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### Public Library Services: A Panacea for lifelong learning of Users in Cross Rivers State Library Board

#### Abstract

*The study investigated public library services: a panacea for lifelong learning of users in Cross Rivers State Library Board. Public library services will afford users the opportunity to improve their learning in the society. The study adopted a survey research design, two objectives with corresponding research questions guided the study and two hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The population of the study is two hundred and five users. The simple size was proportionally distributed amongst users. The simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample of 170. The instrument for data collection was a self-developed structured questionnaire titled "Public Library Services: A Panacea for Lifelong Learning of Users in Cross Rivers State Library Board (PLSPILLQ). Data collected was analyzed using mean  $\bar{x}$  to answer the research questions while the  $Z$  test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance and degree of freedom of 168. Findings revealed that poor library services, ineffective, inconsistent and insufficient information resources in Cross Rivers State Library Board deprive users of having access to the right information resources to enhance lifelong learning. The study concluded that public libraries should fulfill their obligations by meeting up with the information needs of users. It was recommended among others that. Librarians should encourage users of library to independently source for information by making all the necessary needed information available to them.*

**Keywords:** Public, library, services, lifelong, learning

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#### 1.1 Introduction

Public library is said to be the people's university, it plays a vital role in educating people as well as societal growth and development in children and adult. It engages in collecting, processing, preservation and dissemination of recorded information in various format most convenient to its target users (Onifade & Babarinde, 2020). It

provides access to knowledge, information through a range of resources and services. These services are available to every member of the society regardless of race, nationality, age and gender. The history of public libraries is something that is unique to various countries around the world. In 1953, the federal government of Nigeria with the help of UNESCO organized the first regional seminar

on the development of libraries.

However, lifelong learning is very vital to all people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a result of free and open access to information. Lifelong learning is learning continuously all through life. For lifelong learning to be productive, public libraries need to provide the necessary information resources for users to access and make effective use of it, this is very essential for a successful education. Public libraries due to the lifelong nature of their relationship with broad and diverse users and significant part they already play in educating their communities. They are majorly placed to lead the way in developing and supporting people's lifelong learning engagement outside institutions. There is now poor reading culture among the members of the society, coupled with the neglect and poor maintenance of public libraries in developing countries.

Longworth and Davies (1996) define lifelong learning as the development of human potential through a continuously supportive process which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all knowledge values, skills and understanding they will require throughout life. Lifelong learning is one of the main reasons for the establishment of public libraries around the world to encourage high literacy level society. According to Ajegbomogun and Ajegbomogun (2015), lifelong learning is the embodiment of high level of information awareness by individuals which can be used to better their life.. Quality and adequate public library services remain a catalyst to societal transformation growth and development. Also, Srikanth (2017), opined that public libraries was proposed as the obvious and well-equipped agencies for impacting critical information skills to the wide community.

Current awareness service is one of the services rendered by public libraries to enhance lifelong learning to users. It is geared towards bringing to the knowledge of the

library users the information resources in their areas of interest. This is done to ensure maximum utilization of library resources. The library achieves this through means like book exhibition, book display, library tour, online publicity of library materials etc. Uzohue and Yaya (2016) asserts that current awareness is the most dynamic, challenging and practical use of services in providing excellent and current information that may help users obtain key knowledge for future improvement and development.

Another service rendered by the public library is reference services. Reference services provide library users with the opportunity to have access to quality and specific information resources being sourced for. The information resources are being kept for consultation only. However, for there to be an effective reference service delivery there must be sound and quality reference collections (David- West, 2019). It is not merely for the provision of information resources but to help users find the right information.

More so, in a literate society, it is expected that people should be able to replicate or put to use their knowledge in solving societal challenges as well as being able to navigate away from underdeveloped society to a developed society. Solmaz (2017), reported that individuals with lifelong learning skills are reading for all kinds of changes and hardship that life may bring. Information literate citizens improve the society's quality of life. However, the researcher observed that lifelong learning skills of users is dwindling rather than increasing due to the dilapidating state and the poor services rendered by public libraries. The Cross Rivers State library board is faced with inadequate and outdated information resources, unskilled labor thereby making it difficult for the library to meet information needs of its user community.

### **1.2 Objectives of the study:**

The general objective of the study was to

investigate the role of public library services and lifelong learning of users in Cross Rivers State Library Board. Specifically, the study sought to examine current awareness services and lifelong learning of users in Cross Rivers State Library Board. To determine reference services: and lifelong learning of users in Cross Rivers State Library Board.

### 1.3 Research Questions

How does current awareness service enhance lifelong learning of users in Cross River State Library Board?

To what extent does reference services enhance lifelong learning of users in Cross River State Library Board?

### 1.4 Hypotheses

There is no significant difference between the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score of the current awareness service and lifelong learning of users in Cross Rivers State Library Board.

There is no significant difference between the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score of reference services and lifelong learning of users in Cross Rivers State Library Board.

### 1.5 Statement of problem

Public libraries play a critical role in the education of user communities. Whereby they should be able to have insight into their communities needs and provide appropriate information resources to meet their needs. They provide learning opportunities to every citizens of the society both the learned and unlearned.

It is therefore expected that the public libraries in order to meet up with their objectives of promoting literacy in the society provides adequate services to users. Despite the efforts of the Federal Government Literacy Campaign, the public library has been grossly neglected. However, studies have shown that lifelong learning skills of users is dwindling as a result of the dilapidating state, poor funding, unawareness of services, poor services offered

by public libraries. This is making the library not to fulfil its obligation of information service delivery mandate they owe the public. It is against this backdrop that, this study has been done to ascertain public library services: a panacea for lifelong learning of users in Cross River State Library Board.

## 2.1 Literature Review

Public libraries ensure that the public has equitable and equal access to information irrespective of their status, religion and educational and economic status. It is an organization established, supported and funded by the community either through local, regional and national government or through some other form of community organization (IFLA/UNESCO, 2014). Public library services provide access to educational, recreational, cultural and informational activities to improve the quality of citizens (Lisonand Rep, 2016).

Gaumer (2016), asserts that public libraries play an important function to provide literate environment that brings about literacy gains. This means that library is a learning center that provides all types of educational resources for both formal and informal training. According to Sasi (2014), public library is a welfare center which provides useful services to the community by fostering education, promoting culture, providing scope for healthy culture and disseminate information to all sections of the society. It is the people's university and it should be able to foster lifelong learning of users. Public libraries due to their significance in the educational life of diverse client base are considered to be perfectly situated for developing and promoting lifelong learning engagement (Bundy, 2012). Independent lifelong learning has become a gateway for a person to be able to navigate into the world of information in different formats, location and even organization. The users being aware of the available resources and their ability to

utilize them independently will enhance lifelong learning. .

Lifelong learning is the process of learning which occurs throughout life, both formal and informal learning. (Demirel 2009)..The findings of Global Conference on lifelong learning (1994) opined that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century those individuals who do not practice lifelong learning will not find work. Those organizations which do not become learning organization will not survive. The 500 people drawn from 50 nations attending this conference were clear that the development of companies, schools, colleges, and universities will be essential rather than desirable, if they are to survive, the challenge for individuals is to achieve and maintain their own employability through lifelong learning Demasson, Padtidge and Bruce (2010) investigated a study on how public libraries constitute independent lifelong learning in four ways as intellectual process, technical skills, navigating social world and gaining the desired results. The study revealed that users lack the necessary skills to access and utilize information resources in the library.

Current awareness services alert researchers to recently published literature in their field of specialization (Johnson, Andrew and Holz 2009). Collins and Chandler (1997), had an interview with public libraries in US and it was revealed that 20% of the population use public library services or materials for school, class assignment, 19% reported using public library services for keeping up to date in their job. Vanansio (2010), conducted a study on examining the impact of current awareness service towards utilization of library services in universities. A study of Uganda Martyrs University Kabale Branch. A sample of 50 respondents was considered for the study, 5 staff and 45 users. The study revealed that lack of awareness, reading space, insecurity among others, were encountered by users in public library. Current awareness service will enable the

library users to acquire knowledge on current research in their field that will allow them use the library resources effectively. The users being aware of the available resources and their ability to utilize them independently will enhance lifelong learning. . Also, the ability to evaluate their quality and appropriateness is important.

A reference library is not merely for the provision of information resources but to help library users find the information they desire. Public library services must match community needs, interest and priorities (Nelson, 2001). Many libraries report that one of the ways to advance lifelong learning instruction is through the one on one teaching moments such as the reference interview (Julien & Breu 2005). However, for there to be effective reference service delivery there must be sound and quality reference collections (David-west, 2019). Rettings (2012) pointed out that the distinctive features of reference service include a staff designated to provide the service of collection of reference work accessible to the users in an area set aside for the delivery of resources.

Reference service is not just answering question but it is giving an assistance inform of helping people learn how to learn for themselves, rather than simply providing answers. This will help users to acquire necessary skills to access and utilize information resources. Okafor (2012) carried out a research on the appraisal of reference services on two public libraries, Wuse Abuja and Nasarawa State Library Lafia. The study investigated provision of reference services to determine the adequacy in terms of currency and quality. Findings of the study revealed that most of the library staff lack the relevant skills needed for effective reference service. Further finding revealed that public library users do not t access the resources easily and also need for adequate orientation on the use of library resources and services is vital. Thus, public libraries should ensure that it provides the

necessary services needed to meet users need. Despite the importance of these studies in the context of public library services, none of these studies aimed at uncovering issues related to public library services and lifelong learning of users.

### 3.1 Research Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted and the target population was two hundred and five registered library users. The simple random sampling technique was used to select the population, giving every member of the population equal opportunity to be selected. The instrument titled Public Library Services: A Panacea for lifelong learning Questionnaire (PLSPLLQ) was used to elicit information from respondents. The

instrument was validated by three lecturers in guidance and counseling department university of Port Harcourt. The reliability test was done by test-retest, 20 copies of the questionnaire was sent to Rivers State Library Board. The second test was done after two weeks and reliability coefficient of 0.82 was obtained using Pearson Product Moment Coefficient, which indicated that the instrument was good and reliable.

A total of 205 copies of questionnaire was administered to users in Cross River State Library Board and a total of 170 copies were retrieved representing 82.9% return rate.

The mean  $\bar{x}$  was used to answer the research questions while the  $Z$  test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance and degree of freedom of 168.

## 4.1 Results

**Research Question 1:** How does current awareness services enhance lifelong learning of users in Cross River State Library Board?

S/N	Questionnaire items	Current awareness services		lifelong learning of users		Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )set	Rank order	Decision
		$\bar{x}$	St.D	$\bar{x}$	St.D			
	The library organizes book fair event to buy its collections and also notify users to attend..	3.26	0.55	2.50	0.50	2.89	1 <sup>st</sup>	Agreed
	The library informs users regularly on newly arrived materials by any of these means – telephones, talk text messaging, e-mails, talk text notice board	2.35	0.65	2.15	0.50	2.25	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Disagree
	The library's current awareness programs are consistent and effective	2.37	0.51	2.58	0.58	2.47	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Disagree
	I receive updates from library when I ask	3.29	0.36	2.50	0.50	2.89	1 <sup>st</sup>	Agree
	The information resources in this library are insufficient to cover user's information needs	2.35	0.36	1.96	0.49	2.15	4 <sup>th</sup>	Disagree
	Aggregate Mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score	2.73	0.48	2.33	0.51	2.53		Agreed

Data on table 1 presented the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) scores and standard deviation of current awareness services and users' lifelong learning of users in Cross River State Library Board. The respondents agreed on items 1 and 4 with a high mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score greater than the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) criterion of 2.50 following the rank order at 1<sup>st</sup> and disagreed on items 2, 3, and 5 low mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) scores of 2.25, 2.47 & 2.15. The aggregate mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score of 2.53 explained that, the library carries out book fair events to buy its collections which enhances users lifelong learning in Cross River State Library Board. Also, not communicating regularly to users on the arrival of new materials in the library, ineffective and inconsistent library's current awareness programs and insufficient information resources in the library adversely affect users' lifelong learning.

**Table 2:** Mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) scores of respondent son reference services and lifelong learning of users in Cross Rivers State Library Board.

S/N	Questionnaire items	Reference services		Lifelong learning of users		Mean (x)set	Rank order	Decision
		$\bar{x}$	St.D	$\bar{x}$	St.D			
	The reference materials in the library are current	2.41	0.51	2.50		2.45	5 <sup>th</sup>	Low extent
	The reference materials in the library are easily accessible	2.88	0.36	2.15		2.51	3 <sup>rd</sup>	High extent
	The reference librarians assist me to retrieve information from reference materials	3.29	0.36	2.58		2.93	1 <sup>st</sup>	High extent
	The reference materials in the library are adequate	3.00	0.36	2.50		2.75	2 <sup>nd</sup>	High extent
	I do not know how to use the reference library	3.04	0.36	1.96		2.50	4 <sup>th</sup>	High extent
	Aggregate mean ( $\bar{x}$ )score	2.92	0.39	2.33		2.62		High extent

Data on table 2 x-rayed the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score and standard deviation of reference services and lifelong learning of users in Cross River State Library Board. The responses to questionnaire maintained a high extent on items 7 to 10 with high mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score greater than the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) criterion of 2.50 following the rank order from 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup>, also responded low extent in item 1 with low mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score of 2.45 less than the criterion mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score of 2.50. the aggregate mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score pf 2.62 explained that to what extent is accessibility and inadequacy of reference materials in the library, assisting of users by reference librarians to retrieve information from reference materials, dependent use of reference library by the users enhance lifelong learning of users. Also, respondents maintained that to a low extent reference material in the library are not current.

**Hypothesis**

Ho1: There is no significant difference between the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) scores of current awareness service and lifelong learning of users in Cross River State Library Board.

**Table 3:** Z— test analysis on current awareness service and lifelong learning of users

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$	St.D	Df	P	z-cal	z-crt	Decision
Current awareness services	170	2.75	0.48	168	0.05	1.02	+1.96	Accepted
Lifelong learning of users		2.33	0.51					

Table 3 shows that the calculated Z-value of 1.02 was less than the critical Z-value of  $\pm 1.96$  at 0.05 level of significance and degree of freedom of 168. This explains that the null hypothesis was accepted implying that there is no significant difference between the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score of current awareness service and lifelong learning of users in Cross Rivers State Library Board.

Ho2: There is no significant difference between the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score of reference services and lifelong learning in Cross RivesState Library Board.

**Table 4:** Z test analysis on reference services and lifelong learning of users.

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$	St.D	Df	P	z-cal	z-crt	Decision
Reference services	170	2.91	0.39	168	0.05	1.52	$\pm 1.96$	Accepted
Lifelong learning of users.			0.51					

Table 4 shows that the calculated Z- value of 1.52 was less than the critical Z-value of  $\pm 1.96$  at 0.05 level of significance and degree of freedom of 168. This explains that the null hypothesis was accepted implying that there is no significant difference between the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) score of reference services and lifelong learning of users in Cross Rivers State Library Board.

**5.1 Discussion of findings**

Current awareness services enhance lifelong learning of users in Cross Rivers State Library

Board.

The findings revealed that current awareness services enhance lifelong learning of users in Cross Rivers State Library Board include: library book fair events to buy its collections to the users notice, and updates are not sent to users on the arrival of new materials in the library, library current awareness program is inconsistent, information resources in the library are insufficient affects users lifelong learning. . The test of hypothesis one showed that there is no significant difference between the one ( $\bar{x}$ ) score of current awareness service

and lifelong learning of users in Cross River state library board in line with the findings, Ajeghomogum and Ajegbomgum (2015) asserts that lifelong learning is a function of high level information awareness by an individual which can be used to better their life. The scholars maintained that quality and adequate public library services remains a catalyst to societal transformation growth and development. The public library is a place for lifelong learning no matter who you are and where you are. The study of Srikanth (2017) endorsed that public libraries which is an obvious and well-equipped agency for interpreting critical information skills to the wide community need to effectively utilize current information resources for lifelong learning. David-West & Echu, (2018) affirmed that the library achieves this through book exhibition, book display, library tour, online publicity of library materials and so on. The scholar indicated that lifelong learning is the main reason for the establishment of public libraries around the world to encourage high literacy level society geared towards bringing the knowledge of the library users to the information resources in their areas of interest. Uzohue and Yaya (2016) simply put, current awareness as the most dynamic, challenging and practical use service in providing excellent and current information that may help users obtain key knowledge for future improvement and development.

#### **Reference services enhance lifelong learning of users in Cross River State Library Board.**

The findings equally revealed that reference services to a high extent assist public library users to retrieve information from reference materials, dependent use of reference resources by users enhance lifelong learning of users in Cross River State Library Board include: inaccessibility and inadequacy of reference materials in the library,. The test of hypothesis was x-rayed that there

is no significant difference between the mean ( ) score of reference services and lifelong learning of users in Cross River State Library Board. This findings coincided with the study of Onifade and Babarinde (2020) who stated that reference services which are available for the utilization by users regardless of race, nationality, age and gender. The scholars agree that users need the ability to access information, resources and make effective use of it for successful education delivery. David-West (2019), endorsed that reference services provide library users with the opportunity to access to quality and specific information resources. This means that for there to be an effective reference service delivery there must be sound and quality reference collections. Thus, reference services are not merely for the provision of information resources but to help users find the right information capable to rule their world.

#### **Conclusion**

The study has shown that current awareness services as well as reference services are very vital tools that will enhance lifelong learning of users. Public libraries support self-directed learning as well as formal education of all the citizenry through the provision of current awareness services, reference services among others for national development. However, it has been neglected by government and most of them are not meeting up with their obligations by providing current information resources for their community of users.

#### **Recommendation**

Public libraries should encourage library users by providing easy access. Librarians should create awareness of the services they offer and also attract NGO, S to help in funding public libraries 'so that they can offer better services and promote literacy in the country.

Public libraries should educate their users on how to utilize their resources effectively to enhance lifelong learning to users.

Current reference materials should be provided in the library for effective service delivery.

Librarians should encourage independent use of information resources to enhance lifelong learning of users. Government should fund public libraries and renovate the dilapidated buildings and equip them with current information resources'

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