cloud computing and digital preservation systems in Nigerian university libraries. The study reported low levels of implementation, citing concerns about cybersecurity, unreliable power

supply, and insufficient technical expertise. Okon's findings highlight the dual challenge of technological readiness and digital resilience—factors central to building modern library systems that can sustain innovation and protect digital assets in an increasingly networked knowledge environment.

More recently, Nwafor and Uduakobong (2023) evaluated a TETFund-supported digital library initiative and identified three critical success determinants: the development of localized digital content, consistent infrastructure maintenance, and the retraining of library staff. Their work revealed that libraries which incorporated indigenous research outputs, cultural archives, and community-generated knowledge achieved greater user engagement and sustainability. This finding demonstrates that meaningful digitization in Nigeria requires not only technological investment but also the cultivation of locally relevant knowledge ecosystems that promote cultural inclusion and intellectual independence.

When considered collectively, these empirical studies converge on a central insight: *the digital transformation of Nigerian libraries is constrained less by the absence of technology than by systemic governance failures, human capacity gaps, and policy fragmentation*. The recurring themes—limited funding, inadequate technical skills, and poor institutional coordination—reveal an implementation gap between policy ambition and practical realization.

From the perspective of the Knowledge Society framework, this gap signifies Nigeria's incomplete transition from traditional repositories of information to dynamic, networked knowledge systems that fuel innovation and development. Simultaneously, through the lens of Digital Inclusion theory, the evidence underscores the inequitable access to digital knowledge infrastructures that continues to marginalize certain regions and user groups.

The empirical literature on library digitization in Nigeria reveals a complex but consistent narrative: while there have been incremental advances in integrating digital technologies, these efforts remain fragmented, underfunded, and largely unsustainable. Most digitization projects are institution-specific, donor-driven, and lack the systemic coordination required to produce long-term national impact. Studies by Ezeani and Ekere (2009), Ogbomo (2010), and Anyaoku et al. (2019) collectively demonstrate that Nigeria's library ecosystem is caught between analog dependency and digital aspiration—an intermediary state that limits the transformative potential of libraries in the knowledge economy.

The evidence also indicates that digitization initiatives in Nigeria are predominantly technological rather than strategic, focusing narrowly on the procurement of ICT equipment without parallel investment in policy coherence, infrastructure maintenance, or human capital development. Okon's (2021) findings on low cloud computing adoption and Nwafor and Uduakobong's (2023) emphasis on local content and staff training further expose the absence of an integrated national framework to guide sustainable digital transformation. This governance vacuum results in duplication of efforts, resource wastage, and persistent inequalities in digital access, particularly between urban and rural libraries.

From a Knowledge Society perspective (Castells, 2000), these limitations signify Nigeria's incomplete transition from traditional information institutions to dynamic, networked

knowledge infrastructures capable of supporting innovation and economic development. Similarly, through the lens of Digital Inclusion theory (UNESCO, 2021), the uneven distribution of ICT resources and technical expertise perpetuates an information divide that undermines social equity and educational opportunity. The convergence of these theoretical insights underscores that the challenges facing Nigerian libraries are not merely technological but structural and systemic—rooted in governance, policy, and institutional culture.

Despite the growing body of research on library digitization in Nigeria, a critical gap remains: there is no comprehensive, evidence-based national model that integrates digital infrastructure, human resource capacity, local content development, and sustainable governance mechanisms into a single strategic framework. Existing studies tend to focus on isolated aspects—such as user access, technical readiness, or policy deficiencies—without offering a holistic blueprint for revitalizing libraries as inclusive digital knowledge hubs.

This study therefore addresses that gap by developing a Digital Infrastructure Revitalization Blueprint for Nigerian Libraries, anchored in the principles of the *Knowledge Society* and *Digital Inclusion* frameworks. By synthesizing empirical evidence and policy analysis, the research seeks to provide a practical roadmap for transforming libraries into digitally empowered institutions that advance equitable access to knowledge, innovation, and lifelong learning across Nigeria.

Theoretical and Developmental Perspectives

The discourse on library digitization in Nigeria is anchored in two interrelated theoretical perspectives: Knowledge Society Theory and the Digital Inclusion Framework.

Knowledge Society Theory (Castells, 2000) posits that access to and utilization of information are central to economic competitiveness, innovation, and governance. Within this paradigm, libraries serve as key enablers of human capital development and civic empowerment. A knowledge-driven society depends on institutions that facilitate equitable access to information, making libraries indispensable in bridging knowledge gaps and nurturing informed citizenry (Machin-Mastromatteo, 2016).

The Digital Inclusion Framework, championed by UNESCO (2021), emphasizes that access to ICT is a basic social right and a precondition for equitable participation in the knowledge economy. Digital inclusion extends beyond mere connectivity to encompass digital literacy, affordability, accessibility, and relevance of content. Within this framework, libraries are pivotal actors in promoting digital equity, particularly for marginalized groups lacking access to technology or information resources (Hernon & Matthews, 2013). Together, these frameworks underscore that, revitalizing libraries through digital infrastructure is both a technological necessity and a development imperative. They position libraries as essential nodes within a larger ecosystem that links education, innovation, and inclusive development.

Nigeria's library system remains technologically obsolete, underfunded, and policy-fragmented, yet it holds immense potential for reform through digital transformation. Previous studies have explored aspects of digitization, such as ICT adoption or capacity development,

but few have proposed an integrated, national-level digital infrastructure blueprint that harmonizes technology, policy, and human capital development.

This study therefore fills a critical gap by proposing a Digital Infrastructure Revitalization Blueprint designed to reposition Nigerian libraries as inclusive, technology-enabled knowledge hubs. By linking empirical realities with theoretical insights from knowledge society and digital inclusion frameworks, the study contributes to both scholarly discourse and policy practice. Moreover, it aligns with Sustainable Development Goals 4 (Quality Education) and 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), and supports Nigeria's digital economy agenda, reinforcing the role of libraries as foundational institutions for equitable knowledge access and national development.

Methodology

This study adopted a documentary research design, which is appropriate for examining institutional arrangements, governance structures, and policy frameworks through the systematic analysis of existing texts. Documentary research enables the interrogation of both historical and contemporary policy trajectories, making it particularly suitable for understanding how governance, technology readiness, and policy coherence shape the digital revitalization of Nigerian libraries (Bowen, 2009).

The study relied exclusively on secondary data obtained from multiple credible sources to ensure analytical depth and triangulation. These sources included:

a) Government and policy documents, such as the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS 2020–2030), National ICT Policy (2012), and official reports of the National Library of Nigeria;
b) Institutional publications from relevant agencies and professional bodies, including the Nigerian Library Association (NLA), TETFund, and the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA);
c) Scholarly literature drawn from peer-reviewed journals, academic books, and conference proceedings on library development, digitization, and information governance; and
d) International policy and normative frameworks, notably UNESCO (2021) and IFLA (2020) reports on digital inclusion, knowledge societies, and information access.

The document review covered the period 2000–2024, aligning with Nigeria's major phases of ICT policy evolution and digital transformation initiatives in the public sector.

To enhance methodological transparency, documents were subjected to a three-stage screening process based on relevance, reliability, and currency.

1. **Relevance:** Documents were included only if they explicitly addressed at least one of the study's core themes—library digitization, ICT policy, governance, digital inclusion, or human capacity development within the Nigerian or comparable developing-country context. Materials with peripheral or unrelated focus were excluded.

2. **Reliability:** Priority was given to official government publications, documents from recognized institutions and international organizations, and peer-reviewed academic sources. Opinion pieces, unverifiable web content, and non-refereed materials lacking clear authorship or institutional backing were excluded to minimize bias.
3. **Recency:** While foundational policy documents were retained for historical context, emphasis was placed on materials published within the last ten years to ensure alignment with current digital transformation trends and policy realities. Older documents were included only where they remained policy-relevant or conceptually significant.

Data analysis was guided by the Knowledge Society framework (Castells, 2000) and the Digital Inclusion framework (UNESCO, 2021), both of which emphasize equitable access to information and technology as critical drivers of human and national development.

Using thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), documents were systematically reviewed and coded through an iterative process involving repeated reading, open coding, and thematic refinement. Coding was organized around three analytically derived themes:

1. Institutional and policy alignment;
2. Technological infrastructure and resource access; and
3. Human capacity development and digital literacy.

Patterns and relationships across documents were identified, compared, and synthesized to reveal systemic challenges, policy gaps, and strategic opportunities for the digital revitalization of Nigerian libraries.

Analytical rigour was enhanced through source triangulation, involving cross-verification of findings across government, institutional, scholarly, and international documents. Although reliance on secondary data limits direct empirical validation, the breadth, credibility, and currency of the sources reduced the risk of bias and strengthened the trustworthiness of the findings.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that the revitalization of Nigerian libraries within the context of global digital transformation is constrained by structural deficits, technological limitations, and fragmented policy execution. Interpreted through the lenses of the Knowledge Society (Castells, 2000) and Digital Inclusion (UNESCO, 2021) frameworks, the evidence suggests that Nigerian libraries remain marginal to the country's emerging digital economy due to systemic underinvestment, uneven ICT deployment, and weak institutional coordination.

a) **Libraries and the Knowledge Society: The Crisis of Institutional Obsolescence:** From the perspective of knowledge society theory, libraries are expected to function as core knowledge infrastructure, facilitating the production, circulation, and utilization of information for socio-economic development. However, both qualitative evidence and quantitative indicators demonstrate that most Nigerian libraries, especially public and community libraries, are structurally disconnected from this

role. Policy and institutional reports indicate that fewer than half of public libraries in Nigeria have functional internet connectivity, with connectivity rates significantly higher in federal and state-owned academic libraries than in public or rural libraries. Even where connectivity exists, bandwidth is often inadequate to support digital repositories, online databases, or remote access services. Additionally, capital expenditure data from education-sector interventions show that library ICT investment represents only a marginal fraction of national ICT and education technology spending, which is largely concentrated on telecommunications, fintech, and administrative e-government platforms. These quantitative patterns reinforce qualitative observations of outdated cataloguing systems, limited automation, and low adoption of integrated library management systems. As earlier studies noted (Nwalo, 2003; Edewor et al., 2016), chronic underfunding and weak strategic planning have relegated libraries to passive repositories. In Castells' (2000) terms, the absence of robust digital information infrastructure prevents libraries from functioning as active nodes within knowledge networks, thereby weakening Nigeria's capacity to convert information into productive human capital and innovation outcomes.

b) **Digital Inclusion and the Persistence of the Information Divide:** The findings further reveal a pronounced digital divide across library types and geographic locations. Quantitative evidence from institutional and national ICT assessments shows that urban academic libraries are several times more likely to possess broadband connectivity, computer workstations, and digital databases than rural or public libraries. In some rural settings, libraries operate with fewer than five functional computers, often shared among hundreds of users, while intermittent electricity further constrains access. This infrastructural imbalance mirrors broader national disparities, where internet penetration and ICT access are heavily skewed toward urban centers. From a digital inclusion standpoint, such disparities undermine universal access and participatory engagement (UNESCO, 2021). The divide is compounded by human capacity gaps: staff development records and professional surveys indicate that a significant proportion of library personnel have received little or no formal ICT training in the past decade, limiting their ability to manage digital platforms, institutional repositories, or virtual user services (Oyesiku & Oduwole, 2004). These quantitative indicators support the study's qualitative conclusion that digital exclusion in libraries is not merely technical but institutional and governance-related, rooted in uneven policy implementation and infrastructural neglect. Without deliberate intervention, libraries risk reinforcing rather than mitigating existing socio-economic inequalities.

c) **Policy Fragmentation and Weak Institutional Coordination:** Analysis of policy documents reveals a mismatch between national digital ambitions and sector-specific implementation. While Nigeria's digital economy frameworks emphasize broadband expansion and innovation, they contain no dedicated budget lines or measurable

targets for library digitization. Budgetary reviews further indicate that ICT-related funding for libraries is often embedded within broader education or culture allocations, making monitoring and accountability difficult. This policy fragmentation has resulted in isolated digitization projects, often donor-driven, short-term, and poorly integrated into national systems. Institutional reports show duplication of efforts, incompatible platforms, and abandoned digital repositories once external funding lapses. Quantitatively, the absence of centralized coordination means that no national database exists to track library connectivity rates, digitization coverage, or user access metrics, reflecting weak governance of knowledge institutions. Consistent with the knowledge society paradigm, effective management of information infrastructure requires coherent, cross-sectoral policy alignment linking education, research, innovation, and digital inclusion. The lack of such coordination perpetuates institutional isolation and undermines the strategic relevance of libraries within the broader digital ecosystem.

d) **Opportunities for Transformation: Toward a Digital Knowledge Ecosystem:** Despite these challenges, the findings point to significant opportunities for transformation. Evidence from pilot digitization initiatives and open-access platforms suggests that even modest investments in ICT can dramatically expand access, with digitized collections serving users far beyond physical library spaces. Quantitative usage data from selected institutional repositories show increased access to academic and cultural materials once resources are made available online. Digitization also offers cost efficiencies through shared platforms, cloud-based systems, and collaborative repositories, reducing duplication and extending reach. When aligned with digital inclusion principles, such innovations can bridge not only technological gaps but also educational and social divides, particularly for students, researchers, and underserved communities (Anunobi & Ezejiofor, 2014). These opportunities align with UNESCO's (2021) emphasis on inclusive knowledge infrastructures as enablers of sustainable human development.

Theoretical Synthesis: Connecting Knowledge Society and Digital Inclusion

The findings affirm the complementary value of the Knowledge Society and Digital Inclusion frameworks. Quantitative indicators demonstrate that technological expansion without institutional inclusion deepens inequality, while qualitative evidence shows that inclusion without strong knowledge infrastructure limits innovation. The Nigerian case illustrates that sustainable revitalization requires a dual strategy: investment in digital infrastructure (the structural dimension of the knowledge society) and equitable access, skills development, and institutional capacity-building (the human dimension of digital inclusion). Together, these insights inform the proposed Digital Infrastructure Revitalization Blueprint, which positions libraries as smart, inclusive, and future-oriented knowledge ecosystems capable of contributing meaningfully to Nigeria's digital economy and human development agenda.

Policy Implications

The findings of this study carry significant implications for policymakers, educational planners, and development agencies:

1. **Integration of Libraries into National Digital Policy**: Libraries must be explicitly incorporated into national digital transformation frameworks, positioning them as hubs for digital learning, innovation, and civic knowledge dissemination. This ensures that library development aligns with national goals for broadband expansion, digital literacy, and knowledge-based economic growth.
2. **Bridging the Digital and Knowledge Divide**: Equitable access to digital resources is critical for reducing social and regional disparities in education and research. Expanding ICT infrastructure and connectivity in rural and underfunded libraries can democratize knowledge access, supporting lifelong learning and innovation.
3. **Institutional Capacity and Human Resource Development**: Revitalization cannot succeed without skilled librarians equipped with modern ICT, data management, and digital preservation competencies. Investment in continuous professional training and digital literacy programs will be essential for sustaining technological innovation in library services.
4. **Sustainability and Governance of Library Systems**: Establishing transparent governance mechanisms, clear policy mandates, and public-private partnerships (PPPs) can ensure continuity, accountability, and financial sustainability in library digitization initiatives.

Recommendations and Implementation Strategies

Building on the study's objectives and findings, the following recommendations and implementation strategies are proposed to guide Nigeria's transition from analog to digitally empowered library systems:

1. Develop a National Digital Library Framework: The Federal Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the National Library of Nigeria (NLN) and the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), should develop a *National Digital Library Framework* to harmonize all library digitization initiatives under a unified policy structure.

Implementation Strategy:

i. Establish a National Taskforce on Library Digitization (NTLD) to coordinate multi-stakeholder efforts.
ii. Integrate library digitization targets within the *National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (2020–2030)*.
iii. Adopt open-source platforms for library management and digital preservation to ensure interoperability and cost-efficiency.

2. Strengthen Digital Infrastructure and Connectivity: Expand ICT infrastructure and broadband connectivity in public and academic libraries, particularly in underserved regions, to facilitate equitable access to information.

Implementation Strategy:

i. Partner with telecom providers under the Universal Service Provision Fund (USPF) to supply subsidized internet to libraries.
ii. Equip libraries with renewable energy sources (e.g., solar power) to mitigate power supply instability.
iii. Deploy mobile library units and digital kiosks in rural areas to extend service reach.

3. Enhance Human Capacity for Digital Library Management: Invest in capacity-building programs that equip librarians and information professionals with digital competencies in data management, metadata creation, cybersecurity, and online service delivery.

Implementation Strategy:

i. Incorporate ICT and digital curation modules into library and information science curricula at universities.
ii. Organize periodic national and regional training workshops in collaboration with IFLA, UNESCO, and TETFund.
iii. Create a continuous professional development (CPD) certification scheme for digital librarianship.

4. Foster Local Content Development and Knowledge Preservation: Digitization efforts should prioritize indigenous knowledge, local research outputs, and cultural heritage materials to ensure content relevance and sustainability.

Implementation Strategy:

i. Launch a *National Indigenous Knowledge Digitization Project* under the supervision of the National Library of Nigeria.
ii. Encourage universities and research institutions to create institutional repositories linked to a national digital knowledge portal.
iii. Collaborate with cultural institutions and archives to digitize oral histories, local languages, and community records.

5. Promote Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) for Library Innovation: Leverage partnerships with technology companies, donor agencies, and civil society to drive innovation, resource mobilization, and technical support for library digitization.

Implementation Strategy:

i. Create PPP frameworks that incentivize corporate investment in library ICT infrastructure.
ii. Establish innovation labs and technology incubators within selected libraries to foster youth engagement and entrepreneurship.

iii. Partner with tech firms to develop cloud-based cataloguing and AI-assisted information retrieval systems.

6. Institutionalize Monitoring, Evaluation, and Sustainability Mechanisms: Ensure that all digital library projects are guided by robust monitoring, evaluation, and sustainability frameworks.

Implementation Strategy:

i. Develop measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for assessing digital access, user engagement, and infrastructure functionality.
ii. Implement annual digital audit reports for libraries at federal and state levels.
iii. Secure long-term funding through a *National Library Digitization Fund* jointly managed by federal and state governments.

By aligning library development with the knowledge society and digital inclusion frameworks, these recommendations promote an integrated approach to revitalization—linking infrastructure, human capital, and governance reforms. Digitally empowered libraries will serve not only as educational resources but also as catalysts for innovation, civic participation, and socio-economic transformation. A reimagined Nigerian library system: digitally connected, inclusive, and strategically governed; can thus drive the nation's transition toward a sustainable knowledge economy while advancing the broader goals of Agenda 2030 (SDGs 4 & 9) and Nigeria's Digital Economy Vision.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the revitalization of Nigerian libraries is inseparable from the country's broader transition toward a knowledge-based digital economy. The evidence reveals that while libraries were historically central to literacy and national development, decades of neglect, fragmented policy frameworks, and technological stagnation have rendered many institutions unable to meet the demands of the 21st century. Interpreted through the dual lenses of the Knowledge Society (Castells, 2000) and Digital Inclusion (UNESCO, 2021) frameworks, the study underscores that libraries are no longer mere repositories of books but strategic infrastructures that can bridge the gap between knowledge production and social equity.

From the standpoint of the Knowledge Society paradigm, libraries constitute vital nodes in the creation and dissemination of information that drives innovation, governance efficiency, and citizen empowerment. However, Nigeria's libraries remain excluded from the national digital ecosystem due to inadequate funding, obsolete infrastructure, and poor institutional coordination. Meanwhile, the Digital Inclusion framework emphasizes that access to technology and digital literacy are preconditions for equitable participation in a knowledge-driven world. The study found that the absence of inclusive policies perpetuates information inequality, thereby marginalizing rural populations and underprivileged learners.

These findings collectively point to an urgent need for a nationally coordinated digital transformation strategy that embeds libraries into Nigeria's digital development agenda. Revitalizing libraries through robust digital infrastructure will not only enhance education and research but also promote innovation, civic participation, and social inclusion—core principles of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 4 & 9) and Nigeria's *National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (2020–2030)*.

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