

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of green, ranging from light lime to dark forest green. These shapes are primarily located on the left and right sides of the page, framing the central white area where the text is placed.

# Contribution of a University Library to the Sensitization of African Young Students to the Protection of the Environment

Case of the Main Library of the University of Douala in Cameroon.

# INFORMATION, EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIC ELEMENT FOR ENVIRONMENT'S PROTECTION

- The information concept is not easy to define because of its polysemous nature.
- Generically speaking, the term information is perceived as a didactic fact aimed at modifying the cognitive state of the person who receives or uses it.
- information can be considered as an instrument of training and education. In this last definition, the information-training dyad finds all its meaning and significance, and thus restores the entire information usefulness.
- Information is primarily used to reduce our uncertainty about an event or a situation. It is also an essential part of decision-making.

# Information Usefulness

- In the University library, the information disseminated is generally called the STI (Scientific and Technical Information)
- As stated by Marie-France BLANQUET, this refers to «information-knowledge» which is different from information-opinion and information-pleasure.
- To be efficient and attractive, academic libraries should concile these types of information. This implies that while providing knowledge, they should enable their users to enjoy and integrate themselves into the society to which they belong.
- A University library in Africa should provide students with information that could enable them to face the continent's many challenges, including climate change.

# ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION CONCEPT

- The concept of environmental protection can be defined as a set of positive practices and behaviors that an individual adopts for the preservation of the ozone layer.
- It is a matter of implementing daily actions at the University so as to reduce waste, limit pollution and save resources. Whether in the University campus' rooms, in the restaurant, in the courtyard where students throw waste and mostly non-biodegradable objects despite the existence of dust bins, or in the library where documents are photocopied in abundance and in disorder, University campuses in Africa with their high students' concentration rate constitute great polluted environments.

# The Environmental Crisis in Africa

- Even though Africa is not listed among the major polluting continents, the absence of an environmental protection culture is a real scourge for this continent along with others such as corruption, endemic diseases (HIV/AIDS), poor governance, fratricidal and civil wars, just to name the few.
- These hindrances to African progress come from the resignation of our States who should be the guarantors of social cohesion against particularities of all kinds.
- But it is clear that African nations do not play their roles. The fight against pollution is not their major concern.
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# The Imperative Education of African Youth for Environment's Protection

- Education aimed at protecting nature should always, and in all circumstances, be the concern of all partners and African development leaders, as well as all components of African society.
- it seems that the true sustainable development of Africa will depend on the degree of civility and culture of its populations.
- For this reason, Africa's donors (World Bank, IMF and others) should lay much emphasis on this issue if they really want to help Africa in funding programs that tend to train people as far as environmental protection and climate change's issues are concerned.
- Schools and academic institutions should include these notions in their curricula.
- At the Main Library of the University of Douala in Cameroon, we perceived the need to inculcate these notions to our youth by using some stratagems to give an environmental culture to these students.

# CONTRIBUTION OF THE MAIN LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF DOUALA TO STUDENTS' ENVIRONMENTAL CULTURE

- The University of Douala is one of Cameroon's eight State Universities. It was created in 1993 by a decree of the Head of State.
- The University of Douala is located in the Douala metropolis, the Economic Capital of Cameroon. It comprises 11 (eleven) faculties and vocational Schools.
- This University nearly has 45,000 students, for a staff of about 700 lecturers, 700 administrative staff, a Main Library with 03 professionals and 26 workers.

# The Douala University Library

- The University Documentation System consists of a Main Library, a Doctorate School Library and 11 specialized libraries in faculties and vocational schools.
- The daily attendance of users is as follows:
  - Lecturers: 20 per day on average
  - L-level students (Level 1, 2 and 3): 300 per day on average
  - M- level students (Masters): 70 per day on average
  - D- level students (Doctorate): 20 per day on average because there is a specialized library for students at the D- level (Doctorate School Library).
- The documentary collection is estimated at about 25,000 volumes. However, advice and guidance are given to lecturer-researchers to exploit documents as well as electronic journals in OPEN ACCESS. OPEN ACCESS : Free access to electronic resources initiated in Budapest

# Citizenship Education at the Main Library of the University of Douala

- After having observed throughout years that students who attend our library are young people less concerned with preservation and environmental protection issues.
- We realized that it was needful to carry out actions to train and educate them as far as environment's preservation is concerned.
- Instructions were given to the staff in charge to welcome and verbally sensitize them on pollution.
- This verbal awareness technique, was not very effective because it regularly turned into a kind of invective between the library staff and students.

# Citizenship Education at the Main Library of the University of Douala

- we felt it was essential to use informational strength and persuasion to influence our students' behaviors.
- That's why an animation program called "Library Day" was implemented.
- A large glass bulletin board was set up at the entrance of the library with the sign "*The Library Day*".
- A team of three people were trained to regularly moderate this bulletin board.
- They were responsible for the permanent monitoring of the United Nations' (UN), African Union's (AU) and World Days' websites, and they had to listen to the National Radio's news as far as National Days' issues are concerned.

# Citizenship Education at the Main Library of the University of Douala

- To achieve this goal and get the expected results, they used a web application, the FEEDLY watch tool.
- Through this tool, they subscribed to the Rich Site Summary (RSS) of the above mentioned sites, and regularly had updated information therein.
- Once the information acquired, they made an announcement on the panel, for instance: Tomorrow, the "World Environment Day".
- they downloaded the Chief Executive's statement related to the announcement. It could be for instance the statement of the Secretary General of the UN that they enlarge in an A<sub>5</sub> format.

# Citizenship Education at the Main Library of the University of Douala

- Under the supervision of our leadership, workers have to write a small comment related to the theme of the day, and to display all these elements namely the statements from authorities as well as comments from the library's managers.
- In addition, a display was placed at the bottom of the panel, showing all the publications (books, magazines, brochures, etc.) available in the library and relating to the theme of the day celebrated.

# Influence of this Animation Program on Students' Behaviors

- Since the implementation of the "Library Day", students have increasingly become responsible and more polite.
- They no longer throw waste materials anywhere or anyhow because they have been sensitized on waste's effects on environment and also on climate changes that threaten the world.
- A practical example is that of the Red Cross Club of the University of Douala which members, together with the library's authorities, have recently organized an Operation entitled "Campus without Plastics". Plastics stands for the plastic packaging widely used in Cameroon by shops owners and other traders.

# Influence of this Animation Program on Students' Behaviors

- They also respect their fellow disabled students in the library. As a matter of fact, since the celebration of the day dedicated to the disabled, it is very common to see students mobilizing themselves to get books for their disabled companions.
- They respect the library staff and often help the latter to store books on shelves.
- They regularly draw inspiration from themes on the library bulletin board to organize conferences in their clubs and associations within the University.
- Apart from students, the whole University community is gladly informed thanks to this communication board.

# CONCLUSION

- The experience with this animation program in the Main Library of the University of Douala allowed us to understand the fundamental role that a Documentation Center can play on the training and education of its immediate surroundings on the one hand, and the whole society on the other.
- It is therefore imperative for us African information professionals to use our knowledge and expertise to transform mentalities, and thus allow a harmonious development of the whole society, particularly that of African Countries which economic and social development is suffering from climate change effects.
- This should be the credo of the "information society" that we all call for.

Thank you for your pleasant attention