

# **Public Relation Tools and Extension Services of Public Library in Nigeria**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Public libraries exist in many countries across the world and are often considered an essential of having an educated and literate population. Public libraries are distinct from research libraries, school libraries, and special libraries in that their mandate is to serve the general public's information needs rather than the needs of a particular group or sectors of the society, school, institution, or research population. The general popular is expected to make effective and efficient use of public libraries to satisfy their informational and research needs. Unfortunately, many public library in different states in Nigeria had failed over the years to rendered effective services to public. A review of the available literature showed that public library services are not fully exploited by their communities because they are mostly not aware of the services offered. This is worrisome in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this made the researchers to exposing tools to reach people because of one challenges or the others. The paper on public relation tools and extension services of public library in Nigeria focus on the following purposes: public relation tools used for extension services in Nigeria; public library extension services available in Nigeria and the challenges confronting public library extension services.*

**KEYWORDS:** Public Relation, Tools, Extension Services and Public Library.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Public libraries contribute significantly to the educational development and literacy level of any community. They are often considered as an essential part of having an educated and literate population. Public library is a social institution which is based on the concept of democracy and it is an institution for the people, by the people and of the people. Public libraries by definition are libraries established and maintained by the government for the entire populace (Mary & Dhanavanda, 2014). Public library is a library established to provide unrestricted access to

information resources free of charge to all the residents of a given community. Akanwa (2013) citing Emenalor defined the public library as a library that provides information resources, services and recreational outlets for the generality of the citizenry, namely, the young, old, literate and non-literate. Unlike other types of library, the public library is not restricted to any group of users and the collections are developed to reflect the diversity of their clientele. Its services, resources and facilities should suit the local needs of its communities and users.

Various services are offered in public libraries. Ibe (2014) defined public library services as those jobs performed by public libraries for the benefit of the general public whom they are meant to serve. International Federation Library Association (IFLA) (2011) emphasized that public library services include the loaning of books, reference services, referral services, circulation services, children library services, digital/internet services, and other media, provision of books and other materials for use in the library, information service including print and electronic media, readers' advisory services including reservation services. Furthermore, extension services is one of most services carried at beginning of public library in Nigeria. These services aims to meet the need information hungry of those that cannot come to the physical building because of distance or other reasons.

The general public is expected to make effective and efficient use of public libraries to satisfy their informational and research needs. Unfortunately, many public library in different states in Nigeria had failed over the years to rendered effective services to public. A review of the available literature showed that public library services are not fully exploited by their communities because they are mostly not aware of the services offered. The literature establishes that public relations and publicity are important for libraries in the present competitive, digital era (Kanwal, 2015). Therefore, public relations can be defined as the art and science of managing relationship with 'public'. It attempts to establish and sustain mutually beneficial relationships between an organization, commercial or non-commercial, and the stakeholders or "publics". There are various public relations tools used by librarians/public relations experts in public library to provide effective public library services in Nigeria.

Public Relations Tools (PRT) to carry effective public library services example could be grouped into four types: The print media tools, social media tools, and electronic media tools and non-print(audio-visual media tools) (Okon, Uwem & Simon, 2015). Furthermore, Akanwa and Udo- Anyanwu (2017) in their textbook, classified public relation tools or resources available in any type of libraries. The authors grouped them into books (print media tools), non-books (non-print media tools), electronic resources (electronic media tools) and internet resources (social media tools are also part of internet resources).

Finally, in order to reach out to the citizens, public libraries must provide extension services. Extension services is a virtual 'library within a library' providing services to schools, shut-ins and various organizations throughout the city. Extension services endeavors to meet the needs of widely scattered residents through its bookmobile, classroom and deposit collections to schools, day cares, fire stations, nursing homes, senior citizen apartments among others through special services such as delivery and pick-up of library materials to shut-ins (Gary. 2010).

Public libraries extend their services and materials to rural population through the services of the mobile libraries. Mobile libraries are vans which carry materials and staff to the rural population within a state and materials is

borrowed out and also those that are already due are returned in the process (Otuhelu, 2005). Public library extension services such as bookmobile have the potential for a greater variety and quality of service (Friese, 2008). According to Kihat (1990), mobile services have reached segments of the rural population that would not otherwise have any library facilities at all. The bookmobile and its counterparts have brought improvements to rural areas, stimulated reading interest, and have increased general awareness on health, nutrition, child care and family planning among others.

To this end, Abel and Issa (2012) rightly stated that it is therefore no coincidence that one of the most significant developments in public librarianship has been the library's effort to reach out to the community. Thus, Umar (1980) underpins this essence in his observation that a good public library system attempts to serve the entire population with all its dimensions of needs, 'It is necessary' that the public library makes its extension services available and known to the entire community, thus bringing the need for it to undertake extension services. As Oklah (1987) puts it the value of library' extension services came with the consideration of the ways the public library can perform its functions effectively, one of which is to reach out to all members of the community library services. Unfortunately, in spite of the lofty goals and laudable aspirations discussed above, public libraries are grappling with a number of challenges such as lack of fund, lack of mobility, inadequate staff, lack of awareness, lack of current materials etc. These challenges have in no doubt constituted a problem to public libraries in achieving their objectives in Nigeria. For instance, Abel and Issa (2012) supported that public library system in Nigeria suffers most by ways of neglect, lack of recognition, inadequate funding and personnel which have negatively affected the provision of the desired services by the public libraries. Therefore the paper focus on the following purposes:

- find out public relation tools used for extension services in Nigeria
- determine the public library extension services available in Nigeria
- find the challenges confronting public library extension services

## **PUBLIC RELATION TOOLS USED FOR EXTENSION SERVICES IN NIGERIA**

Public libraries have been facing important challenges such as declining budgets, impacts of information technologies and the changing information environment. To overcome these challenges, libraries need to consider public relations tools as an important management tool, as public relations tools are regarded as crucial for improving the recognition and the reputation of public libraries. The purpose of public relations is to create, maintain, and develop mutual understanding. As a communication bridge between library and clients, public relations direct public thoughts through providing mutual relation between people and media.

Public relation tools for effective public library services are grouped under the following:

- ✓ Social media tools e.g. Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Telegrams and websites
- ✓ Electronic media tools, e.g. e-book, e-journals, email, RSS, Blogging, podcast, mobile phones, telex. Computers and teleconferencing.
- ✓ Print media e.g. book, periodicals, magazines, abstract, and card catalogue.
- ✓ Audio-visual/ non- print media e.g. television, radio, and bulletin boards
- ✓ The Library Staff e.g. PR personnel.

## **PUBLIC LIBRARIES EXTENSION SERVICES AVAILABLE**

Extension services according to Agupta (2012) are effort of a library to increase the number of its users to make the maximum use of its resources. Apart from such which, in addition to their being directly educative or recreational, lead also to publicity as an important secondary product. These activities are known as extension services of libraries (Ranganathan in Agupta, 2012). An extension service aims are at converting non-readers into readers. It creates and stimulates the desire for good reading. This is done by bringing books and readers together. This results in exploitation and promotion of collections (Kumar. 2008). The main objectives of extension services according to Agupta (2012) are that it is an attempt to turn the library to a social center which encourages reading; its aim is to convert readers into non-readers; it creates and stimulates the desire for good reading and brings book and reader together; it makes maximum use of library resources; it is to create image of the library among the public and government.

The extension services may be organized through various programmes. Ranganathan cited by Agupta (2012) has given the techniques or programmes to provide library extension services as reading to illustrate: translation of manuscript/ local language; reading circle; intellectual centre library talks and public lectures: library exhibitions; story hours; festivals and fairs; display of new and topical books; mobile services; quiz programmes and celebration of books weeks.

## **TYPES OF EXTENSION SERVICES**

Extension services can be categorized into two groups:

1. Conventional; and
2. Non -Conventional.

## **CONVENTIONAL METHODS**

**Adult Education:** Adult education is an important aspect of extension service. It is needed in developing countries to remove poverty and illiteracy. The illiterate adults can be made to have the benefits of library services by instituting the reading system. Arrangement should be made to have books read to them at stated hours.

**Book Display:** The display of material is the most important technique to spread the news of library service. It is designed to bring together the purpose of display and to reveal the thought content of the documents on display.

There are three types of display: ·

Topical- In this display, documents are displayed according to topic wise.

Subject –In this display, documents are displayed according to subject wise.

Mobile -As term indicates, it is moving within the community of organizations within the service area that library covers.

**Book Exhibitions:** Organizing a book exhibition in the library is also an extension service. Exhibitions are mostly arranged to publicize less known materials, encourage reading, promote interest in a specific field or group of subject fields, call attention to particular anniversary, encourages hobbies and many facilities provided for them in the library. Each exhibit should have a specific objective. Skillful use of colour contrasts, background lighting and equipment should aid considerably in attracting the interests of the readers. An exhibition involves a lot of money, energy and time; it should be well thought and well planned in advance.

**Mobile Library Service:** Mobile library is a stock of books kept in a vehicle with limited staff to providing in some cases, a house to house service in remote areas such as villages and hamlets. Mobile library also provides issue and return services for a certain period.

**Shaping Friends of the Library Group:** People in general Library can likewise consider framing "Companions of the Library Group"; such gathering can help the library through raising money, volunteering, and promotion. They additionally hold book deals at the library. With the assistance of such gathering library can raise supports and can do library promoting moreover.

**Library Services for Nursing Home and Prison:** The library provides extended loan periods to doctors, nurses and other personnel's working in hospitals. Library can / should also provide extended loan periods to prisoners for changing their idea and helps in making them better citizens.

**Mobile library services for the blind:** Mobile library services can be provided for visually impaired persons also. Braille books, large-print books, children books with Braille transcription and talking books can be passed along any mobile library to visually handicapped persons who could be potential users. Currently, the Center of Informal Education Promotion within the Ministry of Education provides a mobile public library service by boat to the riverside community in Bangkok and neighboring provinces. Among its regular users is a mentally handicapped child. The Social Welfare of Bangkok Metropolitan also provides mobile libraries on wheels.

**Distance Learning Library Services:** Many people could not find opportunity to receive formal education; Distance Education Library system can help the common masses to educate them continuously. Distance Education Library System can also help millions of people to move forward in vocational professional skills, in family living, in the pleasure and profit of artistic placement in cultural values and learningbeskills of solving individual community problems. Distance education Library System can also as an agency for eradicating among the masses.

**Document delivery services:** is for specialized users not for all. Documents may be reserved via telephone or mail system. Documents are delivered through courier system, parcel system and/or electronic transmission. Now electronic document delivery may be possible in which faculty, staff and students may request copies of journal articles, book chapters and other materials located in print collection of the library. Cornell University Library provides fee based electronic document delivery service.

**Inter-Library Loan Services:** Is a service whereby a user of one library can borrow books, videos, DVDs, sound recordings, microfilms, or receive photocopies of articles in magazines that are owned by another library. Sometimes for a small fee, or possibly for no cost, a library that has the item will loan or copy it, and the item is transported to the requestor's library to be checked out or just used within the library.

**Story Hours for Children:** Library provides story hours for children. It is also a kind of extension service. Due to this library develops reading habits in children.

**Reading / Study Centres:** Study centres are another form of extension services to provide library services to the people who are not able to come to the library. These centres are worked in odd hours as well as normal hours. Reading centres contains books, periodicals, magazines, newspapers etc. This library contains mainly study material, text books, audio-visual aids and other reading material for its clientele.

## **NON -CONVENTIONAL**

**Ask-Us:** The Ask-Us program has been developed to provide e-mail reference services to users of electronic resources.

**Current Awareness Service'** Service intended to meet the current approach is generally known as current awareness service. CAS is process of dissemination of current information, which means the information contents of current published primary documents, for which the researchers have need. SDI is the part of CAS. SDI is another way of extension service similar as CAS.

**Digital Interlibrary Loan:** Small items that are too fragile to circulate on interlibrary loan are usually supplied through a photocopy, but photocopying often shortens the life of the original. The Library of Congress Collections Access, Loan and Management Division scan this type of material and deliver the images via the Web. This makes public domain items widely accessible for current and future requests and contributes to the preservation of the original. Items protected by copyright are not scanned in this program.

**Outreach and Homebound Services:** Homebound service is the monthly pick-up and delivery materials to individuals in their homes. This is an extension service for those people who live within five miles of city limits and he or she must be sixty-five years old or older and homebound, or physically challenged and homebound. A person may live with another family member who drives and still be eligible for Outreach services. From time to time, there is a waiting list for homebound service due to staff and time limitations. Service to rest homes, nursing homes, retirement homes, assisted living facilities is another aspect of the Outreach program. Book service maybe in the form of a monthly deposit collection a once-a-month browsing hour or more rarely room-to-room visits with a book cart.

**Purchase Xpress:** Purchase Xpress is a service for requesting a book, video, or CD be purchased for the library. The requested item will be ordered (rush ordered if necessary) and delivered to users will receive notification via e-mail when the requested item is available.

**Zoom Text for Windows Service:** This library service is only for visually impaired persons. Zoom Text for Window is software designed to assist the visually impaired to view the computer monitor better. It acts as a magnifying glass over the computer screen.

**Virtual services:** Virtual services such as Web pages, Virtual reference service, Internet searching, online databases, OPAC, Online Book Clubs etc. are also provided by libraries to its users. Online databases are collection of information arranged into individual records to be searched by computer, which is available through the Internet or an organization's Intranet.

**Book club:** Book club also referred to as a reading group, is a collection of readers who participate in the regular discussion of books. Traditionally, a book club consists of several members who meet in person each month to talk about a specific work. However, the advent of web forums and email has made it possible for book clubs to exist online. Fiction, nonfiction, teen, romance, good news, science fiction, mystery and horror books are available on these book clubs.

**Talking Books:** Those who have impaired vision or cannot use a book due to a physical condition are eligible for this service.

**Translation of Manuscript:** For increase in utilization of the library open library ought to decipher books or original copies in to nearby dialect. It pulls in more individuals towards library since books written in neighborhood or primary language are more requested in broad daylight library.

**Festivity of Festival and Events and Arranging Cultural Programs :** It is a smart thought to orchestrate well known celebrations and occasions in the general population library which may likewise organize a dramatization, a manikin appear, a music show, a film appear, an enchantment indicate and so on. Such social projects can demonstrate extraordinary fascination for the group or can celebrate different birth commemorations of prominent individuals.

### **CHALLENGES OF PUBLIC LIBRARY EXTENSION SERVICES**

Studies have shown that public library extension services are facing a number of problems which could be highlighted as bad roads, lack of funds, insufficient library materials, irrelevant or outdated materials and security. Chukwu, (1996) in her study reveals that inadequate staff accommodation, distance irregular visits, ignorance/unawareness of the services as the major problems confronting public library services.

Ebiwolate (2010) noted that library service is inhibited by poor infrastructure, inadequate funding, lack of human resources, and so on. Studies have consistently reported inadequate levels of ICT literacy as one of the major problems facing libraries in Nigeria as they move into the 21st century. According to Kibat (1990) the major obstacles inhibiting efficient information services in rural areas are poor communication infrastructure and widely-dispersed rural population. In developed nations public libraries provide ICTs that aid timely delivery of information to the rural population\ majority of Nigeria's rural population still lacks the most basic telecommunications. ICT infrastructure development and poor funding have been identified as problems, followed by poor ICT skills among staff (Oduwole, 2005; Adedoyin 2005). The culture of infrastructure development and maintenance is not widespread in Nigeria. Infrastructure is essential for delivery of library services to rural communities.

Inadequate funding is another major obstacle. Nearly all library materials are purchased from outside Nigeria, mostly from Europe and America, and due to a shortage of foreign currency and a high exchange rate, acquisitions have dropped sharply and in some states completely stopped. Many libraries in Nigeria cannot afford to purchase and install computers and establish an Internet connection, especially in rural areas. Lack of funds is the greatest problem libraries face. Inadequate funding is hindering the development of public libraries in Nigeria (Nwokocha. 2002). Ajibero (2000) attributes this to economic conditions, government attitude, and particularly information infrastructure. Another vital problem is inadequate Human Resources. We are at a point of change in the information economy of which libraries are a part (Chad 2008, cited by Harris 2009). Change is focused on innovation, technology, user experience, resource management, and service delivery. These changes call for education and training of librarians and other library staff. The shortage of adequately trained staff in libraries is obvious. Education and training for librarianship in Nigeria is inadequate, and need radical restructuring to produce

librarians suited to service in a knowledge-based society. At present, many rural libraries have inadequate numbers of staff, and many others have staff that is seriously undereducated. 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 in rural areas, and to bridge the information gap between urban and rural.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Government should help ensure adequate funds and resource mobilization for the acquisition of information and communication materials for the provision of quality library services in Nigeria
- There should be proactive awareness creation among the people about the major services rendered by public libraries in Nigeria.
- Training and retraining of staff in ICT and related areas should be a continuous exercise in public libraries in Nigeria
- The government should make a deliberate policy that ensures that public library services should be extended to both urban and rural areas with internet connectivity and facilities.
- There should be effective networking of the libraries to the internet so that both the library staff and users can always have access to the internet within the library premises.
- Above all the state governments should recognize the importance of public libraries to the society and should have total commitment to them by providing them with all the necessary assistance in terms of provision and maintenance of infrastructures, recruitment of competent librarians and improved welfare package for effective public library service delivery in Nigeria.

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