

INFORMATION AVAILABILITY AND EXTENT OF USE IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES: A CASE STUDY OF ADAMAWA STATE PUBLIC LIBRARY, YOLA, ADAMAWA STATE

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Abstract

The paper examines the information availability and the extent of use in public libraries in Adamawa State. Survey method was used to obtain data and questionnaire was also used as a data collection instrument. Questions were asked on the categories of users and their frequency in the library, adequacy of information resources and to determine their level of satisfaction as well as problems militating against the development of public libraries. Of the users surveyed, 152 (76%) responded. From the findings, it was discovered that a high proportion of the users felt that the information in the library is obsolete and inadequate and users were not satisfied with them. However, services rendered by staff were satisfactory. The paper made some useful suggestions on how to overcome the identified problems.

Keywords: Information, Public Libraries, Adamawa State, Use of information.

Introduction

According to C.C. Aguolu, public library is an agency for continuing education or as “people’s university” open to everybody on an equal basis, regardless of his or her religion, political, ideological, ethnic, age and educational differences.

The function of public libraries includes:

- i. Facilitation of information and education for all in the community.
- ii. Keeping and preserving the record and culture of any society.
- iii. Serves as people’s university and are financed with public funds, and they offer free services to the public.
- iv. Provide books or materials to all categories of users.

The development of public library services in Adamawa State originated from the Gongola State Public Library which was carved out of the defunct North Eastern State in 1976. The

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former Gongola State Public Library services metamorphosis in to what is known as “Adamawa State Public Library” as a result of the creation of the state in 1991. The State Public Library at present has three divisional libraries situated at Ganye, Numan and Mubi with its headquarters in Yola. The Library extends its services to the rural dwellers through the divisional libraries. Presently, the state public libraries has a collection of about 100,000 volumes of books. It also provide service in the area of photocopying/reprography, audio-visuals, government publications and reference services. The Library opening hours to the public starts from 9:00am to 4:00pm on week days and 8:00am to 4:00pm on Saturdays and remained closed on Sundays.

Information acquisition and use has become the essential tools for physical, social and economic emancipation in the 21st century and will remain relevant for many centuries. Information simply means a new idea or knowledge extracted from the environment for human utilization with the hope to modify their behaviour, effect changes and to enhance efficiency in all human endeavours. Information obtained at any point in time will groom users to be well enlightened and responsible in the society.

On his own part, Nwasuoke (2000) observed that the huge success recorded by man this century is attributed to man’s enhanced ability in processing and managing information with the ultimate goal of decision making which brought about the emergence of new ideas, innovations and new techniques in the communication world. One striking phenomenon is that people recognized the importance of information and consistently yearn for the right type of information. Interestingly, having sufficient information normally enhance knowledge development and this is possible with a well organized library or information centre that has the ability to acquire, store and disseminate information to the end users.

In view of this explanation, information is essential for societal development and is needed in all spheres of life for decision making, planning, evaluation and so on. The library must be in better position to make sure that users are adequately informed on what they have and how best it could be used.

Research Objectives

1. Identify the categories of users and the frequency of usage in the library.
2. To evaluate the type of information sources often consulted and their adequacy.
3. To find out the information needs of the users and determine their level of satisfaction.
4. Identify the problem faced by users and proffer solutions.

Literature Review

The proliferation of information in the global village has changed individuals' perception of acquiring information. The information centers eagerly aspire to meet the information needs of the society. Studies has shown scholars' perception of information availability, were tailored towards the same direction. Ogunbote (2001) rightly said that the society has entered an era in which information has a tremendous bearing on the evolution of human race.

UNESCO (1980) noted that information gives the possessor power, influence and dominion over those who have little information. Similarly, Goulding (2001) purview that information has a clear distinct between developed and developing countries. There exists a comparable dichotomy within developed countries separating those with easy access to an abundant of information than those with little or no access. It is therefore necessary for a nation to harness the vast amount of information that exists in the world in order not to toy in the line of backwardness.

Alokun (2003) affirms that availability of information is central to human development but insufficient knowledge of information may create problems resulting in abject poverty, ignorance, disease, hunger, illiteracy and so on. Aguolu (1989) observed that for any library to flourish in any society the economy must be sufficiently vibrant and the government must commit funds to its development. To succeed in any aspect of human endeavour, availability and accessibility to quick and up to date information is very essential.

In his assessment of the library and information services Ologunleko (2001) believed that public libraries are established and funded with taxpayers' money. Therefore, it has a mandate to provide unrestricted information to the public. He reiterated that such libraries would provide opportunities for individuals to work independently in their search for knowledge, power and self-actualization.

It could therefore be conveniently said that information constitutes the bedrock of knowledge, efficiency and goal achievement in individuals' life and the nation at large. A public library is a driving wheel of mobilizing people for greater achievement. But in Nigeria, people perceived that public library is incapacitated in carrying out its responsibilities in which Opara (2006) identified as poor recognition and inadequate funding as the bottleneck to the development of public library in Nigeria. To this end, this study attempts to investigate the Adamawa State Public Library information availability and the extent of use by the readers, determine their level of satisfaction and make suggestion for improvement where necessary.

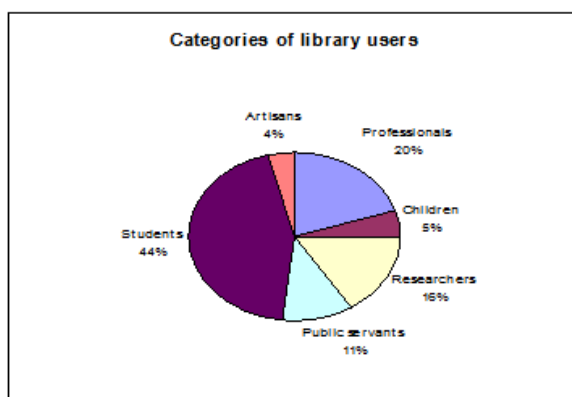
Methodology

Survey method was used to gather necessary data. A total of 200 copies of questionnaire were distributed to all categories of users in the four (4) branches of public libraries in Mubi, Numan, Ganye and Yola in the month of August-September, 2011. The questionnaire was administered personally and with the assistance of staff in each of the divisions. The self administration of the questionnaire gave the opportunity to the researcher to reach out to a greater number of respondents where about 152 (76%) of the responded questions were found out to be usable which comprises of (76%) male and (28%) female users. The data obtained were analyzed using simple percentages and frequencies.

Results and Discussions

Out of 152 respondents, 68 were students, 30 were professionals, 24 were researchers and 16 were public servants while the remaining 6 were artisans in the state. The distributions of the age-group range of the respondents as surveyed were as follows: (11-20 years) 52 respondents, (31-40) 41 respondents, while (21-30 years) have 36 respondents. This implies that age group range of 11-40 years constituted the industrious young person that are interested in seeking information for knowledge acquisition and development. The least were over 50 years' with 5 respondents. These are the set of users who comes to the library for relaxation.

Chart 1: Categories of library users



The study reveals that the library users cut across every sector of the town. However, the students constituted the majority of the respondents of the library users with the response rate of 44%. This followed by Professionals with 20% respondents while Researchers have 16% respondents. The least were the Artisans 4% who seek information on their job performances.

Table 1: Adequacy of the library resource

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Above average	22	14.4
Average	48	31.6
Below average	70	46
Uncertain	12	8
Total	152	100

Table 1 shows that 70 (46%) of the respondents agreed that the library collection is below average while 48 (31.6%) agreed that the resources were average and 12 (8%) were uncertain. The findings show that the library resources are below average/inadequate.

Table 2: Frequency use of the library

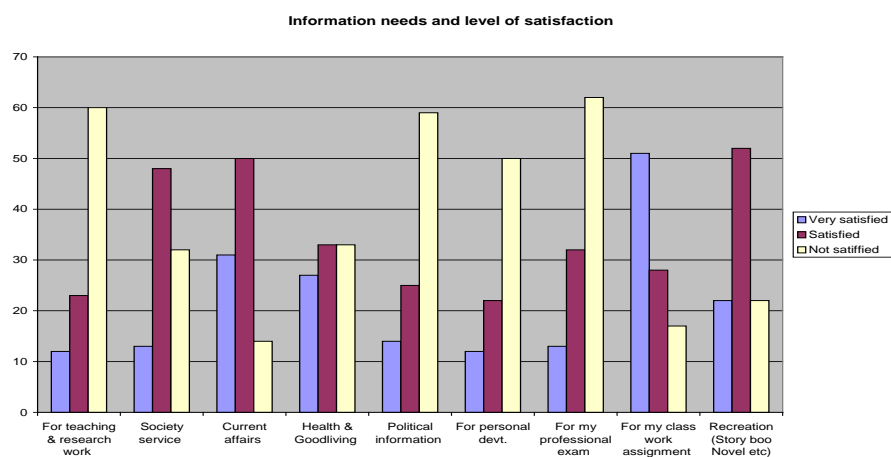
Use	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Daily	62	40.8
Weekly	16	10.5
Twice in a week	54	35.5
Occasionally	20	13.5
Total	152	100

Table 2 shows that 62 (40.8%), of the respondents agreed that they come to the library on daily basis, while 54 (35.5%) respondents visited the library twice in a week. Also, 20(13.2%) came to the library occasionally and 16(10.5%) use the library weekly. This finding shows that the library is a better place for reading and studying.

Table 3: Information sources used in the library

Information sources	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Journals	20	13.2
News Bulletins	14	9.2
News papers and magazines	20	19.7
Textbooks and other reference materials	19	11.8
Indexes and abstracts	11	7.3
Gazettes	9	5.9
Government publications	6	3.9
Patents	8	5.3
Audio visual materials e.g. CD-ROM, video cassette	18	12.5
Referred conference proceeding	8	5.3
Current awareness on recent collections	9	5.9
Total	152	100

Table 3 shows that, out of 152 respondents to this question, 30 (19.76%) claimed that they consulted Newspapers and magazines. 20 (13.2%) consult journals, 19 (12.5%) consult textbooks while 19 (12.5%) AV materials. From this analysis, most users consult Newspapers and magazines for their informational needs in public libraries than other sources.

Chart 2: Information needs and level of satisfaction

The information needs and their level of satisfaction by the users were presented in the bar chart above. It is evident from the analysis that the respondents were highly responsive to their information needs. To further determine their level of satisfaction 60.5% of the respondents said that they were not satisfied with information needed for teaching and

research work while 24.3% were satisfied and 13.2% were very satisfied. On information needed for society services 14.4% indicated that they were very satisfied while 47.4% were also satisfied and 34.2% were not satisfied. Information needed for class work assignments shows 51.3% of the respondents were very satisfied 27.9% were satisfied while 16.4% said they were not satisfied. Analysis from this finding clearly shows that information were obtained for different purposes and most of the respondents were not satisfied with the information available in the library.

Table 4: Problems encountered in using available information

S/N	Problems	SA	%	A	%	D	%
1	Information is sometimes not timely	52	34.3	64	42.1	36	23.6
2	Information is often scanty/inadequate	108	71.2	20	13.1	24	15.7
3	Resource materials are obsolete/not current	68	44.7	46	31.7	36	23.6
4	Information needed is not accessible	76	50	6	4	70	46
5	No internet connectivity	108	71.2	28	18.3	16	10.5
6	Library staff are not cooperative enough	20	13.2	32	21	100	65.8
7	I do not know how to locate materials needed	11	7.2	90	59.2	51	33.6
8	Inadequate reading space	22	14.5	6	3.9	124	81.6
9	Constant noise in the library	37	24.3	16	10.5	99	65.1
10	Opening hours too short	28	18.4	24	15.8	100	65.8
11	Library not well ventilated	24	15.8	24	15.8	104	68.4
12	Library materials not well organized	70	46	76	50	6	4

The study investigated the problems that users often encountered in the process of obtaining information. These are presented in the above Table 4 above. 64 (42.1%) of the respondents agreed that information is sometimes not timely, while 108 (71.2%) strongly agreed that information is often scanty/ inadequate. Furthermore, 68 (44.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed that , the library resources are obsolete, while 76 (60%) also strongly agreed that information needed are not accessible. Moreso, 108 (71.2%) strongly agreed that there is no internet connectivity in their libraries while 100 (65.8%) of the respondents disagreed that library staff are not cooperative enough. In another note, 90 (59.2%) of the respondents agreed that they don't know how to locate materials needed in the library while 124 (81.6%)

of the respondents disagreed that, inadequate reading space is a problem to the library. The respondents finally disagreed that constant noise and opening hour are problems encountered in using their libraries. Analysis from these findings shows that, information resources are scanty and obsolete as well as not accessible and there was no connectivity to internet.

Conclusion

The study has been able to provide the findings on the level of information availability and the extents of use in the public library in Adamawa state.

The study was able to established that majority of the users come on daily basis not only to read but also to consult materials in their areas of interest. This suggests extensive utilization of the few library resources and facilities that were available, though it suggest that most of the resources were scanty and obsolete as well as no connectivity to internet. The study found out that the library was being patronized by every sector of the society.

Recommendations

- i It is also recommended that, the library collection should be improved upon with current and relevant materials. This will also boost the information, education and entertainment services of the library.
- ii. It is recommended that, public libraries should be equipped with the ICT infrastructure in order to guarantee efficient services and communication to the outside world.
- iii. It is also recommended that, there should be a yearly orientation for every user on the use of library, while a library guide should also be made available to all users.
- iv. Finally, the state government should make funding their number one priority, since provision of funds would enhance greater development in the area of information technology and this will enable the library to provide unrelenting service to the users.

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