

A RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION ARE LIBRARIES STILL VALID

It is telling that the above question is often asked by persons who have not since this century made use of library resources, programmes nor services; neither in person nor online. One could choose to ignore the question, but a response is necessary as the question often comes from persons who may just be in a position to make detrimental decisions regarding libraries. So this response is not to the thousands of Jamaicans who make use of their school, public, special, national library but to those who would question the validity of libraries.

A DOZEN REASONS WHY JAMAICA'S LIBRARIES ARE STILL VALID

Valid: **"Not yet having reached its expiry date"** Concise Oxford Dictionary

- Libraries are for the learned, not so learned and for those learning to learn not only their ABCs but their search engines and browsers and social media platforms.
- Libraries are democratic, non-partisan, non-denominational, non-ageist.
- Their stock in trade has been recreation, information and knowledge; definitely more than the medium.
- Libraries are not driven by the profit motive but the return on the investment in libraries make for better people, better communities and better countries.
- Libraries provide the convenience of a pre-paid service-taxes support them.
- Libraries are very relatively safe communal gathering spaces; especially for the young.
- Libraries collect, protect, preserve and share the local memory (school, community, institutional, national)
- Libraries are important partners in development-Vision 2030 recognizes their supporting roles for culture, education, recreation, sustainable development etc.
- Libraries offer free access to computers and Internet including WI-FI services for those using their own electronic devices.
- Equitable access to information is their sacred calling; their line in the sand, their pledge of allegiance.
- Libraries are staffed by persons specifically trained to identify high quality information regardless of the source or medium.
- Libraries are highly adaptable institutions; they know how to flex and will use all tools available to them to ensure that knowledge is accessible, affordable and preserved.

SIX THINGS NEEDED TO IMPROVE JAMAICA'S NATIONAL, PUBLIC AND SPECIAL LIBRARIES.

- Provide them with the means to create and acquire e-content to satisfy needs for information, recreation, education, knowledge.
- Provide them with the means to purchase print books; especially for the young .
- Assist them in developing new spaces and resources for programmes and services to serve their community - be it the community of a department or agency of government, a rural district or a community of historians or budding writers.
- Develop and adopt policy and legislation to advance the knowledge society.
- Provide them with the means to access Internet access regardless of location, too many of our libraries are outside the reach of internet access.
- Provide them with the means to attract and retain staff with the requisite specialist training.

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