

# AN ASSESSMENT OF KWARA STATE PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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## Abstract

*This study is an assesment of the Kwara State Public Library Services, Problems and Prospects. A survey research was used for the study. The study employed documented sources and questionnaire as an instrument in collecting data. The data collected from the study were subjected to descriptive data analysis in a tabular form and percentages. Findings revealed that public library services in the State, such as current awareness services, readers' advisory services, reference services, mobile library services, user education, among others can enhance effective and efficient service delivery. Results obtained showed that 60% of the library users were not satisfied with the services provided by the Kwara State Public Library while 30% indicated that awareness was not created on the different services rendered in the Library. The results further indicated that the services of the Public Library were not satisfactory to the community of users as a result of lack of adequate infrastructure, trained and qualified staff, inadequate funds, and location of the Library. Hence, the study recommends the provision of adequate funds, recruitment of qualified and competent staff, training and re-training of existing staff, creation of public awareness about library services for users, and automation of the library resources for effective and efficient service delivery.*

**Keywords:** Public Library, information, user education, library services.

## Introduction

A Public Library is established primarily to serve as a local centre of information that will make all kinds of knowledge and readily information to its clientele irrespective of age, gender, religion, nationality, race, language, profession and social status. However, it is quite evident that Kwara State Public Library has fulfilled this primary objective.

After the creation of Kwara State along in 1967, the need for a public library service became pressing. The hitherto Northern Regional Library, Kaduna was decentralized for the new states to establish their own separate public libraries. The Area Court building was chosen as a suitable place that could accommodate the new library before it was moved to its present location in October, 1967. Apart from the inherited library materials from the defunct Northern Region, a total sum of three hundred pounds (£300) was released to the Interim Administrative Council to purchase more books for the Library. On 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1968, the Kwara State Library commenced

services to the public after which it was realized that the borrowed building was quite unsuitable due to its closeness to the central market. The problem of accommodation persisted for two decades during which the library was moved from one building to another.

The lack of a befitting infrastructure was a setback to the Kwara State Public Library and frantic efforts were made to secure a suitable and permanent building for the Library. In November, 1987, the then Military Governor of the State, Lt. Col. Ahmed Abdullahi laid the foundation of the present library building. The completed library was officially commissioned by then Military President, Gen. Ibrahim Badamasi Babagida on 21<sup>st</sup> November, 1990. However, over the years, the Library building got dilapidated and its resources outdated and not relevant to the information needs of users due to lack of funding. In 2005, the then Kwara State Governor, Dr. Bukola Saraki had renovated the Public Library and equipped it with new infrastructures, including internet, print and non-print materials. The renovated public library building was commissioned on 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2005 by President Olusegun Obasanjo and put back to use to provide information resources and services for its users (Kwara State Library Handbook, 2006).

The Kwara State Public Library comprises the following departments: Administrative Department, Readers' Services, Acquisitions, Serials and Documents, Technical Services, E-library, Bindery, and Automation. Electronic resources are available through dedicated websites for the Library while using ALICE for Windows for the automation of library resources and electronic device system for the security of library collection.

Kwara State Library Board is bound with aims and objectives which the library seeks to achieve. The main purpose of any public library is to serve the community where it is located in terms of informational needs in respect of gender, profession, ages and physical challenged. The public library is expected to acquire and organize bibliographic materials that will aid teaching, learning and research needs of its community of users. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to assess the services of the Public Library and identify the problems that have hampered effective and efficient service delivery to the people in the State.

Public libraries are designed to serve the entire community and provide lending and reference services of a broad range of professional and non-professional users Encyclopaedia Americana (2012). Public libraries are universally recognized as library which are supervised, financed and supported by either the central or the local government of a country to provide services that are generally considered appropriate to those who are authorized to use them. They serve wider range of users than all other kinds of libraries. Issa, et.al (2012) described public library as the “poor people’s university” because they cater for all the categories of individuals in the society. They serve the illiterates, semi-literates and literates within the society. They also serve the able and the disabled, the young and the old alike. Burkett, Ritchie and Stanley (1978) observed that public libraries are imperative and essential in the society in the sense that, they are integral part of education; without public libraries, literacy programmes and adult education would be wasted, primary school pupils would revert to illiteracy and social, cultural and political development of the community would suffer. Purushotham (2010) deduced that public libraries are expected to render essential services as well as adequate and appropriate up to date information resources to users in order to meet the needs of community of users.

The role of a public library in the community will be achieved only when it performs round the clock services to its users and ensure satisfaction. Thus, when information resources obtained from a public library fails to meet the need or expectation of a user, such user will definitely be dissatisfied. This is the reason why library staff must exhibit willingness to assist users with sources of information whether within or outside the library through inter-library loan services

which will not only provide the much-needed information but also aid clientele in dependence on the library for information. These information sources must be up to date in both quantity and quality so as to meet the needs of the users effectively. Kawarta (2000) noted that public libraries are institution where everyone can obtain knowledge in the way one likes best. Furthermore, that public libraries can bring about an intellectual, social and economic revolution we expect in our society. As a result of the metamorphosis of human mind as well as the complexity of information needs, librarians are expected to have gained a better idea of the great potentials of the library in providing resources and services to meet such needs adequately.

Therefore, an assessment of public library would provide the basis on which to plan and make judicious budgetary allocation. Because it is only when the services of public libraries are assessed and the interest of users are identified that the library will be exposed to the existence of such needs then, the services are likely to be improved to meet the varying interest of users; in other words that the public libraries have responsibilities toward their users particularly Kwara State Public Library.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study are to:

1. determine whether users of Kwara State Public Library are satisfied with the services rendered.
2. determine the level of awareness of users about the services provided by the Public Library.
3. determine whether the Public Library is able to meet the needs of its users through the services rendered.
4. determine whether the Public Library conducts user education programme for effective use of its resources.
5. determine whether the Library resources, equipment, and furniture are adequate for users.

### **Research Questions**

Research questions for this study include:

1. Are users of Kwara State Public Library satisfied with the services rendered?
2. What is the level of users' awareness about the services rendered by the Public Library?
3. Is the Public Library able to meet the needs of users through the services provided?
4. Does the Library conduct user education programme for effective use of its resources?
5. Are library resources, furniture, and equipment adequate users?

### **Literature Review**

Public library as the name implies is a library that is accessible by the general public and funded from public sources such as taxes. Public libraries are expected to provide services and such services must be physically accessible to all the categories of users. Kocher and Sudarshan (1997) opined that public libraries have heterogeneous clients to serve; their services are directed to everyone without restriction. The public library is to meet information needs of the people no matter how diverse their interests are, that is why it is usually referred to as the people university. Nancy (2008) stated that the primary purpose of public library therefore, is to provide resources and services in a variety of media to meet the needs of individuals and groups for education, information and personal development including recreation and leisure. Krishan (2009) liken

public library to a service oriented institution. It is basically a service library which is meant to provide free services or charge a nominal fee for its services. Harrison (1966) observed that public library is said to exist for the free and unrestricted provision of books and related materials for members of the community for study purposes and for vocation and recreational use. Achebe (2008) stressed that, for effective services to come by, the public library should have adequate facilities to enable it satisfy its teeming public.

### **Services Provided By Public Libraries**

Evarest (2004) states that service is at the heart of library operations. In other words, libraries are service oriented institutions. Public library services have to do with the operations, activities and programmes of the library that are organized with the aim of ensuring the smooth running of patrons to enable them meet their information needs.

Public libraries are committed to providing indiscriminate services to the general public aimed at supporting the level of literacy, providing resources for wholesome recreation, promoting and enhancing educational programmes, promoting and encouraging the appreciation of cultural heritage, providing resources to enhance research and selecting, acquiring and organizing educational and informational resources.

Adomi (2009) observed that public libraries render free services to all categories of people through assisting individuals, schools, colleges, adult education programmes and other institutions of higher learning.

Providing number of services will not be the indication of effective utilization of the library materials, hence proper evaluation should be undertaken to know the worth wholeness of each of the information services and facilities provided in the library Patil (2011).

The provision of number of services in the library is not an end but it is a means for effective utilization of library collection. Thus, this study identifies the following key services considered appropriate and relevant to the needs of the immediate community (readers) of Taraba State Public Library.

#### **a. Current Awareness Services**

Current awareness service is the dissemination of information in order to keep users up to date and well-informed with new trends in their various fields. Current awareness services include Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), flayers, publication of current contents, and the publication of list of new arrivals. Nwalo (2003).

#### **b. Reference Services**

Reference Services is a personal assistance that is rendered to reader (user) who seeks information. Reference and information services is an aspect of Library service in which contact between the reader and library materials is established through staff assistance, matching the user with the library materials, which could be printed or electronic in format Daniel, Ifion and Okegbola in Achile (2000). In other words, it is the establishment of contact between readers and the library resources.

#### **c. User Education**

User education is an effort formal or informal which guides and instruct existing and potential library users in the recognition and formation of their information needs Sewa, (1992). This will keep users of public libraries abreast with their resources and services

#### **d. Readers Advisory Service**

Readers' advisory service is concerned with providing reading guidance assistance to individuals needs in the library Kumar (1980). Readers' advisory service is adopted by public libraries to improve reading habit of library clientele.

#### **e. Mobile Library Service**

Mobile library is a section of the public library sent out on regular intervals in a specially equipped van or boat to potential borrowers not living in the vicinity Nwalo, (2003). It is intended for use by those in rural areas, city suburbs and individuals who have difficulty accessing libraries.

In a nutshell, the purpose for the establishment of public library is to meet the informational, educational, recreational, research and cultural needs of individuals or groups as well as the responsibility of the library staff to determine both how it can serve its constituency and how it can attract non users.

#### **Justification of the Study**

Like any other library, the Kwara State Public Library is bound with aims and objectives which the Library seeks to achieve. The main objective of any public library is to serve the entire community where it is located in terms of their informational needs. The importance of any given library is based on the kind of services it offers to its users, that is why all activities in the library are geared towards effective and efficient services to their community of users.

This study attempted to identify the problems of Kwara State Public Library services and its prospects. However, this study intended to determine whether the users were satisfied with the services offered. Some of the identified problems at the Kwara State Public Library include: inability of the Library to meet the information, educational, recreation and research needs of users due to the nature of services rendered, inadequate infrastructure, lack of qualified staff to effectively carry out the needed services. The study also assessed the relevance and adequacy of the resources available in the Library and the nature of services rendered.

#### **Methodology**

The design adopted in this study is the survey research. Mars (2007) described research design as a master plan or blue-print of the activities which the researcher intends to adopt in carrying out investigations in the problem under study. The researchers used survey method because it is characterized by the selection of random samples from large or small population to obtain an empirical knowledge of contemporary nature thus, allow samples for generalization to be made about the entire population being the nature of the entire population studied.

The sample population for this study included the users and staff of Kwara State Public Library. In order to have an accurate and reliable data, the researchers used documentation and questionnaire for gathering relevant data. The data collected were subjected to descriptive analysis in a tabular form and percentages.

#### **Data Analysis**

The total number of forty (40) questionnaires distributed were returned which formed the response rate:

| No of copies distributed | No of copies returned | Percentage |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| 40                       | 40                    | 100        |

Hence, 100% response rate was recovered

Table 1: Are the users satisfied with services rendered?

| Alternatives | Responses | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Yes          | 16        | 40%        |
| No           | 24        | 60%        |
| Not sure     | Nil       | Nil        |
| Total        | 40        | 100%       |

Table I above shows that 16 (40%) of the respondents indicated that user were satisfied with the services provided while 24 (60%) of the respondents indicated that users were not satisfied with the services provided.

Table II: Is awareness being created about the different services provided by the library?

| Alternatives | Responses | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Yes          | 28        | 70%        |
| No           | 12        | 30%        |
| Not sure     | Nil       | Nil        |
| Total        | 40        | 100%       |

Table II, shows clearly that 28 representing 70% of the respondents indicated that awareness is being created while 12 representing 30% of the respondents disagreed that awareness is not being created about the different services provided by the Library.

Table III: Is the library able to meet the informational, educational and research needs of users through the services provided?

| Alternatives | Responses | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Yes          | 16        | 40%        |
| No           | 24        | 60%        |
| Not sure     | Nil       | Nil        |
| Total        | 40        | 100%       |

Table III above shows that 16 representing 40% of the respondents were of the opinion that the library has been able to meet the informational, educational and research needs of users through the services rendered. While 24 representing 60% of the respondents admitted that the library has not been able to meet the informational, educational and research needs through the services

rendered. Therefore, the analysis reveals that the library was not able to meet users' information needs.

Table IV: Is the library able to carry out users education programme to enhance effective use of library resources?

| Alternatives | Responses | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Yes          | 8         | 20%        |
| No           | 32        | 80%        |
| Not sure     | Nil       | Nil        |
| Total        | 40        | 100%       |

Table IV above shows clearly that 8 representing 20% the respondents were of the opinion that the library has been able to carry out users' education programme to enhance effective use of library resources. While 32 representing 80% of the respondents admitted that the library was not able to carry out user education programme effectively. Therefore, the analysis reveals that the library was not able to carry out user education programme effectively and efficiently.

Table V: Is the library resources, furniture, equipment etc. comfortable for the users?

| Alternatives | Responses | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Yes          | 12        | 30%        |
| No           | 28        | 70%        |
| Not sure     | Nil       | Nil        |
| Total        | 40        | 100%       |

Table V above shows that 12 representing 30% of the respondents agreed that the library furniture, equipment etc. are comfortable for the users. While 28 representing 70% of the respondents admitted that the library resources, furniture, equipment etc. are not comfortable for the users. Therefore, the analysis revealed that library resources, equipment, furniture etc. are not comfortable for the users.

## Conclusion

The concern of public libraries the world over have been to meet the informational, educational, recreational, research and cultural needs of the community where they are located. Based on the research findings, this study concluded that users were not satisfied with the services provided by the Kwara State Public Library. The Library has not been able to create the necessary awareness about the different services provided. The Library has not been able to meet informational, educational and research needs of users through the services rendered and user education programme has never been effective in the Library. The resources of the Library, furniture, equipment etc. are not adequate for users because a library is a growing organism.

However, the services rendered by the Kwara State Public Library are not satisfactory and adequate to meet the numerous and diverse needs of its users. Therefore, to improve its services, the Library must enhance the performance of the existing staff through training and re-training, increase staff strength, and better funding for effective operation and services.

### Recommendations

In the light of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are offered for efficient and effective service delivery by Kwara State Public Library.

1. To employ additional qualified librarians with requisite knowledge and skills of computer.
2. To intensify public awareness on the resources and services of the Library for effective utilization by users.
3. The Library Management should provide adequate training and also organize conferences, workshops and symposia regularly with a view to keeping the staff abreast of current developments and global best practices in Librarianship.
4. To ensure promotion of staff as at and when due in order to enhance staff performance.
5. Adequate funds should be allocated by the State Government so as to enable the Library perform its functions effectively and efficiently. In addition, adequate furniture and equipment are required to accommodate the growing needs of users.
6. Government, through the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), should allocate funds for public library development, so as to enhance learning, research, library services delivery, and national development.
7. The Kwara State Public Library resources should be automated and digitalized to enhance access and utilization by users.
8. The Library Management should provide solar power system or stand-by electric generator to serve as an alternative power source in the Library.

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