

PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES AND THE ATTAINMENT OF THE SOCIAL WELL BEING OF USERS IN ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

The study was carried out to investigate public library services and the attainment of social well being in Enugu State. Seven research questions bothering on availability of resources for public libraries services were posed and answered by the study. The study employed survey research design for gathering data, through the use of structured questionnaire. The population of the study was 1,667 registered users of the branch libraries studied out of which a sample of 333 was drawn. The data collected was analyzed using frequency tables and simple percentages. The findings of the study revealed that the main areas of need of the respondents for using the public library are information, education and social; reference materials, government publications, serials/journals and textbooks are provided for users; none of the information resources provided for users is highly adequate; all the libraries studied do not provide mobile library service; respondents are highly satisfied with only reprographic, reference and extensions services; inadequate resources, traditional library practice, lack of awareness and poor reading culture are the main challenges hindering the use of library services for social well being of the users. As a result of these findings, the study made some recommendations which are: that the government of Enugu State should make library development a top priority; mobile library services should be revitalized to ensure effective service delivery; there should be internet connectivity to help the public library staff and users to join millions of the world population in the global village and public libraries should not depend wholly on government subvention.

Introduction

Public libraries are libraries that provide unrestricted access to library resources and services free of charge to all residents of a given community district or geographical region. Reitz (2004) opines that public libraries are now acknowledged to be an indispensable part of

community life, as promoters of literacy, providers of wide range of reading for all ages and as centres for community information services. Hence Edom (2012) opines that public libraries are library institutions established by the government to enhance independent and continuing education of people particularly those living within this environment or locality. This is necessary as they offer their collection to all members of the community.

Public libraries are often considered as an essential part of having an educated and literate population. It enlightens, uplifts and sustains the educational status of people in the society. The public library acquires, organizes and stores recorded knowledge for the purpose of giving information and knowledge to their users to enrich their personal lives. As the local gateway of knowledge, resources, which they acquire, are to provide access to lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social group, which is guided towards the realization of national development. The assessment of any public library can better be judged by the satisfaction users derive from its services. Access to information is crucial in the information environment. It can be achieved through mobile technologies, access to research information, and best practices among public library staff will be achieved through establishment of public library repositions.

Since 1955, the government of south-east geo-political zone of the country and other stakeholders in the educational system have embarked on the provision of public libraries for easy accessibility of current and relevant information resources services to enhance learning in Nigeria. Based on this laudable effort, by both the UNESCO and the eastern regional government of Nigeria, the citizens are expected to maximally utilize the public libraries as one of their major resources of information on educational upliftment. However, from observation and studies conducted on public library services, it has been established that users do not often make use of the public library facilities. This may be partly responsible for the poor standard of education in Nigeria or as a result of non-availability of desired resources, and poor facilities.

Purpose of the Study

Generally, the purpose of this study is to investigate the use of public library services for the attainment of social wellbeing of users in Enugu State of Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives are to:

- i. Ascertain the areas of information need for the utilization of public library resources for the social wellbeing of users.
- ii. Identify the information resources used by users in the public libraries studied.
- iii. Determine the adequacy of public library information resources used by public library patrons.
- iv. Find out the type of library services provided by Enugu State public libraries for the social well being of users.
- v. Ascertain the level of satisfaction derived from the use of public libraries by users.
- vi. Identify the challenges hindering the use of public libraries for the social well being of users.
- vii. Find out strategies for the enhancement of public library usage for the attainment of social wellbeing of users.

Literature Review

Precisely, public libraries are said to have existed between 28 & 39BC in ancient Rome. They are established with the main mission of providing access to materials and services to meet with the present and future needs of the community they serve. Ogbonyomi (2007) says that public library should provide for the intellectual, cultural, occupational and religious information needed of all Nigerian society irrespective of their race, culture and occupation in their society.

Public libraries in under-developed countries should be regarded as an agency among others that promote education and eliminate illiteracy among people. In the same vein, Onwubiko (2004) suggests that public library provide materials in wide range of subjects to cater for all levels of demand. These materials range from reference, continuing education down to recreation, however, they provide materials for specialized reference and research, co-ordinate programs for continuing education and sponsor cultural and recreational events. In addition, Ode and Omokoro (2007) agreed that public libraries assist at developing learning skills among the children, youths and adults, as they play a part in encouraging positive use of the leisure and providing materials for change and relaxations.

Badawi (2007) reveals that the fact that public libraries are agents for social development, to back this up, Onyenachi (2012) says that through public libraries, people can discover knowledge and learn new skills, get informed about personal health and well-being, find out about government and local authority service and seek information about employment and business development.

The tremendous role of the public library can never be over-emphasized. It enhances the productivity of individuals and organizations through the following functions – educational, informational, economic and cultural - which bring about social development.

Library resources are stocks of recorded information (print and non-print materials). Organized for use and made available to users. Examples of print materials are booking monographs, reference materials, periodicals/serials (magazines and newspapers) while non-print are audio visuals, multi-media, microfiche, films, slides and microforms etc. According to Halsey (2006), library resources should not only include traditional print-on-paper media like books, journals, newspapers etc, but also audio visual materials like records, audio cassettes, projectors, art reproductions, maps, photographs, microfiches, and Electronic Information resources (EIR) like CD-ROM, computer software, online databases, internet, e books, e-journals and other media. Ifidon (2006), opines that services in a library could be said to be excellent and appreciative if only there books and other library resources available in that library.

Public libraries are making frantic efforts to provide services to its clientele. In other words, services expected to be provided by the public libraries have become a major concern of library and information science practitioners. No wonder Okiy (2004) opines that mobile library service was launched in order to extend library services to everyone in the state, irrespective of location. Other mobile services provided by the state library board include prison and hospital trolley services. These services provided by libraries have become the melting point of the present day librarianship and information science. IFLA (2001) opines that the services provided by the public library include community information services, recreational activities, reference services, loan services, storytelling, reading, career information, customer care, adult literacy education etc.

To remain relevant and keep up with the many needs and expectations of their users, Public library must be proactive, vibrant, and abreast of the latest developments in information dissemination as they play a crucial role in the advancement of knowledge.

The services provided by public libraries could be summarized as; mobile library services, information and referral services, outreach programmes, current awareness programmes, library services to children, Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), internet services, photocopy services and book depot.

Public libraries are used by different categories of human beings such as students, teachers, lecturers, lawyers, civil servants, architects, businessmen, engineers etc. According to IFLA/UNESCO (2001) users of public libraries include children, young adults, adults, people with special needs such as those who have hearing problems and even the blind and the visually impaired. Others are prisoners, the aged, nursing mothers, organisations and people in government. Emphasis is however placed on meeting the needs of the less privileged in the society, e.g. they provide braille materials for the blind users. Achebe (2005) emphasizes that public libraries are also referred to as centres for acquisition of knowledge and information. They satisfy people's quest for education and specific information as a solution to problems since all age group must find materials relevant to their needs.

Vital as the role of public libraries are, it is a thing of surprise that after many years of public library existence in Nigeria, most of its objectives are yet to be achieved due to several problems militating against them. Some of these prevalent problems according to Nwokeocha (1998) is the government neglect of the role of the public library to the society. To this effect, they are faced with a lot of challenges and obstacles. Oyedum (2005) states that there is lack of recognition of the state librarians by the government decision makers. One can confidently say that public library system in Nigeria today is characterized by poor status in collection, facilities, human resources, modern information facilities like information computer technology (ICT) and poor quality services followed by poor ICT skills among staff. Most, if not all of these problems emanated from the mother of them all – poor funding. Nwokeocha (1998) observed that lack of funds. Inadequate funding is hindering the development of public libraries in Nigeria.

At present, many public libraries have inadequate numbers of staff and others have staff that are seriously under-educated. If libraries in Nigeria are to survive, they must invest in the intellectual capital of their employees. Technology used to access information, can be a way to educate library staff, to provide resources and services required to bridge the information gap between developed and under-developed nations. Bhattachajee (2007) informs that many of the public libraries do not have their own buildings; some are located in small thatched huts while some share a room and time with their institutions. The quality and quantity of public library services and the changes they can create in the society depends on its human resources. The staff of the public library is not motivated adequately to boost their morale. Opara (2005) notes that it is as a result of inadequate attention given to these workers and their institutions.

Furthermore, the number of the professional librarian is so small to compare to the non-professionals who are always large in number. According to Oyedum (2005) this is contrary to the International Federation of Library Association (IFLA, 2001) suggestion that at least 33% of the total staff strength should be qualified librarians in any established library. Where this is lacking, there is no doubt that poor library services would always be provided to the users; secondly, library development would also be slow and this would attract little or no users.

Therefore, Ebiwolate (2010) suggests that public library services are facing a number of problems which could be highlighted as bad roads, lack of funds, insufficient library materials, irrelevant or outdated materials.

Research Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is descriptive survey design. The population of this study consisted of the 1667 registered users of the 7 (seven) branch in the state libraries. The sample size of the work is 333 derived by using Yaro Yamene (1969) statistical formular. Stratified sampling technique was used to select the number of respondents from each library while random sampling technique was used to select the individual respondents. Self-designed questionnaire was used for data collection. The distribution and collection of the instrument was carried out by the researchers with the help of research assistants. Descriptive statistics that is frequency counts and percentages were used to analyse the data collected.

Data presentation and analysis

Out of the 333 questionnaire administered, all were returned showing 100% return rate but 308 were found in usable form.

Table 1: Areas of Need for the use of Public Library N=308

| ITEM | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Education | 278 | 90 |
| Information | 289 | 94 |
| Recreation | 45 | 15 |
| Culture | 64 | 21 |
| Infrastructural | 31 | 10 |
| Health | 135 | 44 |
| Social | 234 | 76 |
| Others | 117 | 38 |

Table 1 shows that 289(94%) respondents noted that information is their main area of need for using the public library , 278(90%) respondents indicated education, 234(76%) indicated social, 135(44%) ticked health, 117(38%) others, 64 (21%) culture, 45 (15%) recreation while 31(10%) of respondents indicated that infrastructural need is why they use the public library.

From the above analysis, it can be deduced that the main areas of need of the respondents for using the public library are information, education and social.

Table 2: Information resources available for use. N = 308

| Information resources | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Textbooks | 300 | 97 |
| Reference materials | 308 | 100 |
| Serials/journals | 306 | 99 |
| Audio visuals | 30 | 10 |
| Government publications | 308 | 100 |
| Electronic information resources | 123 | 40 |
| Foreign publications | 95 | 31 |

It could be deduced from the analysis of table 2 that all the respondents 100% indicated that reference materials and government publications are provided for users. 306 or (99%) agreed that serials/journals are provided, 300 (97%) chose textbooks, 123 (40%) electronic information resources, 95 (31%) foreign publications and 30 (10%) indicated audio visuals.

It could be noted that in this era of Information Communication Technology, public libraries in Enugu state are yet to embrace it fully. This is a flaw on the part of the public library because the users are denied access to their use.

Table 3: Adequacy of Information resources.

| Information resources | HA | A | FA | NA |
|----------------------------------|----|-----------|----------|----------|
| Textbooks | - | 100 (32%) | 117(38%) | 91(30%) |
| Reference materials | - | 143 (47%) | 103(33%) | 62(20%) |
| Serials/journals | - | 139(45%) | 121(39%) | 48(16%) |
| Audio visuals | - | 15(5%) | 45(15%) | 248(80%) |
| Government publications | - | 213(69%) | 82(27%) | 13(4%) |
| Electronic information resources | - | - | 109(35%) | 119(65%) |
| Foreign publications | - | 56(18%) | 235(76%) | 17(6%) |

Where: HA = Highly available, A = Available, FA = Fairly available, NA - Not available

Table 3 shows that none of the information resources provided for users in the public libraries studied is highly adequate. However, there is evidence that most of them are adequate and fairly adequate with the exception of audio visuals and electronic information resources with scores of 248 (80%) and 199 (65%) respectively showing that they are not adequate.

The result of this analysis indicates that the public libraries studied do not acquire enough information resources for user's social well being.

Table 4: Types of Services provided

N = 308

| Services | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------|-----------|------------|
| User education | 78 | 25 |
| Mobile library service | - | - |
| Inter library loan service | 89 | 29 |
| Lending service | 167 | 54 |
| Internet service | 87 | 28 |
| Reprographic service | 308 | 100 |
| Reference service | 308 | 100 |
| SDI/CAS | 54 | 18 |
| Extension service | 235 | 76 |

The researchers sought to find out the types of services that are provided for users. Table 4 shows the analysis of data on the types of services provided for the social well being of the users. It is evident that reprographic and reference services are accepted by all the respondents showing a 100% response rate. This is followed by extension service with 235 (76%) respondents, lending services 167 (54%), inter library loan services 89 (29%), internet services 87 (28%), user education 78 (25%) and Selective Dissemination of Information and Current Awareness service 54 (18%). The entire respondents also affirmed that the mobile library services are not provided. This entails that it is not provided in any of the libraries studied. One therefore wonders how the public library can effectively cater for the social wellbeing of the rural dwellers.

Table 5: Level of Satisfaction derived by users

| Library Services | HS | S | FS | NS |
|-----------------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| User education | - | 23(7%) | 35(11%) | 250(81%) |
| Mobile library services | - | - | - | 308(100%) |
| Inter library loan services | - | 13(4%) | 34(11%) | 261(85%) |
| Lending services | 67(22%) | 164(53%) | 67(22%) | 10(3%) |
| Internet services | - | - | 74(24%) | 234(76%) |
| Reprographic services | 268(87%) | 23(7%) | 10(3%) | 7(2%) |
| Reference services | 245(80%) | 15(5%) | 20(6%) | 28(9%) |
| SDI/CAS | - | 3(1%) | 9(3%) | 296(96%) |
| Extension services | 188(61%) | 76(25%) | 35(11%) | 9(3%) |

Where: HS = Highly satisfied, S = Satisfied, FS = Fairly satisfied, NS = Not satisfied.

Respondents were asked of their level of satisfaction with the library services provided in public Library. From the analysis above, majority of the respondents are highly satisfied with reprographic, reference and extension services as shown by their response rate of 268 (87%), 245 (80%) and 188 (61%) respectively. All the respondents are not satisfied with mobile library services. This corresponds with the respondents' earlier assessment in Table 4 that mobile library services are not provided to. The analysis also shows that 296 (96%), 261 (85%), 259 (81%) and 234 (76%) respondents are not satisfied with SDI/CAS, inter library loan services, user education and internet services respectively. For the provision of lending services, majority of the respondents 164 or (53%) are satisfied.,

It could be deduced from the analysis above that users are highly satisfied with some library services while they are not satisfied with some.

Table 6: Challenges hindering use of public library services. N = 308

| Challenges | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Poor reading culture | 189 | 61 |
| Unorganized collection | 78 | 25 |
| Library staff attitude | 85 | 28 |
| Traditional library practice | 210 | 68 |
| Lack of awareness | 195 | 63 |
| Inadequate accommodation | 143 | 46 |
| Monotony of services provided | 132 | 43 |
| Inadequate resources | 235 | 76 |
| Illiteracy | 104 | 34 |
| Government neglect | 189 | 61 |

Table 6 reveals the challenges hindering the use of library services for social well being of the users as inadequate resources with 235(76%) response rate, traditional library practice 210(68%), lack of awareness 195(63%), poor reading culture 189(61%). Others are inadequate accommodation 143(46%), monotony of services provided 132(43%), illiteracy 104(34%), library staff attitude 85(28%), unorganized collection 78(25%).

It can be concluded therefore that inadequate resources, traditional library practice, lack of awareness and poor reading culture are the main challenges hindering the use of library services for social well being of the users.

Table 7: Strategies for the enhancement of use of the public libraries

| Strategies | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|------------------|-------------------|
| Qualified library staff | 89 | 29 |
| Adequate accommodation | 109 | 35 |
| Mass literacy programmes | 210 | 68 |
| User education | 301 | 98 |
| Adequate resources | 308 | 100 |
| Automation of libraries | 300 | 97 |
| Inclusion of more services | 234 | 76 |
| Proper recognition of public libraries | 221 | 72 |

From all indications, analysis in Table 7 shows that the respondents see provision of adequate resources as the main strategies for the enhancement of use of the public libraries for social well being. This is shown by 308 (100%) response rate it got. Following closely to adequate resources is user education with 301 (98%), then automation of libraries which scored 300 (97%). Others are inclusion of more services 234 (76%), proper recognition of libraries 221 (72%), mass literacy programmes 210 (68%), adequate accommodation 109(35%) and qualified library staff ranking last with 89 (29%) response rate.

This implies that provision of adequate resources, user education, automation of libraries, inclusion of more services, proper recognition of libraries and mass literacy programmes are strategies that can be adopted to enhance use of public libraries.

Discussion of Findings

Findings of the study as analysed in table 1 shows that the main areas of need of the respondents for using the public library are information, education and social. This implies that most of the respondents have not seen the need to use the library for recreation, culture etc which are part of the things that make up the social well being of users. This undermines the statement of Onyenachi (2012) that through public libraries, people can discover knowledge and learn new skills, get informed about personal health and well-being, find out about government and local authority service and seek information about employment and business development. The result shows that users use the library mainly for educational needs. Education and public library cannot be separated. Public library provide enabling environment for the development of education. In fact, it is essentially a medium of education supporting both individual and self-conducted education as well as formal education at all levels.

The result of research question two on the information resources provided for users in the public libraries studied shows that reference materials, government publications, serials/journals and textbooks are provided for the users. On the need for provision of these resources, Onwubiko (2004) suggests that public library provide materials in wide range of subjects to cater for all levels of demand. These materials range from reference, continuing education down to recreation, however, they provide materials for specialized reference and research, co-ordinate programs for continuing education and sponsor cultural and recreational events. It could be noted that at this era of Information Communication Technology, public libraries in Enugu state are yet to embrace it fully. This is a flaw on the part of the public library because the users are denied access to their use.

Analysis of data in table 3 shows that none of the information resources provided for users in the public libraries studied is highly adequate. Government publications are adequate, foreign publications are fairly adequate while audio visuals and electronic information resources are not

adequate. This implies that the public libraries studied do not acquire adequate information resources for use. The implication of not having adequate information resources in the public library is that excellent services will not be provided. This is supported by Ifidon (2006), who opines that services in a library could be said to be excellent and appreciative if only there are books and other library resources available in that library.

The main services provided for users according to analysis in table 4 are reprographic, reference, extension and lending services. This agrees with IFLA's (2001) list of the services provided by the public library which include community information services, recreational activities, reference services, loan services, storytelling, reading, career information, customer care, adult literacy education etc.

Research question 5 sought to know the level of satisfaction derived by users in their use of public libraries. Results revealed that users are highly satisfied with reprographic, reference and extension services, they are satisfied with lending services but not satisfied with mobile library services, user education, inter library loan, internet services and SDI/CAS. It could be deduced from the analysis above that users are highly satisfied with some library services while they are not satisfied with some. The library should do everything to see that users are satisfied because this may encourage or discourage them from using the library.

The result of the analysis for research question 6 shows that the main challenges hindering the use of library services for social well being of the users are inadequate resources, traditional library practice, lack of awareness and poor reading culture. This finding agrees with Nwokeocha (1998) who opined that there is government neglect on the role of the public library to the society. Many political leaders do not have any good agenda towards the development of the public library, which will assist in efficient service delivery of the public library. In support of challenges facing use of public libraries, Oyedum (2005) states that it is lack of recognition by the government; similarly, there is also lack of recognition of the state librarians by the government decision makers. This is why most public libraries in many states are at the pity state of condition.

Respondents agreed that provision of adequate resources, user education, automation of libraries, inclusion of more services, proper recognition of libraries and mass literacy programmes are strategies that can be adopted to enhance use of public libraries. The analysis is shown in table 7. The choice of library automation as a strategy corroborates with the advice of Diso (2005) in his study that Nigeria and other developing countries of the world must begin to use Information Communication Technology (ICT) to address the multi-dimensional problems of the society.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and their attendant implications, the following recommendations are made:

- There should be awareness creation on the services which the public libraries provide to their users.
- Recognizing the vital role played by public libraries in the area of information, education, economics, politics, culture, health and other social activities, the government should have total commitment in the provision of
- infrastructure, recruitment of competent librarians and improved welfare packages for effective public libraries service delivery in the state. Therefore, the government of Enugu State should make library development a top priority.
- Public libraries should create awareness on other areas of need like i leisure/recreation since it will contribute to the social well being of the users.

- There should be internet connectivity to help the public libraries staff and users to join millions of the world population in the global village.
- Efforts of the public library should be geared towards the satisfaction of users.
- Mobile library services should be revitalized to ensure effective service delivery.
- Government should give libraries priority in their planning.
- Public libraries should not depend wholly on government subvention. Other sources of funding can be explored so as to provide adequate information resources for the users.

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