



Issues and Trends in the Provision of Public Library Services in Nigeria: A Literature Survey

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ABSTRACT

The philosophy, orientation and nature of public library are routed in the responsibility of disseminating diverse and current information services to the members of its community. Waller and Mcshane (2008) posit two major challenges in the provision and use of public library services which are; lack of obtaining a thorough understanding of the nature of the environment which bothers majorly on information provision and use; and the development of policy frameworks that clarifies institutions goals and brings coherence to diverse and sometimes conflicting policy demands. This paper looks at issues and trends concerning some of the challenges bedeviling the provision and utilisation of public library services in Nigeria such as in-appropriate policies, lack of sufficient professionals, inadequate facilities and services and lack of awareness and proper understanding of the concept of public library services which led to non-use of the available services by potential users. Yield shift theory of satisfaction phenomena was used to explain the satisfaction phenomenon of public library services by users. Identified challenges were discussed and recommendations made towards developing a framework for improved public library services in Nigeria.

Keywords: Public libraries, Information provision, Information services, Information utilisation, Information satisfaction, Nigeria.

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I. Introduction

A public library as type of library is regarded as the local gateway to knowledge, providing a basic condition for lifelong, independent, decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups (IFLA/UNESCO, 1995). (IFLA, 2001) also defines public library as “an organisation established, supported and funded by the community, either through local, regional or national government or through some other form of community organization”. (IFLA, 2001) further opines that a public library provides access to knowledge, information and works of the imagination through a range of services and is equally available to all members of the community regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion, language, physical and mental limitations, economics and employment status and educational attainment. (Conable, 2012) opines that every citizen should have equal right of public library services, buttressing the IFLA position on public library services.

According to (Waller and Mcshane, 2008) two major challenges were identified in the utilisation of public library services which are: lack of obtaining a thorough understanding of the nature of the environment which borders majorly on information accessibility and utilisation; and the development of a policy framework that clarifies the institutional goals and brings coherence to diverse and sometimes conflicting policy demands. (Mostert, 2001) posits that, Africa public library system are challenged with multi-faceted problems which can be divided into five broad categories: the introduction of an anachronistic and inappropriate colonial model, inadequate training of library staff, deficiencies in determining specific needs through analysis, lack of cooperation among agencies involved in library-related work, and the absence of sustained efforts to achieve an alternative framework.

Some of the services that can be rendered by public libraries includes: providing information services to support local business; economic and workforce development; maintenance of up-to-date reference

materials on market trends and career opportunities; providing materials and programmes for young children, which encourage an interest in literacy and learning; offering settlement support; accreditation and employment support; maintaining and providing access to local historical collections; providing materials and programmes that complement formal studies; facilitating access to information on services and programmes of government and community agencies; assisting users to find relevant, accurate information quickly through print and electronic sources; and using information and communication technologies (ICT) in order to connect virtually to the libraries, their community and a world of databases and cultural resources (Libraries, 2010). Several studies done in developed countries of the world indicate that information services provided by public libraries are well utilised and held in high esteem by their patrons (Librarian, 2011); (Collins and Chandler, 1997). According to (Black and Muddiman, 1997) public library services in Britain were improved upon after the post-war era by doubling or even quadrupling most non-book cultural services like lectures, film shows, gramophone recitals and poetry readings.

The institution of public library services in Africa has a chequered history closely related to the period of colonisation (Ngubeni, 2004). For example, developing countries such as Nigeria and South Africa do not experience the same high regard of utilisation as their counterparts in developed countries in terms of the legacies left behind by colonialists. Nigeria got her independence over five decades ago, while South Africa is about two decades of independence. It is obvious that, collections in the public libraries in these two countries will reflect the colonial phenomena differently because of the time difference. (Mutshewa, 2010) notes that, Botswana public library services has always experienced problems addressing the information needs of their community due to unsuitable availability of materials, and the rendering of services that supports solidarity reading and learning. Serena in (Mutshewa, 2010) indicates that collections of foreign materials which are not useful, especially for people in the rural community, pose a serious challenge to information service delivery in public libraries. Nigerian public libraries established in the eastern provinces in the 1950's as part of a UNESCO public library project was initially successful in delivering information services as they were governed by law and library boards. Several other initial attempts to establish information services were less successful (Nwoye, 1981), (National Library of Nigeria, 2007); (Ogbonna, 2010); and (National Library of Nigeria, 2011), posit that, there are thirty six (36) public library boards in all the six geo-political zones in Nigeria, serving a population of about 160 million people. Although, there are a number of community/local government public libraries under the supervision and or guardian of these library boards, the services is grossly inadequate compare to the country's population.

Despite the availability of these public libraries, many of them providing vital information services such as information and reference services to both users and small businesses, information sources in a wide variety of

formats to suit people with different abilities and capabilities, photocopy services and in some cases free Internet, they are plagued by several challenges affecting both the kind of services delivered and the utilisation of available services. Authors such as (Aina, 2012); (Badawi, 2009); (Olden, 1985); (Kolawole and Issa, 2002); (Opara, 2008); (Issa, Abdulkareem, Isah, and Kupolati, 2011) and (Fourie, 2009) postulate some of the challenges influencing the provision of public library services in Nigeria, resulting in declining library utilisation statistics. It is against this backdrop that, this study sets out to investigate the challenges in the provision and utilisation of information services in public libraries in Nigeria.

II. Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to survey literature on challenges in the provision and utilization of information services in public libraries in Nigeria with a view to identifying gaps arising from the research problems and developing a framework for improved public library service delivery. The following objectives were identified:

- To determine what information services are currently offered in public libraries and challenges faced in the provision of the services.
- To determine satisfaction levels of users of public library services.
- To develop a framework for the improvement of public library service delivery.

III. Significance of the Study

This survey will assist the public library parent bodies in planning towards developing a framework for improved public library service delivery. It will also create awareness on the degree of patronage of public library services among public library stakeholders and contribute to the existing literature on public libraries in Nigeria. The study will equally serve as basis for appropriate funding for public libraries; stimulate better government policy formulation and implementation on public libraries administration.

IV. Levels of Public Libraries in Nigeria

The operationalisation of public libraries in Nigeria is categorized majorly on three levels which are: Federal, State, and Local. On the Federal level the National is categorized as a public library because it is serving all categories of users at the national level (Ogbonna, 2010). The allocation of funds is derived directly from the federal government budget, while selection and acquisition of materials, service delivery, and all other administrative responsibilities are discharged by senior librarians and the executives of the National Library of Nigeria (NLN) through the Federal Ministry of Education. At the State level, all public libraries are under the umbrella of either the State Ministry of Education. Some public libraries were under the umbrella of State Ministry of Information or Youths and Social Development before the harmonization, focused on

categorizing them under the Ministry of Education and are administered by Library Boards. The Library Board is responsible for the budgetary and all administrative responsibilities, while selection and acquisition of information materials are the responsibilities of the professional librarians. However, all these activities are supervised by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology which is the parent body and overseeing ministry. The majority of community and local government public libraries are either affiliated or supervised by the state public libraries. Provision of information, service delivery and all administrative activities are channelled through the State Library Board.

V. Human and Material Resources

(Aina, 2004) posits that, regardless of the long existence of public libraries in Africa, they are perhaps one of the least developed legacies of the colonialists. This is because the libraries are dangerously in a state of neglects in terms of poorly stocked and outdated materials. Staff quality is very low and inadequate in number. This, according to Aina is largely responsible to poor funding and administrative lapses. It was much better during the colonial era and immediately after the independence. Public libraries in Nigeria lack locally produced resources which led to the inability to procure books, journals and other necessary resources that require foreign exchange because of the introduction of structural adjustment programme (SAP) by the world bank in most countries of Africa, including Nigeria. Nigeria public libraries are currently facing economic crises as a result of the devaluation of currency, library budgets were cut and this led to insufficiency in the financial resources to buy current materials on entertainment, recreation, serials or dailies, reference materials and introduce new services that will reflect the values of the communities that they serves. The libraries could not recruit qualified and competent librarians and train the staff on ground for improved performance and services. Only few public libraries in Nigeria have functional ICT and internet access. All these challenges forced public libraries in Nigeria to remain in a pathetic state. The contributions of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the internet in organizing, preserving and disseminating public library's information services cannot be over emphasized. ICTs could be used to store and preserve materials in the public libraries as a backup measure. It is imperative to understand that ICTs cannot be adequately utilised without web technology put in place. The web technology will link ICTs to accessing the global data bank. "On the other hand, web technology significantly assists public libraries in carrying out their traditional mandate more effectively by helping them cater for the daily information needs of typical public library users. The web frequently offers quick access to information on virtually any topic, ensuring some level of service to members of almost any interest group (Prabha and Irwin, 2003). (Mabawonku, 2001) opines that, internet facilities could be used in information provision to policy makers. This is an indication that internet could be used not only to get information but also to process and disseminate the

information. Millions of people of all ages and backgrounds are turning to the web as a first step for finding information. In Nigeria, a national survey of 3,097 information users' respondents reported using only the internet (20.3%) was twice as large as the average percentage of respondents who reported using only the library (9.7%). This is an obvious demonstration of the importance of information and communication technologies in using information (Council, 2000).

(Library, 2001) in a study on the significant challenges faced by librarians from academic, school and public libraries, the results of the findings show that, the biggest challenge they face is the widespread perception that the internet can provide everything the patron, the student, or the faculty member wants. Librarians who see the Web as a threat to survival recognize that indeed Web-based information providers compete with information services that libraries offer. On the other hand, Web technology significantly assists public libraries in carrying out their traditional mandate more effectively by helping them cater to the daily information needs of typical public library users. The Web frequently offers quick access to information on virtually any topic, ensuring some level of service to members of almost any interest group.

(American Library Directories, 2000) reports that "Web addresses also reflect public libraries' administrative affiliations". In reality, libraries can be, and often are members of both a library system/network and a political community. The library in New London, Connecticut, for example, is supported primarily through city taxes and is clearly a substantial information resource for the community. At the same time, in order to provide enhanced service to the citizens of the city, the library's Online (LION), a non-profit alliance of 22 libraries that share resource and maintain a common OPAC. Its web presence is associated with the LION site rather than the official site of the city of New London or any other governmental units or ISPs. In the web environment, the options for public libraries appear complex. In establishing and maintaining an official presence on the Web, public library directors and boards seem to have had two choices: to connect the institution to a larger entity or stake out their own "group" on the Web. The majority were associated with other institutions, both within the library realm and outside. Public libraries can design effective Web sites on their own in order to create room for independency. Another recurring theme is the issue of filtering; some writers have focused on delivery of services via the Internet, targeting special population through the Web, digitizing local collections, and the Web as a marketing and public relations tool for public libraries. The only wise way forward for public libraries in Nigeria is to embrace ICTs, the internet and Web technologies considering the huge population of clientele and the potential users it intend to serve.

VI. Provision, access and use of public library services (IFLA/UNESCO, 2001) posits that, provision of public library services have been very effective in many countries of the world. For example, In South Africa, public libraries give a high priority to providing the basic facilities, light, tables and chairs. In Trafford, England, three smaller libraries have been integrated into existing

facilities. One branch library has been combined with a school library and two are located with leisure facilities. In Zimbabwe, a weekly mobile library service visits thirty seven primary schools greatly increasing access to the library service for children in the city. In Amazonas State, Venezuela, where there are no school libraries, community public libraries concentrate on providing support for school students and teachers. In the State of Queensland, Australia, public libraries provide homework resources and support to upper primary and secondary school children through organised homework clubs in libraries. (Aguolu and Aguolu, 2002) opines that “public library services can richly complement the formal education institution by imparting in the students the required socialisation, through effective participation in adults education activities, by assisting adults, no longer of school age or out of school in the development of attitudes, extending their technical needs and vocational skills. In this way, the society changed in perceptual categories, ethnical out looks and behavior leanings. He further emphasize “public libraries can play an important cultural role in supporting civic and cultural organization through provision of accommodation for holding meetings, staging plays, organizing debates, or films of cultural relevance. By serving as documentation centers for the tradition and values of the people, public libraries can help in inculcating in children and adolescent appreciation of their cultural heritage through making available to them oral traditional materials in transcribed or record form.

According to (Evans, Amodeo, and Carter, 1999), the following are public library services that could be rendered to public library users in specific term: Lifelong learning; leisure; recreational reading; services to special user groups; services for immigrants and new citizens to help them to find their native culture; reading promotion and literacy; customer care; user education; co-operation and resource sharing; among others.

There is no library anywhere in the globe that can sufficiently provide all the materials that the members of its community require. It is therefore, necessary that libraries strive to enhance services to their patrons by providing them with access to the collections of other libraries. This co-operation could be exhibited at any level, local, regional, national and international, involving libraries of a wide range of organizations with information resources. Public libraries should also make their collections available for loan to other libraries through participation in a network through union catalogue or in a local network of information provided such as schools, colleges and universities. It is equally important that public libraries classify and catalogue its resources according to accepted international or national bibliographic standards. In order to successfully deliver services made available in public libraries, physical accessibility is essential. Otherwise, the services may not be meaningful to those who are unable to access them no matter how high the quality of such services. This should be carried out in a way that maximizes convenience to users and potential users. If possible, they should be near the centre of transport networks and close to areas of community activity. The public library in some cases

could share buildings with other services such as arts centres, museums, art galleries, community centres and sports facilities. This can help to attract users and achieve capital and operational economies. The library must be opened at all times for maximum convenience to those who live, work and study in the community. (ASLIB, 1995) in a survey carried out founds that, the perception among members of the profession was that public library service should provide computer for a variety of tasks. The position is that, automation will facilitate the storing and dissemination of information to users. (Murrey, 1997) shares the view saying that the most challenging task of public is to be able to provide access to information and competent staffs, which will provide increasingly wide range of access to information. When public library services are provided and there is access to these provisions, it is meaningful for these resources to be used and appraised whether or not the clientele are satisfied with the use of the resources.

VI. Satisfaction of Public Library Services

Satisfaction is the state that results after a user has favorably or positively experienced a service or product. It can be quantified and basically represents the degree to which a library has met a user’s needs and expectations. The essence of utilising public library services is to derive satisfaction from the use of such services. Users’ needs are a basic activity in which all categories of public library users participate through particular behaviours. It is of most interest to librarians in the areas of collection development, services, and organisational structures. Needs should generally be more objective than either wants or demands. As a result, Users’ needs of public library are likely to be at least partially based on reason or logic. If public library users do not have their needs met, they may fail to achieve their goals. Public library users tend to hold expectations that can be considered quite basic. Of great importance is a basic sold performance and that promises are kept. Public library patrons desire a quality service or product provided in a friendly and courteous manner. Dimension of expectations by public library users involve two service levels. This first is the desired service level or what the user hopes to receive a blend of what can and should be. The second represents the adequate service level. This is the level of service a patron finds acceptable and satisfying. (Edwards and Browne, 1995) opine that library staff tends to emphasise empathy, tangibles, and customer/staff relationships in order to facilitate users’ satisfaction. Yet, library users tend to attach greater importance to reliability and responsiveness. In the same vein, library users hold expectations for concrete indicators such as the rapid delivery of library services (Coleman, Xiao, Bair, and Chollet, 1997). Public library staff with a good understanding of needs and expectations and their relation to customer satisfaction will experience greater success in satisfying their customers. However, the goal should not be simply to meet expectations or needs but rather to exceed them by surprising and delighting users. To do so, library staff must attempt to both manage and redefine. A survey of expectations management practices of British

Service Firms was conducted in 1993 (PiH and Jeantront, 1994), Over one hundred marketing decision makers responded and share their perceptions. They believed that attention to expectations or needs management resulted in high level customer satisfaction, greater market share, a better understanding of the relationship between pricing and expectations, and grater overall understanding of their customers' expectations gained from regular customer contact and research. This study could be adopted to understand the needs of Public Library users.

Another essential component is a major educational effort on the part of library staff. Staff needs to be honest with public library users in educating and informing them in the area of what libraries can or cannot provide and the cost implications both monetary and otherwise in order to provide the desired services. Whether users' needs are met or not, it will go a long way in determining the degree of library use and satisfaction or otherwise, which will to a large extent determine the relevance of such public library in the community where it is sited. (IFLA, 2009) posits that a checklist for best practice in meeting users' needs is desirable as follow: friends and user groups; focus groups involving staff and members of the public; statistical analysis and surveys; and suggestions and comments schemes. (Oyediran – Tidings, 2004) posits users study as a scientific diagnose of information needs of library users with the aim of effective service provision and satisfaction by libraries. This is to underscore that, before public libraries could satisfactorily meet the needs of her patrons, there is the need to embark on scientific diagnosis of the needs in order to be able to underpin the actual demands of library patrons.

This position was corroborated by (Aina, 2004) when he emphasises that “for libraries to be able to meet the information needs of their users, they need to conduct user studies. User studies involve determining the profile of the users in terms of demographic and personal information. It also helps in determining the information needs of users in order to move up the ladder of rendering an acceptable, satisfactory and valuable public library service (Oyediran – Tidings, 2004). This position was equally supported by (Nnadozie, 2004) when he underscores that research on information needs is in the realm of library user studies for satisfactory services. In a similar study by (Mabawonku, 2004), asserts that there have been studies on information needs of various interest groups and professionals portraying their peculiarities and sources consulted in order to meet the needs satisfactorily. (Aina, 2004) and (Akinwumi, 1996) on different occasions buttress the assertion that through users' studies, libraries are well-placed to know those who use their services, what their information needs are, and what services will likely meet the information needs and for libraries to function excellently, the services so provided should correspond as closely as possible to the satisfactory needs of the users.

VII. Yield Shift Theory of Satisfaction Phenomena (YST)

The premise of the yield shift theory (YST) is satisfaction response which led to outcome, desired by an individual pre-determined effective arousal of emotion (Briggs, Reining, and de Vreede, 2011). It explains the satisfaction response which could either be positive or negative feelings. When one is positive in his feelings, it is adjudged that, one is satisfied and if the feelings are negative, then, dissatisfaction comes in. The theory is not categorizing “Satisfaction” and “Dissatisfaction” separately but characterizes the phenomena arousal by individual leading to positive or negative feelings. For example, the use of public library information services can be adjudged as phenomenon arousal of an individual user which can lead to either positive or negative feelings. The positive feelings indicate satisfaction while the negative feelings depict dissatisfaction. Yield shift theory is premised on five assumptions and two propositions to argue that, satisfaction dispositions of individual are determined by perceived shifts in the yield for the active goal set. For the purpose of this literature survey, interest is geared towards satisfaction phenomena as explained by yield shift theory which manifest in the IS IT domain. The satisfaction phenomena are determined by ten main variables as follows: 1. Goal attainment effect; 2. Confirmation effect; 3. Disconfirmation effect; 4. Anticipation effect; 5. Nostalgia effect; 6. Differential effect; 7. Hygiene effect; 8. Mentor effect; 9. Mixed feelings and 10. Attenuation effect.

1. Goal attainment effect explains the satisfaction that individual derives from the attainment of a desired state but when the outcome is thwarted, dissatisfaction sets in.
2. Confirmation effect is the satisfaction derived when the outcomes match with the expectation of an individual and dissatisfied when outcomes are less compare to the expectations.
3. Disconfirmation effect is a situation when the feeling of individual is neutral when outcomes match expectations and satisfied when outcomes exceed expectations but dissatisfied when outcomes are lower.
4. Anticipation effect is the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of individual when thinking of future goal attainment.
5. Nostalgia effect is the opposite of anticipation effect. This is when an individual feel satisfied or dissatisfied when thinking about past goal attainment or failure.
6. Differential effect posits a situation where individuals manifest different levels of satisfaction to outcomes.
7. Hygiene effect is the neutral or negative feelings of an outcome of an individual but never positive.
8. Mentor effect is the satisfaction or dissatisfaction level of an individual after discussion with a trusted advisor or mentor, even when the discussion does not change anything.

9. Mixed feelings explain individuals' experience that has to do with satisfaction and dissatisfaction level of an outcome.
10. Attenuation effect stands on the premise that, the level of satisfaction responses of an individual diminishes over a period of time.

VIII. Discussion and Conclusion

Public library services in Nigeria, no doubt are plagued by several challenges ranging from insufficient number of libraries' availability serving a population of about 160million people (National Library of Nigeria, 2007; Ogbonna, 2010; Nigerian Library Association, 2011 and Aina, 2012). Aina (2004) buttresses this position when he posits that, the services of the available public libraries in Nigeria are grossly inadequate with outdated collections coupled with lack of sufficient professional librarians. The level of patronage of the existing public libraries is low, less relevant materials; awareness and understanding of the public library concept by the community are poor, bureaucratic in-orderliness, poor funding, and lack of the seal to introduce new services. Introduction of new services will trigger the increase in interest rate of both the clientele and potential users to wanting to use the library more and better as earlier proposed by yield shift theory in this study. The 'Attenuation effect' suggest that, the level of satisfaction responses of an individual diminishes over a period of time, hence, it is advocated that, introduction of new services phenomenon should be a continuous one in order to sustain the high level of patronage occasioned by the additional new services introduced. These challenges can be viewed as the outcomes of the deficiencies in the administrative arrangements in managing these libraries. Although, we have the public library boards, headed by a Chairman, who, in most cases is a politician and knows little or nothing about library management, the board on the other hand, is responsible to the permanent secretary or the commissioner in the ministry of education, who is either an administrator or politician also. It is obvious even to the blind that, critical understanding of the public library settings cannot be posited by these leaders and unfortunately, they are the policy makers on public library matters. It is fundamental that, librarians should be actively involved in policy formulation and implementation. A lot of public library directors in Nigeria are incapacitated about policy formulation, they are just there to implement, even if it is professionally unethical. It is germane to set up a public library and information services' committee which will metamorphose into an institutionalized commission comprising professional librarians and IT experts which will arrest the pathetic situation of public library system in Nigeria.

IX. Recommendations

This survey recommends the following in order to address the identified gaps in the literature:

1. The dreadful state of public library services in

Nigeria requires urgent attention. Hence, the government should set up a formidable committee comprising of professional librarians, IT experts, and administrators of integrity to come up with modalities for improved public library services. Autonomy should be given to libraries and complete access to the collections is desirable by allowing clientele to borrow library materials for a number of days, weeks or months as the case may be. This is purely policy matter.

2. The totality of the public library collections should be overhauled so that they reflect the thinking and values of the communities which they serve.
3. New services such as film show, debate and reading club, story times, lap time for infants, preschool explorers, selective dissemination of information (SDI) and others should be introduced as it is done in the developed countries of the world. This will increase the degree of utilisation and service performance.
4. The satisfaction phenomena as explained by the Yield Shift Theory should be implemented because; introduction of new services must be a continuous process as satisfaction of clientele diminishes with time.
5. Potential users should be sensitized through mass media and other devices on the benefits accrued to the use of public library services. This will trigger their quest for using the services.

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