# LIBRARY AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT FORUM

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# MAXIMAZING THE USE OF PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES IN NIGER STATE THROUGH MARKETING

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## Abstract

The paper examined marketing library and information services of public libraries in Niger State. The study employed a survey research design. The population of the study consisted of forty-three professional and para professional librarians employed by the Niger State Library Board. The data were analyzed by use of frequency and percentages. The results of the data analysed revealed that the need for marketing public library services was to create awareness of the services provided by the public libraries (72%). The library services available for marketing were library services for children (100%), user education (74%) and reference services (93%). Furthermore, findings of the study revealed that the most widely used marketing techniques were 'display and exhibition of new arrivals' (63%) and interpersonal and good communication skills (88%). It was recommended that public library staff ensure that they create and serve users with novel and innovative information services.

## INTRODUCTION

A library is primarily established to acquire, organize, preserve and ensure users have access to resources and services. There are various types of libraries that comprised: academic libraries, public libraries, special libraries, school libraries and private libraries (Odine, 2011).The focus of this paper is the public libraries because they are usually tied to the economic, political and social emancipation of the citizens in a given community as they open their doors and provide access to information on any of the afore-mentioned areas.

Edoka as cited in Udensi and Akor (2014) defined public library as a library system that provides unrestricted access to library resources and services free of charge to all the residents of a given community, state, local government areas and a country. It is worthy to note that public libraries are funded by the government mainly from taxes collected from the citizens. The patrons of public libraries include: students, researchers, skilled and unskilled workers irrespective of their religion, colour, gender, tribe, educational and economic attainment.

According to International Federation of Library Association (2001), public libraries are expected to provide resources and services in a variety of medium to meet the information needs of individuals and groups for education, information and personal development including recreation and leisure.

Regardless of the services provided by public libraries, the effectiveness and efficiency can only be determined by the users. Therefore, the management of public libraries has a responsibility to ensure that the services of public libraries are effective and efficient. This can be achieved when librarians are proactive and are abreast of latest development and its application in the course of acquisition, organization and dispensation of information to satisfy the information demands and expectations of users.

Adigun (2018) lamented that public libraries in Nigeria are battling to remain relevant due to poor funding and human capital development. In order to encourage, attract users and appeal to government to increase funding, public libraries are encouraged to re-strategise by applying marketing principles and supporting tools. Librarians need to market their services for users and potential users, in order to create awareness of public library's value. Several sectors of the public libraries possess services needed by the potential market but they are probably not aware. This paper enjoins public libraries to act like the corporate world by providing quality services and promoting their library services at the right time and place to their patrons.

Niger State Public Library was established in 1963 at Bida during the colonial era. At the creation of Niger State in 1976, two office rooms were allocated at Bosso to the library to start operation in Minna the state capital. As a result of pressure mounted by librarians then, the library was further allocated a classroom block in Bosso road, Minna. In 1986, the library was relocated to the State House of Assembly Library which was vacant as at that time. The Niger State Government partially completed and commissioned an ultra-modern library complex to house the State Library Board Headquarters in December, 1991. In the same year, an edict was enacted establishing a Library Board in Niger State. The Niger State Public Library Board has three branches: Suleja, Kontagora and Rijau.

## Statement of the Problem

Public libraries acquire, preserve and disseminate information to users irrespective of their age, educational status, religion, etc. However, the facilities and services provided in public libraries are in a gory state. Bitagi and Asibi (2016) lamented that Niger State Public Library has not fared well in the provision of library services when compared to other public libraries in Nigeria. The available services are not utilized and available ones were underutilized. From several visits to the library, it was observed that the services provided do not meet the expectations of the 21st century public library user.

There is need to improve on the services and create awareness on the services available in the library. This may result to increase in the library patronage. It therefore, becomes necessary to examine the effective and efficient ways to market public library services in Niger State.

## Objectives of the study

The objective of the study is to determine the extent of marketing library services in public libraries of Niger State Library Board:

1. Determine the need for marketing of library services offered by public library in Niger State.
2. Determine the services offered by public library that are available for marketing in Niger State.
3. Find out the extent to which current techniques are employed in marketing of public library services in Niger State

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Kutu and Olabode (2018) defined marketing of library services as a planned approach to identify, attract, serve and gain support of specific group of users in order to achieve the objective of the library. Meanwhile, IFLA (2018) maintained that marketing of library services is much more than advertising, selling, persuasion and promotion. For marketing is a tried and true systematic approach that relies on designing the services or product in terms of the customer needs, desires with satisfaction as its goal. Library marketing can be defined as a process of identifying the needs of users and striving to satisfy their needs in an effective and efficient manner that maximizes use of library resources and services.

Bovaird (2017) highlighted several reasons why marketing is necessary in public libraries. These include: exposure of people to the programmes offered by the library, it helps keep libraries in the mind of people especially funding agencies, and helps people to create awareness of the benefits associated with the use of public library services. Alkindu and Al-surgri (2013) enthused that

marketing of library services is using marketing tool to announce the usefulness of new services to users. While, Ndukka (2015) maintained that marketing is a medium that is used to transform libraries for the future. The writer further stressed that as a result of emerging technologies marketing becomes necessary for the survival of libraries.

In order to effectively market public libraries, public libraries should provide facilities and services that will bring information resources and users together under conditions which encourage reading for pleasure, self-discovering, personal growth and sharpening of intellectual curiosity.

Iwhiwhu and Okoroduda (2012) identified the following services that are peculiar to most public libraries to include the following: community information services, storytelling, recreational activities, reading competition, career information, customer care, adult literacy education, mobile library services, services to prisoners and online internet services. In order to create awareness and educate users on the benefit of using library services, various strategies have to be adopted. Odine (2011) stressed that libraries have to rethink its services and provide more flexible and user-centred services. The following services were recommended: access to digital information resources, information literacy programme, and e-library services.

Ashikuzzamam (2019) maintained that public libraries should consider the disabled in the provision of library services by providing them the following facilities: screen reader

Salami, R.O., Abutu, P. and Sadiku, K. A. O.

and magnifier, braille, display keyboard, talking typing and scanner etcetera. Adeogun (2018) suggested the following, as ways of marketing public libraries: print and electronic communication media, library websites, social media such as face book, twitter, regular publications, use of pamphlets and posters, book fairs, annual library week celebrations and friends of the library groups. Akpom (2010) stated that the use of leaflets and posters should be used to publicize the various services available in public libraries. Westwood (2011) noted that in order to effectively market public library services that it was very necessary, for librarians to provide

conducive environment to serve as a retreat for users.

## METHODOLOGY

Survey research design was adopted for this study. The population comprised 43 professionals and para professional librarians in Niger State Public Library. All the 43 professional and para-professionals were studied because the population is not too large. The instrument used for data collection for the study was questionnaire. A total of 43 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and all were duly returned. The questionnaire was analyzed using percentage and frequency distribution.

## Presentation of Result and Discussion of Findings
### Table 1: Need for Marketing Public Library Services

| Need for Marketing Services of Public Libraries | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Increase community awareness of the library | 31(72%) | 12(28.0%) | 0(0.0%) | 0(0%) |
| Increase library funding by government and donors | 28(65%) | 15(35%) | 0(0%) | 0(0%) |
| Increase library usage by existing and potential users | 21(49%) | 21(49%) | 1(2%) | 0(0%) |
| Increase perceived value of library among government officials and the community at large | 25(58%) | 16(37%) | 2(5%) | 0(0%) |
| Achieve high level of customer satisfaction | 9(21%) | 30(70%) | 4(9%) | 0(0%) |
| Identify the information needs of users | 7(16%) | 6(14%) | 23(53%) | 7(16%) |
| Improve interpersonal relationship between library personnel and users | 5(12%) | 29(67%) | 7(16%) | 2(5%) |

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 1 shows the responses of the respondents on the need for marketing public library services in Niger State. 72% of the respondents strongly agreed that marketing increases community awareness public library services in the study area. Those who agreed that marketing services of public library can increase community awareness were 12 (28%), while none disagreed or strongly disagreed accordingly 0(0%).This is not

surprising because marketing enables librarians to draw the attention of the community they serve about the services and resources available in the library.

This study confirms the findings of Adegoke (2015) who found out that marketing and promotion played a vital role in creating awareness for library and information products and services. Also, most (28(65%) of the public librarians reported that marketing

increased the perceived value of library among government officials and the community at large, however, 15 (35%) agreed, 0(%) disagreed and 0(0%) disagreed. Furthermore, a larger percentage (53%) of the respondents did not see the need of identifying the information needs of users through public library marketing.

This could be as a result of misconception by respondents of what library marketing is all about. Many people view marketing as mainly creating awareness of existing and new products and services. Marketing fosters the relationship between the library and the community so as to enable libraries identify how convenient, ease of use and users' choice of information resources and services.

**Table 2: Services Available for Marketing**

| Services Available for Marketing | Available | Not Available |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Library services for children | 43(100%) | 0((0%) |
| Recreational activities | 26((60%) | 17(40%) |
| User education | 32(74%) | 11(26%) |
| Adult literacy education | 0(0%) | 43(100%) |
| Career information | 20(47%) | 23(53%) |
| Reference services | 40(93%) | 3(7%) |
| Services to prisoners | 0(0%) | 43(100%) |
| Internet services | 7(16%) | 36(84%) |
| Current awareness service | 27(63%) | 16(37%) |
| Selective dissemination of information | 10(23%) | 33(77%) |
| Provision of cultural art works | 7(16%) | 36(84%) |
| Mobile service | 0((0%) | 43(100%) |
| Provision of assistive devices for the physically challenged such as Braille | 0(0%) | 43(100%) |

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 2 shows the library services that were available / not available for marketing in Niger State Public Library. As shown on table 2 library services for children (100%), were available. This finding is very remarkable because when services are provided for children it will enable them to become lifelong learners and improve the growth and development of children especially as regards to their education.

This finding is in line with Oyedum et al (2014) who opined that the services provided at the children's section at Nassarawa State Public Library was effective Furthermore, other services that were available for marketing were user education

32(74%) reference services 40(93%), recreational activities 26(60%) and current awareness services 27(63%). It is worthy to note that, Niger State Public Library provided the above mentioned services.

Public libraries by virtue of their nature are expected to deal with all kinds of services in all spheres of life for different category of people for various reasons. However, the results showed that mobile services (100%) were not available. This is saddening because most rural dwellers would have benefitted so much from such service. They will be able to have access to information resources to satisfy their information needs where

they live. As a result of limited funds and inadequate staff, public libraries cannot be established in every part of the country. However, with the provision of mobile service every citizen can have access to information resources and services and this will also create more awareness on the activities of public libraries in their community. This finding confirmed the findings of Anyalebechi and Anyanwu (2016) who reported that public libraries in Enugu State do not provide mobile services.

Also, majority of the respondents 36(84%) indicated that internet services were not available (Table 2). In today's technological era users prefer the use of electronic resources than print resources. In order for public libraries to remain relevant and be appreciated by their communities, provision of internet services becomes an essential tool.

This study is in agreement with Bello (2014) who confirmed that despite the importance of ICTs in libraries, most libraries in North Central Nigeria have failed to provide them for their users. Other services that were not available as indicated by majority of the respondents were adult literacy education 43(100%), career information 23(53%), services to prisoners 43(100%), provision of assistive devices for the physically challenged 43(100%), provision of cultural art works 36(84%) and selective dissemination of information 33(77%). The findings of this study is an indication that services pertaining to the vulnerable groups were not readily available even though the use of public library services is the fundamental right of every citizen irrespective of his social class

**Table 3: Extent to which Current Techniques Are Employed in Marketing Library Services**

| Techniques in Marketing Library Services (%) | Great Extent | Moderate Extent | Little Extent | Not Applicable |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Organizing annual library week | 3(7%) | 10(23%) | 25(58%) | 5(12%) |
| Friends of the library group | 2(5%) | 4(9%) | 7(16%) | 30(69%) |
| Posters and flyers | 0(0%) | 8(19%) | 2(5%) | 33(76%) |
| Library website | 0(0%) | 0(0%) | 6(14%) | 37(86%) |
| Word of mouth | 16(37%) | 20(47%) | 7(16%) | 0(0%) |
| Display and exhibition of new arrivals | 6(14%) | 27(63%) | 6(14%) | 4(9%) |
| Social media | 4(9%) | 7(16%) | 2(5%) | 30(70%) |
| Mobile technology | 5(12%) | 9(21%) | 9(21%) | 20(46%) |
| Interior/exterior sign-post | 2(5%) | 9(21%) | 28(65%) | 4(9%) |
| Advertising in print and electronic media | 3(7%) | 5(12%) | 19(44%) | 16(37%) |
| Staff friendliness to users | 8(19%) | 29(67%) | 6(14%) | 0(0%) |
| Preparation of annual report | 6(14%) | 18(42%) | 10(23%) | 9(21%) |
| Provision of conducive environment | 9(21%) | 8(19%) | 24(56%) | 2(4%) |
| Interpersonal and good communication skills | 2(5%) | 38(88%) | 3(7%) | 0(0%) |
| Provision of adequate information resources and services according to information needs of various categories of users | 8(19%) | 11(25%) | 24(56%) | 0(0%) |

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Findings in table 3 revealed that interpersonal and good communication skills were employed to a moderate extent in marketing of public library services as indicated by 38(88%) of the respondents. This finding is really appreciable. This is because whatever technique put in place to market library services, the library requires dedicated, committed, friendly and polite library staff to drive such techniques.

This finding is in line with Odine (2011) who affirmed that effective marketing of library services is dependent on the interpersonal and good communication skills of librarians. Another technique that was applied to a moderate extent to market library services was: display and exhibition of new arrivals 27(63%). It was also deduced from the studies that the use of library website (86%) and social media (70%) were not applied in marketing library services. In order to keep up with customers' expectations, librarians must ensure that they link up with users in communication channels frequently used by the users and these users are more active on social media.

This study is in disagreement with Khan and Bhatti (2012) who deduced that libraries in Pakistan employed the use of social media to capture the attention of online users. Other techniques that were not applied in marketing of public library services as indicated by the respondents were: friends of the library 30(69%) and posters and flyers 33(76%).

## CONCLUSION
Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn. The major need for marketing public libraries in Niger State is to increase community awareness of the library. Several services were available for marketing, however, three services were highly available for marketing. They include library services for children, user education and reference services. However, several services were not available they include adult literacy education, career information, services to prisoners, internet services, mobile services, assistive devices for the physically challenged and provision of cultural art works.

The techniques commonly used to market library services were display and exhibition of new arrivals and interpersonal and good communication skills. Finally, this study found out that several core public library services were not provided. It is pertinent to note that no effective marketing strategy can be effective without an effective and efficient service delivery.

## RECOMMENDATIONS
1. Public libraries in Niger State must create awareness of the types of services they offer and sustain the effort to help them to continually determine the changing information needs of their patrons.
2. Utilization of technology can facilitate public libraries in Niger State to leverage on the different audiences and provide befitting services targeted at such groups who are also patrons of the library. It is recommended that during registration, patrons should be encouraged to provide in addition, information on the social media/networks they patronise.
3. Capacity building is an important component of staff development. It

is recommended that public libraries in Niger State participate in workshops and conferences providing such opportunities" to understand and apply different techniques into library services. Staff sponsorship and release be prioritised periodically.

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