Kebbi State Public Library: A Study of its Historical Development, Resources, and Services

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Abstract

The traces the historical background of Kebbi State Public Library. It examines it development from the creation of the State in 1991 to date. The study also assesses the currency of the Library resources as well as the extent of the use of the resources. Survey research method was used for the study. Questionnaire and interview were used for data collection. The population of the study included the five branch libraries that were established from 1991 to date. The study found that only five branch libraries were established by the successive administrations in the creation of the State in 1991. The last official dates of collections update were 2003 and 2006. The most serious challenges faced by the Library include inadequate funding, outdated and inadequate resources, unconducive environment and inadequate staffing. Based on the research findings, it is recommended that the Library should adequately funded, the resources should be regularly updated, the branch libraries should be renovated among others.

Keywords: Kebbi State, Public Library, Historical Development, Resources, Services

Introduction

Public libraries are social agencies that are funded by government and are charged with the responsibility of identifying, selecting, acquiring, organizing and disseminating information resources in various formats to all members of their host communities. By their nature, the collections of public libraries are all-inclusive and all-encompassing. They provide resources and services to cater for the varying, increasing and changing needs of the community irrespective of their ethnic, cultural, religious, educational, economic or political background. In communities where public libraries exist, they are viewed as the housewares of knowledge, education, information, enlightenment, mobilization and custodians and promoters of the people's cultural heritage. The creation of Kebbi State in 1991 gave birth to Kebbi State Library Board, which is primarily responsible not only for the provision of resources and services to the general public but also establishment of branch libraries in all local government headquarters as well community libraries and rural reading rooms across the State. After three decades of the existence of the State, it is imperative to empirically investigate the progress made so far in terms of establishment of more branch libraries, rural reading rooms as well as provision of adequate, current and relevant resources and services that meet the diverging and changing needs of the ever information conscious society.

Statement of the Problem

The creation of Kebbi State in 1991 has given rise to the hope for the establishment of more branch libraries by the State Library Board. This is so because is not only meant to bring government closer to the people, but also to bring government programmes, policies and services closer to the citizens. Basically, in addition to the increasing need for mass literacy and public enlightenment on government policies and programmes, pupils in primary schools and students in post-primary and tertiary institutions need to use the resources and services of the public libraries for education, information,

recreation and aesthetic appreciation. Furthermore, government officials, politicians, business class and entrepreneurs need the resources and services of the public library to improve their productivity, professionalism and proficiency in service delivery. Similarly, the traditional institutions, cultural groups and troupes also need the services of the public library to promote and preserve their cultural heritage for posterity. Undoubtedly, people need the resources and services of the public library for different purposes. Unfortunately, however, it seems public library development, resources and services in Kebbi State seem to be far below the expectations of the public. Now the question is, thirty years after the creation of the Kebbi State, what is the level public library development? How adequate, current and relevant are the library resources and services of the public library? What challenges does the State Library Board face in the creation of branches, collection development and service delivery? What are the possible solutions to these challenges? These and similar questions would be answered by this research.

Research Questions
This research answered the following questions:

1. What is the level of public library development in Kebbi State from 1991 to 2021?
2. What is the level of public library resource development in Kebbi State from 1991 to 2021?
3. What is the level of the services provided by Kebbi State public library from 1991 to 2021?
4. What are the challenges faced by Kebbi State public library in the discharge of its statutory responsibilities?
5. What are the solutions to the challenges faced by Kebbi State Library in the discharge of its statutory responsibilities?

Literature Review
As the name suggests, public libraries are agencies that are charged with the responsibilities of identifying, selecting, acquiring, organizing and making available and accessible different resources in various formats to meet the educational, informational, recreational, cultural and other needs of their host communities. According to Elaturoti (2012), a public library is an organization established, supported and funded by the community either through local, regional and national government or through some other forms of community organization. It provides access to knowledge, information and works of the imagination through a range of resources and services and is usually available to all members of the community regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion, language, disability, economic and employment status and educational attainment. Adeleke and Gbenu (2020) view public libraries as the libraries that are accessible by the public irrespective of status, religion, educational qualification, tribe, age, or gender.

The history of public libraries in Kebbi State goes back to 1991 when the State was created from Sokoto State. After its creation, Kebbi State established five branch libraries. These included Birnin Kebbi and Argungu branches in 1991, Yauri and Zuru branches in 1992 libraries and Jega branch in 1993. The permanent site of the State Headquarters of the Library Board was constructed in 2006 during the time of His Excellency, the Executive Governor of Kebbi State, Muhammadu Adamu Aliero. The plan by the previous governments to establish branches in all local government headquarters proved abortive due lack of political will and proper understanding of the

importance of public library by the successive administrations. Describing the importance of public library, Hopkins (2005) has this to say:

I believe that the public library fills a special place in a community. The library is a vibrant part of the community, a meeting place, a place to go for information, for entertainment, and for cultural activity. It reflects the changing and diverse interests of the community as well as its history. Buttressing the above point, Opara (2008) stresses that the intellectual life of any community revolves around its public library, the absence of which will adversely affect the community in which it is located both educationally, socially, culturally and otherwise. Scola (2014) sees Public libraries as valued cultural institutions which improve the worth of life of the community in which they exist.

As people's university, the public library is expected to acquire different kinds of resources to cater for the diverse, changing and increasing needs of all users without any discrimination. Since its target group is the whole community, its collections should be all-encompassing and all-embracing. Elaturoti (2012) posits that in a public library, all age groups must find materials relevant to their needs. Collections and services have to include all types of appropriate media and modern technologies as well as traditional materials. Modibbo (2016) reveals that the collections of public libraries cut across different fields of knowledge like history, sciences, engineering, arts, etc. He further buttresses that provision of resources on all subjects is very essential because many parents cannot afford to buy books for their children, and in any case, could not supply the extensive and varied collections that the library offers.

Furthermore, the significance of public libraries has since been acknowledged by the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (1994) which states that the public library is the "local centre of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users." Mattern (2014) observes that public libraries help with a resume or job hunt; they make available information material that aid local businesses, economic and workforce advancement; they maintain recent reference materials; render services to young children; provide access to historic resources and refer people to other community resources.

In order to compete favourably in the ever-competitive environment, the public libraries use Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to provide vast information resources on all disciplines for maximum benefits of their users. Subedi (2010) posits that public libraries utilize materials in print, audio-visual and electronic formats in order to collect, preserve, classify. Retrieve, and disseminate information, thoughts and the creative product of the human imagination

In fact, as education and information for all are becoming more and more indispensable in human and national development, the resources that public libraries are expected to acquire to consistently meet the changing and increasing needs of their users should include textbooks for all areas and ages, periodicals, newspapers, pamphlets and ephemerals, audio-visual resources, graphics and state-of-the-art Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). The resources are also expected to be broad-based to cater for the varying needs in the areas of education, agriculture, health, business, environmental management, human resource development, transport, arts and crafts, recreation and leisure. Assuredly, a good combination of these resources will provide opportunities for users with varying degrees of needs and backgrounds to consistently and adequately meet their needs as well realize their maximum potentials for self-actualization.

Undoubtedly, the success of any library is determined by the type of services it provides to its clientele. ALA World Encyclopedia of Library Services defines library services as "activities that library staff perform in direct response to client request or in anticipation of client interests." In other words, library services include anything the library staff do in order to facilitate access to library resources and enhance their utilization by users.

Scholars expressed different views as regards the type of services public libraries provide in order to adequately meet the varying and changing information needs of their clientele. According to Zickuhr et…al (2013), public libraries play significant role in the daily activities of the residents in which they are located by promoting their quality of life and delivering many services that would have been challenging to locate elsewhere. Matthew and Okeagu (2009) view public libraries as agents of change that promote social inclusion. They provide services to all whether young or adult without discrimination. They provide the much needed avenue for the transfer of transfer of appropriate and timely information to communities in the rural areas.

Hopkins (2005) opines that as public libraries continue to offer recreational, educational and informational services to the communities they serve, good customer service and communication skills as well as book knowledge will continue to be invaluable. It is with these skills that librarians build connections to their communities and are able to meet their ever-changing needs. He also suggests that to be a successful librarian in a public library means being interested in serving, changing, and learning. The best public librarians become an important part of the community, learning what people want and providing it in changing times. Finding people who fit this ideal can be difficult.

According to Izah (2020), public libraries have critical roles in creating and supporting environment that enables everyone, including girls and women in their communities to achieve optimal use of information and services provided. They are centres where people acquire the needed knowledge to reduce ignorance. The knowledge that women and girls can acquire from libraries can make them well informed and aware of their rights, which in turn empowers them to contribute meaningfully to national development. Akidi and Okezie (2020) advice that for libraries to fulfil their responsibilities, their services should include but not limited to compilation of bibliographies, indexing and abstracting services, library user education, reference services, lending services, interlibrary loan, current awareness services, selective dissemination of information and bindery services.

In spite of the importance of the public libraries in the all-round development of the populace, they seem to face a lot of challenges. In fact, it is common knowledge that public libraries have not largely enjoyed adequate support from their proprietors. In all parts of the country, public libraries seem to have suffered more than others Matthew and Okeagu (2009). They further stress that public libraries are tied to community's life and if they are weakened or fail because of budgetary or other constraints, the community's quality of life depreciates and Nigeria is paying the price. In a research conducted by Eze (2021), she observes that although staff training and development in Nigerian public libraries is a very important device in personnel management, it has been discovered that most workers of public libraries were not adequately exposed to training programmes. The consequent effect of this is that workers' efficiency is adversely affected and as such, public needs are not always met. For public libraries to

surmount the challenges and participate actively in national development, engaging the government is indispensable Aliero (2021).

Research Methodology

For the successful conduct of this study, survey research method was used. Structured questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. The population of the study were the heads of the five existing branch libraries that were established in the State, namely, Birnin Kebbi, Argungu, Yauri, Zuru and Jega. Interview was also conducted in order to acquire more information and seek for clarification on some issues raised in the questionnaire. The data collected was presented in a tabular form showing the findings and interpretations.

Presentation and Analysis of Research Findings

Table 1: Information of Branch Libraries

S/No.	Name of Branch Library	Year Established
1.	Birnin Kebbi	1991
2.	Argungu	1991
3.	Yauri	1992
4.	Zuru	1992
5.	Jega	1993
Total		5

The table above shows that Birnin Kebbi and Argungu branches of the Kebbi State Public Library were established in 1991 immediately after the creation of the State. The Yauri and Zuru branches were established in 1992 while that of Jega was established in 1993. This brings the total number of branch libraries to five (5). This seems to suggest that the successive State Governments did not give the desired attention to public library development in the State.

Table 2: Last Date of Collections Update

S/No.	Name of Branch	Last date of collections update
1.	Birnin Kebbi	2006
2.	Argungu	2006
3.	Yauri	2003
4.	Zuru	2021
5.	Jega	2020

Table 3: Assessing the Library Funding

S/No.	Adequacy of Funding	Frequency	Percentage %
	Very adequate	0	0
	Adequate	1	20
	Inadequate	4	80
Total		5	100

The above table shows that none of the branch libraries indicated that the funding was very adequate. 1 branch library, representing (20%) indicated that the funding was adequate while 4 branches (80%) indicated that the funding was inadequate. This shows that the funding of the Library needs to be substantially improved.

Table 4: Assessing the Adequacy of Library Resources

S/No.	Adequacy of Library Resources	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Very adequate	0	0
2.	Adequate	1	20
3.	Inadequate	4	80
Total		5	100

The above table shows that shows that none of the branch libraries indicated that the resources were very adequate. I branch (20%) indicated that the resources were adequate while 4 branches (80%) indicated that the resources were inadequate. This shows that majority of the branch libraries under study had inadequate resources.

Table 5: Assessing the Currency of Library Resources

S/No.	Currency of Library resources	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Very current	0	0
2.	Current	1	20
3.	Not current	4	80
Total		5	100

The table above shows that none of the branch libraries had very current resources. 1 branch (20%) indicated that its collection was current while 4 branches (80%) indicated that their resources were not current. This shows that the Library collections were not current and thus need to be updated regularly to improve access to most current resources.

Table 5: Last date of Collections Update

S/No.	Name of Branch	Last Date of Collections Update
1.	Birnin Kebbi	2006
2.	Argungu	2006
3.	Yauri	2003
4.	Zuru	2021
5.	Jega	2020

The table above shows that the last date of updating the collections of Birnin Kebbi and Argungu branches was 2006 while that of Yauri was 2003. Zuru branch indicated that the last date of its collection update was 2021 while Jega branch indicated 2020. This shows that the collections of most of the branch libraries were totally outdated. The difference in collections update at Zuru and Jega branches was attributable to donations from some community based philanthropists.

Table 6: Assessing the Use of the Library Resources

S/No.	Use of Library resources	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Highly used	0	0
2.	Used	4	80
3.	Fairly used	1	20
Total		5	100

The table above shows that none of the branch libraries indicated that it resources were highly used. 4 branch libraries (80%) indicated that their resources were used while 1 branch library 1 (20%) indicated that its resources were fairly used. Indicating that the

library resources were not highly used could be attributed to outdated-ness of the collections coupled with other factors.

Table 7: Assessing the Conduciveness of the Library Environment

S/No.	Conduciveness of the Library environment	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Very conducive	0	0
2.	Conducive	3	60
3.	Not conducive	2	40
Total		5	100

The table above shows that none of the branch libraries indicated that its environment is very conducive. 1 branch (20%) indicated that its environment was conducive while 4 branches (80%0) indicated that their environments were not conducive. This shows that the conduciveness of the library environment need to be improved to attract more users of the library resources and services.

Table 8: Assessing the Staffing of the Library

S/No.	Assessing the Library staffing	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Very adequate	0	0
2.	Adequate	1	20
3.	Inadequate	4	80
Total		5	100

The table above shows that none of the branch libraries had adequate staff. 1 branches (20%) indicated that the staffing was adequate while 4 branches (80%) indicated that the staffing was inadequate. This shows that the staffing situation of the library needs to be improved for efficient and effective service delivery.

Table 9: Sponsorship of Library Staff for Training

S/No	Sponsorship of staff for training	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Yes	4	80
2.	No	1	20
Total		5	100

The table above shows that 4 branches (80%) indicated that staff were sponsored for training while 1 branch (20%) indicated that its staff were not sponsored for training. This suggests that most of the staff of the branch libraries go for further training on official sponsorship.

Table 10: Frequency of Staff Training Frequency

S/No.	Frequency	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Very regular	0	0
2.	Regular	4	80
3.	Irregular	0	0
4.	Missing system	1	20
Total		5	100

The table shows that none of the branch libraries enjoy very regular staff training. 4 (80%) of the branch libraries indicated that they enjoyed regular training while 1 branch (20%) remained indifferent. This shows that the staff were given the opportunity to further professional training.

Summary of Findings

1. Library development was not given the desired attention by the successive administrations of the State.
2. Inadequate funding is the main challenge faced by Kebbi State Public Library.
3. Lack of capacity to establish branch libraries in local government headquarters and rural reading rooms.
4. Outdated and inadequate collections.
5. Inadequate staffing.
6. Dilapidated structures leading to unconducive environment.
7. Lack of electronic resources.
8. The library resources and services were patronized by users.
9. The services provided by the branch libraries include reader services, reference services, readership promotion campaign, current awareness services and public enlightenment.

Discussion of the Results

From the research findings, it is clear that the development and services of Kebbi State Public Library was not given the desired attention by the successive administrations. It is disheartening to observe that since the creation of the State in 1991, only five branch libraries were established. It is discouraging to also observe that after thirty-two years of existence, sixteen out of twenty-one local governments had no branch libraries. The findings of this research indicates that the funding of the library was grossly inadequate. Four (4) branch libraries representing (80%) indicated that the funding was inadequate while only one branch indicated that the funding was adequate. Close observation of the physical infrastructure, resources, furniture and the entire library environment revealed that the funding leaved a lot to be desired. The finding on resources indicated that none of the branch libraries had very adequate resources. One (1) branch, representing (20%) indicated that it had adequate resources while 80% (4) indicated the resources were inadequate.

On the currency of the library resources, none of the branch libraries indicated that its resources were very current. One branch, representing (20%) indicated that the resources were current while while 4 branches (80%) indicated that the resources were not current. However, it is important to note that the branch that claimed that its resources were current was as a result of donations from some community-based philanthropists as explained by the Director during interaction with the researcher. On a general note, when any library resources were not updated since 2003 and 2006, the level of out-datedness is left to the imagination of readers. The findings indicated that the resources of 4 branches, representing (80%) were used while 1 branch, representing (20%) indicated that the resources were fairly used. The reason why the resources were not highly used was attributable to their out-datedness and lack of conduciveness of the library environment for readings, research and recreation. On staff training, 4 branches (80%) indicated that staff were sponsored for further education while 1 branch, representing (20%) remained indifferent. Commenting of the general inadequacies that characterized public libraries in Nigeria, Elaturoti (2012) buttresses that the bane of all public library system in Nigeria has been poor funding resulting in scanty, outdated and irrelevant collections to meet the public needs, inadequate and out-modeled physical structure and equipment and inadequate staffing. Shedding more light, Fati (2015) stressed that the challenges impending public libraries services include negligence on the part of government, non-approval of budget, non-implementation of budget where it is approved, extremely dilapidated facilities, obsolete resources and shortage of staff.

As highlighted by Aina and Mamman (2018), the challenges faced by Kebbi State Library include lack of constituted board, outdated information resources non-functional e-library and lack of official vehicle among others.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is obvious that library development in Kebbi State was not given the desired attention since the creation of the State in 1991. The negative attitudes of the successive administrations, both military and civilian contributed very little toward the improvement and development of library resources and services in the State. Many initiatives and efforts by the successive managements of the Library to convince the Government to accord the Library the desired attention for the general betterment of the State proved abortive. To a certain extent, this attests to the reason why on many occasions, the State performed poorly in national post-primary school examinations and many indigence cannot actively and meaningfully participate in national development projects. Since information and education are undoubtedly the determinants of progress and development in any society, the Government of Kebbi State needs to accord public library service the attention it desired. This will not only pave the way for improvement in children's reading habit and excellence in education but will also enable indigence to actively and meaningfully participate in the democratic processes and other national development policies and programmes.

Recommendations

1. All the branch libraries should be adequately funded by the State Government to enable them discharge their statutory responsibilities.
2. The collections of the branch libraries should be regularly updated to enable users have access to the most current information resources.
3. All the branch libraries should be renovated in order to make the environment attractive and conducive for reading, learning, research and recreation.
4. Readership promotion campaign should be embarked often in order to create public awareness on the existence and uses of the library in people's personal and national lives.
5. More qualified staff should be employed for proper management of the libraries and provision of efficient and effective services.
6. Mobile library services should be introduced for the benefit of rural communities.

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