

PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES FOR A TRULY DEMOCRATIC NIGERIA

Katamba Abubakar Saka, PhD, CLN

Department of Library Information Technology
Federal University of Technology, Minna, Nigeria
s.katamba@futminna.edu.ng. 07038706880

Abstract

The paper explores conceptual analysis of public library services; democratic form of government as well as services offer by public libraries towards attaining a truly democratic Nigeria. Democracy is the best system of government in any country and the modernized public libraries can adopt varieties of library and information services. They include: acquisition and provision of collection and services to attain a truly democratic Nigeria; voter education/information literacy, public enlightenment programme; document delivery; social networking, referral, translation and mobile library services; services for the children and conflict resolution. For effective provision of library and information services in public libraries and true democratic Nigeria, information and communication technologies (ICTs) be adapted and used. Challenges to public library and information services include: funding, ICT skills of library personnel and electorate, infrastructural problem and religion and cultural factors. Conclusion was that application of ICTs to modern public library services would enhance a true democratic Nigeria and absence of the ICTs and efficient information may lead to not have a truly democratic nation. Paper recommended that to have truly democratic Nigeria, adequate funding for the procurement of ICTs, training of personnel and electorates; equipped infrastructure facilities be made available. There should be policy on public library services to disadvantaged groups in Nigeria.

Keywords: Democracy, Public Libraries, Modern Libraries, Library and Information Services, Nigeria.

Introduction

Government as overall organ of a country is charged with the responsibilities of providing social amenities, enacting policies and making provision for the safety of lives and properties. Nigeria as a country posse three (3) arms of government i.e. the executive, legislative and judicial arms of government. Depending on individual country the concept of government is usually link to the expected functions and roles. The executive, legislative and judiciary arm of government discharge series of functions which include policy proposal, design and implementation and example is the national policy on education which gives Nigerian a sense of direction in terms of education. Governments of every country consist of state, local government, constituency which has representatives that cater for their felt needs. The representatives may be elected or appointed to cater for their interest. In Nigeria, individual rise to certain position through their career path or through election. For the appointed individuals to be well informed and abreast in their area of assignment, there is the need for library services position which may be attached to their immediate organization a been managed by professional trained LIS personnel who will charged with the responsibility of meeting the information need of host community.

Public Library Services: Conceptual Explanation

Public libraries are established out of government and public funds and their use is not restricted to any class of users but for all. For this reason, some people regarded public libraries as people's university. Therefore every citizen including civil servants, politicians, businessmen and women, farmers, students, applicants, medical personnel, teachers, disadvantage groups, etc can access public library resources

for consultation with a view to meeting their information needs (Aliyu and Magaji, 2015). Community and rural libraries are extension of the public libraries, hence most of them are under respective state library board. It is very necessary for these categories of libraries to provide information services to citizens for a truly democratic Nigeria.

Public libraries are not left out in this direction of making Nigeria a truly democratic nation, hence Chimah, Akpom and Okoro (2015:160) stated in one of the overall mission of Moldova's Public Libraries is "to democratize society by providing quality information services and ensuring access to information through modernized public libraries". Information is a vital ingredient in the development of any society and effective access to information can only be made possible through the use of ICT. The modernized public libraries can effectively and efficiently offer services if Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are incorporated (Madumere & Ukwueze, 2013).

Democratic Form of Government

Depending on countries, various systems of government exist and are practiced and they vary from one country to another. Thus in Nigeria, we have: presidential, republican, military-in-power, civil-military rule, democracy etc. systems of government. From all the systems practiced by various countries of the world, democracy is the best system of government globally; this is because of equally participation of citizens in the affairs of the state or country. Democracy according to Dubie (2012) is government on behalf of people i.e. a representative government; hence this is anchored with the common slogan "Government of the people for the people and by the people."

For a truly democratic Nigeria to exist, people must have equal right to vote and be voted for; right to choose own candidates, thus being determined by free and fair elections (Madumere & Eze, 2013) and hence the writers enumerated three categories of political posts/appointees that exist in Nigeria and are in three levels i.e. Federal, State and Local Government appointment levels. At local government level election is usually conducted by State Independent Electoral Commission (SIEC) while at state and federal levels elections to the position of president and national assembly are conducted by Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) and thus Madumere & Eze (2013) maintained that local, state and federal government appointment levels exists in Nigeria. The local governments appointments consist of chairmen and councilors, while at state there exist state governors, deputy governors, commissioners, state legislators. At federal level we have the president, vice president, ministers, permanent secretaries etc.

Importance is attached to democracy in Nigeria such that 29th May of every year has been declared as democracy day and recently the present administration has also considered June 12th which mark the month and date when the election to the office of president was annulled even though many Nigerians claimed that the election was creditable, free and fair.

Public Library Services Provision

Public libraries offer varieties of information services. The libraries that are pertinent to democratic setting in Nigeria include: national, community, rural and public libraries but mostly public libraries provide free access to use of collection.

Acquisition and Provision of Information Resources and Services

One of the services offered by public, community and rural libraries is to acquire and provide current but relevant information resources which are in different format and are educationally and politically inclined in the modern age. Based on the submission by Egbe-Nwuyi, Chinyere and Eneh

(2017) educational materials such as textbooks, newspapers, fictions, pictures, posters were not only provided but also readers, lending, reference as well as Current Awareness Services and Selective Dissemination of Information services were offered to users of Enugu State Library Board. In this modern age, a combination of both printed, non-printed and electronic information service would enhance information resources delivery (Ahmed, 2016; Aejedafiru and Enakire, 2017).

Voter Education Programme/Information Literacy

Since large percentage of population of Nigeria reside/concentrated in rural areas, public libraries in collaboration with community and rural libraries can be equipped with ICT facilities there and then use internet facilities and services to educate users particularly the electorates/voters or offer information literacy programme. This if adopted and used regularly would assist voters, young and adults not only to read and write numbers and alphabets but also effectively use Online Public Access Catalogue (Saka, et al., 2015; Okeoghene, 2018).

Public Enlightenment Programme/Current Awareness Services

Public libraries should be charged with the responsibilities of creating awareness; provide orientation and sensitization on how the election procedures, laws and processes take place in a democratic setting. Thus public, community and rural libraries should provide and display posters on strategic locations while mobile libraries can distribute pamphlets on politics, election and activities of government to people in remote locations. All these are steps to be taken so as to wipe out ignorance; promote economic, educational, social and cultural development in the society (Aejedafiru and Enakire, 2017).

Public libraries with media section can provide enlightenment programme through radio, television, DSTV, newspaper, etc. Live community, press release or announcement on results can be made through television and newspaper.

Document Delivery Services

The modernized public libraries can promote document delivery services via internet. This entails that both urban and rural communities would not only have electricity supply but also steady power supply and ability to access and use the internet. Unlike the traditional postal services, libraries can send and deliver documents to users through electronic mails (Okeoghene, 2018).

Social Networking

The use of ICT has turned the whole world into a global village. Modernized public libraries can provide social media sites for users to exchange/share ideas on the political situations of a country. Knowledge can be shared through mobile phones, e-mails, etc. (Awodoyin, et al., 2016).

Referral Services

No library on earth is self-sufficient in terms of resources, therefore, public libraries can re-direct users to another libraries where the needed information or information resources can be obtained (Madumere and Ukwueze, 2013).

Mobile Library Services

This is also known as extension or outreach services, due to one reason or the other, some individuals are unable to access and use public libraries. These group of individuals include: women in purdah houses, inmates, rural dwellers, cripples, deaf and dumb, internally displaced persons (IDPs), people

living in riverine areas, etc.. Mobile libraries services (through public libraries) can provide books, posters, leaflets, pamphlets etc. to users and these services according to Eze (2015) can be extended to IDPs through public libraries. Some of these collections can be given on loan especially textbooks (Madumere and Ukwueze, 2013).

Information Services to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Public libraries can provide career guidance and counseling services as well as preservation of cultural heritage to IDPs. Public libraries can also provide information services on the type of career IDPs are to engage upon and how they can protect themselves against violence (Eze, 2015).

Library Services for Children

The children section in public libraries are expected to be equipped with relevant story books, fictions, arithmetic, social studies and civic education. The modernized public libraries in Nigeria can take the shape of public libraries of Istanbul for the children e.g. story and reading competition for children on annual basis; computer and internet courses; book lending services, etc. (Altay and Tekin, 2016).

Translation Service

Public libraries being people's university are expected to hire consultants that are versatile in both foreign and local Nigerian languages so as to translate write-ups in foreign languages to Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba as well as other minority tribes. Above all, this service can be offered to other organizations for free (Aina, 2004).

Conflict Resolution

Conflict in public; among citizens, electorates or voters and rural dwellers can occur due to inadequate information; information flow, misinformation or inaccessibility to right information on the electoral process. For public libraries to effectively provide accurate, current, right and reliable information so as to reduce or avoid conflict more especially among electorates and on the electoral process. Kareem (2014) maintain that judges and lawyers need to provide adequate information. These piece of information when documented can be kept in public, community or rural libraries for consultation. Public enlightenment programme, voter education and internet services can help reduce conflicts among electorates and users of information.

Challenges to Public Library and Information Services

Inadequate Funding

Provision of library and information services require a lot of funds to take care of resource procurement particularly the ICT facilities and their installation. Provision of general library services and routines require money and absence or inadequate funding create setback to public library development in Nigeria (Abba, 2017) and not to talk of having a truly democratic Nigeria through public library service provision.

Lack of ICT Literacy

Users of public libraries, more especially the rural dwellers' with the problem of inability to read and write, not to talk of having knowledge of accessing and operating computers and related ICT facilities, can create problems of democratic information in the society. This problem is not only limited to users alone but also some library staff as Abba (2017) reported that out of the four problems identified from the study, lack of ICT facilities both on the side of staff providing library services and the users consulting ICT facilities was the major obstacle to the use of ICT facilities in public libraries in Katsina State, Nigeria.

Infrastructure Problem

Problems associated with the provision of public library and information services is the infrastructural problems such as poor access road, telecommunication, access to information as well as electricity power supply, provision of library services cannot be possible without good access road, internet services, telephone and steady power supply especially access to information by rural areas (Kamba, 2010).

Religion and Cultural Factors

Even where public libraries intends to provide mobile library services (extension and outreach services), religion and culture of the land might not permit library staff (mobile librarian) from getting access to women in puddah houses. Related to this is the language of community is a negative factor for easy assimilation or comprehension of English Language of the documents.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Library and information services entails the acquisition and provision of library resources (print, non-print and electronic) and other specialized services. The application of ICT to modern public library services would enhance a truly democratic Nigeria, while inadequate or non-availability of ICTs in public library services may lead to half-baked democratic Nigeria. To have a truly democratic Nigeria using public libraries to offer library and information services, the following suggestions need to be taken into consideration:

1. The State Library Boards should provide adequate funds to procure ICT facilities, train library staff and users (rural dwellers); provide and equip infrastructural facilities.
2. State Library Boards should design and develop policy on public library services to disadvantaged groups (rural dwellers IDPs, women in puddah houses, etc).

References

- Abba, H (2017). Assessing the use of ICT facilities by staff and users of public libraries in Katsina State, Nigeria. *Samaru journal of information studies*, 17(2), 66-82.
- Aejedafiru, E.F & Enakrire, R.T (2017). Public Library and Information Services: Dilemma for Riverine Communities in Delta State, Nigeria. *Journal of Library Information Science and Technology*, 4(3), 18-26.
- Ahmed, A.O (2016). Library and Information Service Delivery in Niger State: Challenges and way forward. *In Proceedings of Annual Conference of the NLA, Niger State Chapter held at Niger State College of Education, Minna, 1st – 5th August, 2016, 9-13.*
- Aina, L.O (2004). *Library and Information Science Text for Africa*. Ibadan Nigeria. Third World Information Services Limited.
- Aliyu, A & Magaji, R (2015). Emerging trends in library services. *In Proceedings of 15th Annual Conference of Nigeria Library Association Enugu State Chapter held at National Library of Nigeria, 25th -27th November, 147*
- Altay, A & Tekin, A (2016). Creative Information Services at the Public Libraries of Istanbul. *Journal of Balkan Libraries Union*. 1(1), 2016, 8-11. Also available at <http://www.balkanlibraries.org/journal>

- Awodoyin, A; Osisanwo, T; Adetoro, N & Adeyemo, I (2016). knowledge Sharing Behaviour Pattern Analysis of Academic Librarians in Nigeria. *Journal of Balkan Libraries Union*, 4(1), 12-19.
- Chimah, J.N; Akpom, C & Okoro, N.P (2015). Community information and library services for a democratized society: Implications for public libraries in Nigeria. In *Proceedings of 15th Annual Conference of Nigeria Library Association Enugu State Chapter held at National Library of Nigeria, 25th -27th November*, 153-162
- Dibie, C.C (2012). *Essential Government for Senior Secondary Schools* 5th ed. Ibafo: Tonad Publishers Limited.
- Egbe-Nwiyi, N.E; Chinyere, O & Eneh, E.A (2017). Public Library Services and Users Satisfaction in Enugu State Library Board. In *Compendium of Papers presented at the 1st International Conference and Home Coming of the Department of Library and Information Service, University of Nigeria, Nsukka*, vol.2, 25th -30th June, 2017, 113-121.
- Eze, I. O (2015). Towards planning public library and information services for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Nigeria. In *Proceedings of 15th Annual Conference of Nigeria Library Association Enugu State Chapter held at National Library of Nigeria, 25th -27th November*, 66-77.
- Kamba, M.A (2010). Access to information: the dilemma of rural community development in Africa. Retrieved from [http://buk.academic.edu/manirabubakarkamba/papers/049868/access-to-information.The dilemma-for rural-community-development-Africa](http://buk.academic.edu/manirabubakarkamba/papers/049868/access-to-information.The%20dilemma-for%20rural-community-development-Africa) 28th January, 2019.
- Kareem, S.A (2014). The impact of LIS delivery in peace and sustainable development in Nigeria. In *Proceedings of the Annual Conference on Peace: A Panacea for National Development held between 17th and 20th April, 2013 at Osun State College of Education, Ila-Orangun*, 155-167.
- Madumere, C.P & Eze, C.C (2013). The Role of Librarians in the Development of True Democracy in Nigeria. In *Proceedings of the 13th Annual Conference and General meeting of the Nigeria Library Association, Enugu State Chapter held at National Library of Nigeria, Enugu, 20th -22nd November, 2013*, 120-126.
- Madumere, C.P & Ukwueze, P.N (2013). The Mandate of Public Libraries for Rural Transformation in the Era of Information and Communication Technology. In *Proceedings of the 13th Annual Conference and General meeting of the Nigeria Library Association, Enugu State Chapter held at National Library of Nigeria, Enugu, 20th -22nd November, 2013*, 152-158.
- Okeoghene, M (2018). Influence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) on job performance of Librarians in National Open University of Nigeria. *Lagos Journal of Library and Information science*, 7(1&2), April/October, 2018, 30-41
- Saka, K.A; Salami, R.O; Akor, P.U & Abu, O.I (2015). Libraries and Information Services as tool for sustaining true democracy in Nigeria. In *Proceedings of 15th Annual Conference of Nigeria Library Association, Enugu State Chapter held at National Library of Nigeria, 25th -27th November, 2015*. 78-87