

Assesment of information resources of public libraries in Rivers state, Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper assessed information resources of public libraries in Rivers State. A survey research design was used for the study; four research questions and one hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. The population of the study comprised of 1150 public library users and librarians in Rivers State. A sample size of 220 public library users and 10 librarians were obtained through purposive sampling techniques. A structure questionnaire and a checklist were used to collect data for the study. Data obtained were analyzed using arithmetic mean and the hypothesis tested with z-test. The checklist was analyzed based on the degree to which the items are available. Findings revealed that public libraries in Rivers State provide adequate information resources for users, awareness of resources provided by public libraries in Rivers State is low, inadequate funding, high cost of information resources are some of the problems faced by public libraries in Rivers State. Some recommendations were made for improvement.

Introduction

The establishment of public library is based on the need to provide library resources and services to support education, research, recreation, cultural, political and information needs of the public. It is a facility set up by the government to render information service, to every member of the public irrespective of educational background, age, gender, language, religion, politics and nationality. Seavey (2003), described public library as an agency of knowledge, providing opportunities for life-long learning, independent decision making, and culture development of individuals and social groups. It is an organization established, and supported through local, regional or through some other form of community organizations.

Information resources, according to Ahiauzu, Kubo and Igben (2007), are interpreted to mean only those resources that have been acquired and processed for use. Today libraries do not only have books but also stock with variety of information resources which are in print and non-print sources. These information resources are government publications, rare books, textbooks, fictions, encyclopedias, dictionaries, geographies, maps, atlases, journals, microform, microfilm, periodicals, DVD, RAM, CD-ROM, computer, cassettes, painting, videos, floppy disk, compact disks, pamphlets, television and many more.

Information resources are inevitable in library operations as they enable the library to fulfill its objectives of meeting the information need of users. It is the source from which people receive ideas, meaningful messages, enlightenment and directions that will help them to accomplish task, take decision and solve problems. Public library provide services for youths whose areas of interests often include adventures, sports, stories, science, fictions and other fantasies.

Public library is expected to provide a wide range of information resources in a variety of formats and in sufficient quantity to meet the need and interest of its users. Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) recommended that information material to be represented in typical public library should include; fictions and non-fictions for adults, young people and children, reference works, periodicals, newspapers and government information sources. For effective service delivery the UNESCO Public Library Standard (2000,) recommends that;

- An establish library services serving 100,000 population book stocks of 200,000 volumes (2 books per head).
- Public library should offer an adequate choice of up-to-date books and materials to meet the information need of the community.
- Public libraries should provide relevant books and materials in different indigenous languages.
- Each public library should have up-to-date magazines periodicals and newspapers as part of its collection.
- Public libraries should at least have one television for users, non-print materials in the form of CD-ROMs, DVDs, Videos and tapes
- Every public library should have a fixed telephone line, fax machine, a printer, scanner, photocopying machine, ICT in order to provide and communicate with users and other libraries. The role of public library is indispensable because through libraries, people can have access to vital information on government policies and programmes, information necessary for full mobilization of the people and create public awareness.

Users of public libraries have different background, while some are highly educated, many are not literate, while some are physically able, a few could be physically challenged, their ages also varies from children to senior citizens, some users are experienced and sophisticated and may need in-depth search while many may be visiting the library for the first time. Given the large disparity among the users of public libraries, it is obvious that public libraries must provide a variety of information resources in order to meet the need of various users.

The philosophy underlying the establishment of public library in Rivers State is to provide library resources and services to every member of the community according to their needs and circumstances. But observation reveals that public libraries in Rivers State may not be fulfilling this objective satisfactorily. Library users go into the library with their reading materials. This may be the reason, why Nwosu (2013), remarked that public library in Nigeria are not given maximum and increasing attention and this may be owing to the fact that public library is not a profit making organization, forgetting that it is the store house of knowledge and information. In view of this, the study therefore set out to; assess the information resources of Public Libraries in Rivers State.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to:

- Assess the information resources provided by public libraries in Rivers State
- Find out users awareness of information resources provided by public libraries in Rivers State
- To find out the information need of public library users in Rivers State
- Ascertain the problems face by public libraries with particular reference to information sources

Research question

- To what extent are information resources provided by public libraries in Rivers State?
- What is the extent of user's awareness of information resources provided by public libraries in Rivers State?
- What information resources are needed by public libraries users in Rivers State?
- What are the problems faced by public libraries with particular reference to information resources?

Hypotheses

- Rivers State public libraries do not significantly provide adequate library resources to the people of the state.

Methodology

The study is a descriptive research which employs a survey design. A survey design is necessary for this study because it specifies how data relating to a given problem will be collected and analyzed. The population of the study comprised 1150 public library users and librarians in Rivers State. The sample size comprised 220 library users and 10 librarians selected through purposive sampling techniques. Four research questions guided the study and one null hypothesis. Observation checklist was designed to record

inventory of resources and a structured questionnaire titled “Assessment of Information Resources of Public Libraries in Rivers State (AIRPLRS) was designed for the study to collect data. Data obtained were analyzed using arithmetic mean and the hypothesis tested with z -test. The observation checklist was analyzed according to the degree to which the items are available in the libraries.

Findings and discussion

Data obtained for this study were analyzed and presented based on the research questions and hypotheses that guided the study. Out of 230 copies of questionnaire distributed, 227 which represents 98% return rate were duly completed, returned and were used in the analysis of this research.

Research Question 1: To what extent are information resources available in public libraries in Rivers State?

Table 1: Availability of Information Resources in Public Libraries in Rivers State

Items	Public Lib. Gokana	Public Lib. Okrika	Public Lib. Khana	Jubilee Lib. P.H	Central Lib. PH
Text books	6,278	4,273	3,743	2,322	16,171
Ref. books	195	118	51	82	1939
e-journals	81	-	-	-	-
Scanners	-	-	-	-	-
Printers	4	-	-	-	-
Fiction	132	213	162	140	741
e-books	120	-	-	-	-
CD-ROM	10	-	-	-	-
Internets	1	-	-	-	-
Gov. Publications	49	33	52	93	564
Computers	122	-	-	-	-
Photocopying machines	-	-	-	-	3
Periodicals	25	48	21	10	653
Projectors	-	-	-	-	-
Children books	298	211	142	198	2,321
Satellites TV	-	-	-	-	-
Int'l Publications	-	21	-	-	83
T.V Sets	-	-	-	-	-
DVD	-	-	-	-	-

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Microform	-	-	-	-	-
Braille	-	-	-	-	2
Speakers	-	-	-	-	-
Fax Machines	-	-	-	-	-
OPAC	-	-	-	-	-
Microfiche	-	-	-	-	-
Unit Total	7,305	4,917	4,171	2,851	22,477
Overall total 41,722					

The observation checklist shows that all the libraries investigated have textbooks, reference sources, fictions, government publications, periodicals and children books.

At the Central Library Port Harcourt, nine types of information resources out of twenty five types checked were found. The information resources found were textbooks, reference sources, fictions, government publications, photocopying machines, periodicals, children books, international publications and braille. All the information resources found in the central library Port Harcourt are twenty two thousand four hundred and seventy seven (22,477).

At Jubilee Library D-Line in Port Harcourt, seven types of information resources out of twenty five checked were found. These include textbooks, reference materials, fictions, government publications, periodicals, children books and international publications. The numbers of information resources found were two thousand eight hundred and fifty one (2,851).

At the public library in Khana Local Government Area, six types of information resources out of twenty five checked were found. The information resources found were children books, periodicals, government publications, novels, reference sources and textbooks. All the information sources found in this library were four thousand one hundred and seventy one (4,171).

At Okrika public library seven types of information resources out of twenty five checked were found. The information resources found in this library include fictions, international publications, children books, periodicals, textbooks, and reference materials. All the resources found in this library were four thousand nine hundred and seventeen (4,917).

At Gokana public library, twelve types of information resources were found out of twenty five checked. The information resources found in this library were photocopying machine, computers, periodicals, children books, government publications, Internet, CD-ROM, e-books, fictions, printers, reference sources, textbooks and e-journals. All the information resources found were seven thousand three hundred and five (7,305).

The finding show that information resources available in public libraries in Rivers State are predominantly traditional print sources such as textbooks, reference materials,

fictions, government publications, periodicals sources, children books and international publications.

The observation checklist shows that only public library in Gokana has Information and Communication Technology (ICT) resources such as C.D-ROM, e-books, e-journal, Internet and printers. The total of the information resources in the five public libraries is forty one thousand seven hundred and twenty one (41,722) in number.

Research question 2: To what extent is the public aware of the information resources provided by public libraries in Rivers State?

Table2: Mean Scores on Extent of Awareness of the Information Resources Provided by Public Library

Items	Mean	Decision
1. General dictionaries	2.75	High extent
2. Biographies	2.73	High extent
3. Children books	2.54	High extent
4. Fictions	2.51	High extent
5. Textbooks	2.50	High extent
6. Newspapers	2.35	Low extent
7. Directories	2.05	Low extent
8. Specialized dictionaries	2.00	Low extent
9. Almanacs	1.98	Low extent
10. Recreational materials	1.97	Low extent
11. Journals	1.96	Low extent
12. General encyclopedia	1.93	Low extent
13. Indexes and abstracts	1.92	Low extent
14. Government Publications	1.88	Low extent
15. Bibliographies	1.85	Low extent
16. Yearbooks	1.75	Low extent
17. Specialized encyclopedia	1.73	Low extent
18. Reports	1.72	Low extent
19. Travel guides	1.64	Low extents
20. Internet facilities	1.60	Low extent
21. Int'l org. publications	1.43	Low extent
22. Non-book materials	1.38	Low extent
23. Braille	1.16	Low extent

The analysis in Table 2 shows that the extent of public awareness of the information

resources provided by public library is low. The item by item analysis shows that out of the 23 items of information resources provided by public library, the extent of public awareness on 18 of the items is low; their mean ranges from 1.16 to 2.35. Just five items has a high awareness.

Research question 3: What information resources are needed by library users in Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean Scores on Information resources needed by Public Library users in Rivers State

	Items	Mean	Decision
1.	Employment	3.85	High extent
2.	Oil spillage	3.66	High extent
3.	Fish production	3.40	High extent
4.	Crime reports	3.39	High extent
5.	Education	3.35	High extent
6.	Social activities	3.32	High extent
7.	Health	3.30`	High extent
8.	Environment	3.30	High extent
9.	Politics	3.29	High extent
10.	Disease control	3.16	High extent
11	Security	3.13	High extent
12.	Sports	3.10	High extent
13.	Disease control	3.04	High extent
14.	Business	2.65	High extent
15.	Current affairs	2.59	High extent
16.	Govt. programme	2.59	High extent
17.	Human right	2.57	High extent
18.	Religion	2.55	High extent
19.	Agriculture	2.50	High extent
20.	Food storage	2.30	Lowextent
21.	Entertainment	2.24	Low extent
22.	Historical sources	2.23	Low extent
23.	Flood prevention	2.20	Low extent
24.	Terrorism	2.14	Low extent
25.	Economy	2.10	Low extent
26.	Pest control	2.10	Low extent
27.	Fertilizer application	2.01	Low extent
28.	Customs & tradition	1.43	Low extent

As shown by the analysis in Table 3, indicate that public library users in Rivers State

need different sources of information. Item by item analysis shows that out of the 27 items on information sources 19 items are of interest to the library users. Their mean ranges from 2.50 to 3.8

Research question 4: What are the problems faced by public libraries in River State while providing information resources for users

Table 4: Mean Scores on the Problems faced by Public Libraries in Rivers State while Providing Information Resources and Services

Items	mean	decision
1. High cost of library resources	3.90	High extent
2. Inadequate library resources	3.70	High extent
3. Inadequate ICT resources	3.70	High extent
4. Inadequate fund	3.30	High extent
5. Lack of selection tools	2.10	Low extent
6. Mutilation of library resources	2.10	Low extent
7. Obsolete classification tools	2.00	Low extent
8. Theft of library resources	2.00	Low extent

From the mean of responses in Table 4 above, 4 items out of 8 listed which are inadequate library resources, inadequate fund, high cost of library resources, inadequate ICT related resources are accepted as the problems faced by public libraries in Rivers State while providing information resources for users. Their mean ranges from 3.30 to 3.90.

Hypothesis testing:

Hypothesis 1: Rivers State public libraries do not significantly provide adequate library resources for users.

Table 5: Test Analysis on Provision of Adequate Information Resources for Users

Items	mean	SD	df	z-cal	z-crit
1. Textbooks	2.51	1.39	219	26.84	1.96
2. Journals	1.97	1.05	219	27.72	1.96
3. Newspapers	2.35	1.43	219	24.36	1.96
4. Non-books	1.38	.60	219	33.92	1.96
5. Int'l org. publ.	1.43	.65	219	32.77	1.96
6. Braille	.16	.46	219	37.61	1.96
7. Children books	1.89	1.23	219	22.86	1.96
8. Internets	1.60	.82	219	29.08	1.96

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9. Govt publ.	1.89	.94	219	29.71	1.96
10. Fictions	1.76	.85	219	30.63	1.96
11. Yearbooks	1.76	.81	219	32.37	1.96
12. Reports	1.72	.75	219	34.22	1.96
13. Recreational sources	1.97	.70	219	42.09	1.96
14. Travel guides	1.64	.68	219	35.55	1.96
15. Indexes & abst.	1.93	.95	219	30.15	1.96
16. Bibliographies	1.85	1.00	219	27.48	1.96
17. Gen. encycl.	1.93	1.08	219	26.50	1.96
18. Subj. Encycl.	1.74	.94	219	27.31	1.96
19. Biographies	1.73	1.00	219	25.79	1.96
20. Gen. dictionaries	1.75	.93	219	27.77	1.96
21. Subj dictionaries	2.01	.83	219	35.77	1.96
22. Directories	2.06	.96	219	31.78	1.96
23. Almanacs	1.98	.94	219	31.40	1.96

The hypothesis 1 sample z-test analysis presented in Table 4 shows that Rivers State public libraries provide adequate library resources for users as all the observed mean ratings were up to the test value of (2.50) and above, this was shown by the fact that all the calculated z-values for all the items were greater than the critical z-value of 1.96. This is an indication that the respondents mean ratings on all these items were significantly up to and above the scale average of 2.50. This shows that the respondents were of the view that Rivers State public libraries provide adequate library resources for users. Hence hypothesis 1 is therefore rejected that public libraries in Rivers State do not significantly provide adequate library resources.

Major Findings

The major findings of this study revealed that:

- Public libraries in Rivers State provide adequate information resources. The finding is based on the UNESCO Standard which recommends a media book stock of 200,000 volumes for a population of 100,000 users (2 books per head). Public libraries in Rivers State, serving a population of 1150 users have a book stock of 41,722 information resources which is approximately (36 books per head). Findings also revealed that information resources found are mostly in traditional book formats, modern information resources were not available in the public libraries investigated except in Gokana public library.
- Users' awareness of the information resources provided by public libraries in Rivers State is low. From the available information resources in these libraries, users are aware of only five types of information resources.
- The study found that public library users' in Rivers State need various

information resources on education, health, employment, security, environment, crime reports, social activities, religion, politics, agriculture, sports, government programmes, current affairs, fish production, human right, business, oil spillage, and disease control.

- The identified problems hindering public libraries while providing information resources to the community are high cost of Library resources, lack of ICT facilities and insufficient fund.
- Finally, test of the hypothesis indicate that public libraries in Rivers State significantly provide adequate information resources for users.

Conclusion and recommendations

From data analysis on findings of this study, it can be concluded that; the overall provision of information resources in [public libraries in Rivers State is adequate as it meet the recommendations of the UNESCO public library standard, though information resources found may not satisfy the sophisticated information need of public library users as a result of inadequate modern information resources. User's low awareness of information sources provided by public libraries in Rivers State may be responsible for low patronage. Library users need varying degrees of information to be able to function well in the society but are deprived access to these information sources in the library. The numerous problems that hinder public libraries while providing information resources for users include inadequate library resources, high cost of information resources, inadequate funding and lack of ICT related resources.

It is in light of the foregoing that the following recommendations are made.

1. The Rivers State Government should provide adequate fund for acquisition of up-to-date information resources, while the Rivers State Library Board, should enter into partnership with the State Government, Local Government and the Multi-national Oil Companies operating in the state and institute a yearly library development fund raising campaign for public libraries.
2. The public libraries should create awareness among users on various information resources available, through user-education, orientation, regular publication of accession list and provision of error free catalogues, library guides, exhibitions to acquaint users' with various available resources.
3. Public libraries in Rivers State, should be computerized, networked and be involved in inter-library loan, collaboration, resource sharing and provision of Internet services to enable users have access to unlimited information resources in databases.
4. The State government should from time-time review public library allocations to enable them meet the constant changes in the cost of information resources.

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