

PROMOTING INFORMATION LITERACY FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: THE ROLES OF MOBILE LIBRARIES.

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Abstract

Information literacy has been an effective tool for information access and use of information for making decisions and solving problems. A well-informed community member should be able to identify when he/she needs information, where to get the information, identify the needed information, evaluate and use the information for decision making and solving of problems. Such a member is considered an information literate person. This is because the ability of an individual to access the needed information is the bedrock for knowledge development which adds to the community development of any nation. A vital tool in community development is the acquisition of knowledge or information on how to solve the basic community problems such as unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, communal crises, diseases, food shortage and domestic violence. Unfortunately, from observations little or no attention is being given to community access to information through the library services provided in the public libraries in various communities in Nigeria. This issue can be addressed through the use of mobile libraries provide libraries services for the promotion of information literacy for community development in Nigeria. The roles mobile libraries' can play in developing information literacy for community development in Nigeria cannot be overemphasised. The acquisition of information literacy skills will help the individuals in the community to master how to access information on employment, agricultural activities, health issues and quality education to enhanced community development. This can only be achieved when information is brought to the community doorstep to encourage entrepreneurship skills, good health and self-sufficiency in food production for the advancement of the citizenry, hence the need for functional mobile library services in Nigeria. Therefore, this paper discussed the concept of information literacy, mobile libraries and community development, the importance of Information literacy for community development, roles of Mobile Library Services in the promotion of information literacy for the community, Challenges associated with the use of Mobile Libraries for promotion of Information Literacy and strategies to enhance the use of Mobile Libraries for the promotion of Information Literacy for community Development in Nigeria.

Key words: Mobile Libraries, Information Literacy, Information Literacy Skills, Community Development

Introduction

The mission of every library is to provide adequate services to meet the information needs of its teeming users irrespective of their location and time. Libraries are always ahead in exploring and experimenting new technological to improve the services they provide to users.

Mobile libraries are libraries that provide services to meet the information needs of the elderly, children nomadic and youths who may find it difficult to visit any nearby library. Mobile libraries are means of taking information resources (books and non books) and services to remote areas using bicycles, backpacks, boxes, boats, trains, streetcars, motorcycles, oxen, donkeys, elephants and camels (Hisham & Abdullah, 2018). According to the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (2010:5) "Any library service that does not stay in one place is classed as a mobile library". Mobile libraries should have books, journals, magazines, maps and non books materials such as films, slides, projectors, and internet connected computers (laptops). However mobile libraries are essential in community development as stated by Suprapuo and Qosyim (2022) because they serve all levels of people in the community irrespective of social, cultural, educational and beliefs. Mobile libraries promote equity of service provision and opportunity of access to library information resources and services. Mobile library provides the most flexible library services to users, not being restricted to any particular population and are able to respond to the needs of various categories of users. Aiyebelehin, Onyam, and Akpom (2018) opined that mobile libraries are agencies that promote education and eliminate illiteracy among people by providing adequate information and making all kinds of knowledge readily available to users. Mobile libraries store books and non- books materials and move them about to allow people in smaller or more remote communities to read, search for information and borrow books.

Furthermore, all these services are provided by libraries to promote information literacy and development in the community that is being served. According to Association of College and Research Libraries in Ekwueme, Elem and Ilo (2018: 145) is defined information literacy as "a set of integrated abilities which include the discovery of information from several sources, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning". The mobile libraries can help community members irrespective of their age range to discover information from several information resources housed in the library to increase their knowledge and solve day to day problems. Also, Landoy, A., Popa, D., Repanovici, A. (2020). defined information literacy as the ability of any individual to think critically and evaluate any information found and use it wisely. The ability of any individual to think critically and evaluate any information found and use it wisely depends on the level of information literacy skills possessed by such individuals.

Concept of Information Literacy Skills, Community Development and Mobile Library

Information literacy is knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner which includes all “set of skills and abilities which everyone needs to undertake information-related tasks; such as how to discover, access, interpret, analyse, manage, create, communicate, store and share information (CILIP 2018:3)”.

The acquisition of information literacy skills is vital for the development of any community. Every community member requires information skills to know when and why such member needs information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use it in making decisions regarding health, education, economic and community life, no matter the level of education of the citizenry. Skills to locate, access, evaluate, use, save and preserve information are vital for individuals' lifelong learning whether in schools or daily activities in remote rural or urban communities. Information literacy skills are the means to attaining personal, social, occupational and educational goals. It is also basic human rights in the digital world, because they enable the social involvement of citizens in national development. For every citizen of a community to contribute meaningfully to the development of the community he/she must be able to use information critically and logically whether the information is coming from the library, webpage, neighbours, friends, social media and any mass media. Information literacy helps members of the community to master the necessary skills needed to find out when information is needed, how to locate, identify, evaluate and use identified information in making the decision and solving everyday life problems. Tood in Partridge, Bruce and Tilley (2008) stated that the ability to access and use information makes a difference in the everyday life of an individual. Also, the knowledge of information skills exposes one to various ways of solving problems and attending to life concerns. The ability to solve life problems enhances one's development in life. Then what is development in this context?

The term "development" has been defined by different authors depending on the needs of the people living in the community. Abuiyada (2018: 119) defined development as " progress towards complex goals which include the elimination of poverty, the provision of employment, the reduction of inequality and the guarantee of human rights". To achieve development there should be reduction or eradication of poverty, unemployment and inequality and integrated rural development. Rabie (2016) sees development as an economic concept that involves the application of some economic and technical measures for the utilization of available resources to enhance economic growth and improves the quality of people's life. Also, economic growth cannot be viable without taking the culture that governs the attitude and the way the people thinks who will manage the proposed development strategies and programs (Rabie 2016). The question is, who are the people that their cultural attitude and thinking should be considered, that will manage the proposed development strategies and programs? They are the community members. Community members are a group of people living in a given community that share certain characteristics in common. A community can be referred to as the group of people sharing a geographical area; for example, a local government region or a particular town and sharing common interests, identity or characteristics like language and cultural beliefs (Australian Institute of Family Studies 2021). Individuals in a community can contribute to community development when they are well-informed on community projects and how to go about them. The question here is what is community development?

Community development can be seen as any activities which are aimed at eliminating poverty, provision of employment, the reduction of inequality and the guarantee of human rights in a given geographical area that shares certain cultural beliefs and attitudes. An important phase of any community development lies in getting the relevant information on how to identify the community needs and how to determine the priorities of the community. Also, community development ensures that community members are empowered, knowing their rights, and participating fully in any community developmental programs. How can the members of the community participate in developmental programs without adequate and relevant information on the basic principles of how to decide on the types of program to embark on, implementation and evaluation of programs? Schutte (2016) stressed that all these can only be done through having background information on community development and the techniques to be employed in determining the actual needs of the communities. So every community member needs relevant information which can be obtained from information resources available in the library. Many rural communities live in a community where there is inadequate or no power supply, poor road network, poverty and poor access to information. Poor access to information hinders community development. Every community will like to have access to health information, agriculture, employment, entrepreneurship, education for the growth of the members. This can be aimed through the provision of information resources and services by the public libraries or other libraries located in any given community. The public libraries provide information resources and services to the rural and urban communities.

In this digital age every public library should have online resources and service to facilitate an online community. This will help the public libraries to have a web presence to provide computer and internet access to the online environment by the community users. The Public libraries should not operate behind walls waiting for users to come and use or patronize the information resources and services provided but should device ways of taking these services to grassroots or the doorsteps of the community members. The most effective method is the establishment of libraries on the wheels which is mobile libraries. Mobile libraries are established to serve the public, disseminate knowledge to all, especially to those who find it difficult to visit or access information from libraries due to social or geographic reasons, poverty, or health issues and old age.

Furthermore, mobile libraries are not only bookmobile driving between locations only but include services and materials that are available 24 hours a day on any type of technological devices. The libraries on wheels can provide such services to rural communities through equipping the mobile libraries with computers and internet access as one of the services available within the bookmobile. This will help the librarians to impact the knowledge of online information searching techniques to these community members. The modern mobile library provides such resources as DVD's, CD's, computers, pictures, maps, toys, satellite dish and leaflets above all books. These libraries have facilities that can enable users to download material onto disk and memory devices. Photocopy documents or resources and access information from the internet. The aims of establishing and promotion of mobile library services as stated by Atuti (2002) include the existence of the country temporary settlements and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and 'mobile' populations of nomadic communities that the library service targets hence the use of camels as a mode of delivery, Hence users in remote areas may not have libraries, providing access to information to target groups located these areas with poorly

developed road network infrastructure and high cost of transport makes it difficult for these users to reach out libraries in urban areas.

The various means of moving these library services to these remote areas can be by the use of trains, boats, trucks, large buses, motorcycles and use of various animals. As reported in the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (2010) Thailand use elephant, Zimbabwe and Colombia use donkey while Kenya uses camel library services. In Nigeria bookmobile services which can be regarded as mobile library services was established in Nigeria by the regional governments in the 1960s and 1970s to extend library services to everyone in each region irrespective of their location. Some states provided library services to prisons and hospitals using trolley services. Unfortunately, these services are no longer in existence when you visit the many public libraries established by the old regional government you can see still the old abandon trucks used for mobile library services pack in the library premises. Still on the need for mobile library services Funmi Illori a former primary schoolteacher embarked on book-lending business in 2003 with “Books in a basket” which she carried door-to-door established a mobile library service from the fund she got from a Nigerian government development initiative and bought a lorry and a small minibus in 2018. This she used in organising reading workshops for out – of school children in slum areas in Lagos at evenings and weekends (Vanguard Newspaper, 2018). The mobile library visits communities’ especially rural communities at intervals to bring information to their doorsteps and teach them the skills needed for searching and retrieval of information. The information can be on their occupation, career choice, agriculture, health and resources for entertainment and leisure.

Roles of Mobile Library Services in the Promotion of Information Literacy for Community Development.

Mobile library services contribute immensely to community development through the provision of unhindered access to library and information services, which support communities and individuals to attain freedom and literacy. Libraries however, should not operate behind walls, nor do they wait for their users to find them, they make their way to them in the most unexpected ways, with buses, ships, trains, bicycles etc. Infact anything that can be moved and carry books or relevant material can be called a mobile library as long as its aim is to serve the public and disseminate knowledge to all. According to Bikos and Papadimitriou, (2018) any library service that does not stay in one place is classed as a mobile library services. The best news you can hear is that someone has stopped drinking because he has started reading says Bonela (2012).

Organization of Information Literacy / User Education for community Development:

Information literacy can be organised by the public libraries through mobile library services provision to community members using vehicles and animals as means of transportation to reach the community. The librarians using the mobile library should inculcate to the community members the information literacy skills to enable them to access online library information resources and services provided in the library database for taking decisions and solving life problems. Not only knowing how to access and navigate the library databases for online information resources but mastering how to evaluate the information they retrieved from the internet and other sources of information online. The acquisition of information literacy skills will help them to identify and search for the needed information, evaluate the available information to find out which information will help them in making the decision and solving

their community needs. Knowledge of Information literacy skills are needed for these tasks. Given this, Yarmey (2011) asserted that students using mobile phones to access information need to master how to use the most appropriate mobile resources and evaluate the accessed information resources based on the mobile websites. Provision of information resources through mobile library services will also promote reading habits among the community members. In providing these services librarians can organise various cultural/entertaining activities for the public, reference services and information literacy/user education for the community. Organising information literacy for rural communities through mobile library services is needed to ensure that people in the community acquire the necessary skills needed for information searching and the use of information in making decisions to contribute to community development

Development of Lifelong Learning among Community Members:

Mobile libraries help to develop lifelong learning attitudes among the members of a community. Mobile libraries provide access to information, knowledge, culture and serve as supplements to school libraries or academic libraries for research and study. The use of mobile libraries increase information access and the information literacy level of the community. The community members using the mobile libraries have access to health information like maternal health care, Covid-19 spread and prevention measures. A healthy community is a wealthy community. In a healthy community, every member is well-informed on how to recognise when information is needed, identify, locate and evaluate the available information about their health; and where to seek help in times of sickness or outbreak of diseases.

Disseminating of Information to the Rural Dwellers: Socio-economic information needed for community development by the rural populace are lacking due to infrastructural problems, economic policies, growing insecurity, and unstable power supply which hinder community development. In view this Harande (2009) reported that rural inhabitants in Nigeria are not reaping from the fruits of the enormous wealth of the country because information services that will greatly enhance their productivity, transform their community into an empowered economic base is basically absent. The mobile library can play a very vital role in inculcating information literacy skills to enable the rural dwellers to identify how to sources and use relevant information to enhance their economic wellbeing.

Challenges Mobile Library Service in Nigeria would Face in Developing Information Literacy for Community Development.

The use of mobile libraries to foster information literacy and community development in Nigeria is fraught with difficulties. According to Atuti (2002), managing a community's mobile library service is becoming more difficult at a time when vehicle prices are high and maintenance costs are high, and as a result, in developing countries like Nigeria, replacing mobile library services with branch services is becoming more of an issue. He outlines the major challenges that a mobile library service in Nigeria would face in developing information literacy for community development, including:

Cost of Operation of Mobile Libraries: The establishment and management of mobile library services have become a hard task for public libraries in Nigeria due to increasingly economic

hardship, poor funding, high cost for purchasing and maintenance of vehicles and animals (Camel and horses). The funding available to public libraries for acquisition of information resources to attract new readers are minimal. There is need for mobile libraries to secure appropriate "independent" funding to support its services. The government and management of public libraries should open up the sub-sector to collaborative funding from NGOs. The Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) and other social service agencies with similar interests' involvement in mobile library services will enhance more community involvement and support in the establishment of mobile libraries for reading recovery/literacy groups and library services to nomadic communities.

Poor Roads Network: The road network of roads in some communities are very bad, some of the roads are unpaved and full of pot holes that continuous use the road will enhance the damage of the vehicles meant for the mobile library services. Not only incurring expensive for the repair of the vehicles, increase fuel consumption but putting the lives of the library staff in danger. Because the vast majority of Nigeria's highways are in poor condition, mobile library services may be hampered as a result of poor roadways connecting the communities where these services are to be delivered there by hindering and promoting information literacy and community development in Nigeria.

Inadequate Trained Staff: The shortage of adequately trained staff for mobile libraries operations is obvious. The education and training of librarians in Nigeria is inadequate There is need to train more librarians that will help in the provision of mobile library services to urban and rural communities to promote the level of information literacy on the populace. This challenged has be observed by Ebiwolate (2010: 3) who said that "at present, many rural libraries have inadequate numbers of staff, and many others have staff who are seriously undereducated".

Inadequate Information Resources in Local Languages: Most of the information resources provided by the mobile library services are written in foreign languages especially English language most of these rural dwellers who are usually farmers did not obtain western education. This will be a big challenge for them to patronize the mobile library services. Erinle in Momodu (2012) emphasised that "language problem" affects the use of library by rural communities because only very few vernacular literature exists and our local newspaper are mainly in English language with few exceptions. The mobile library staff will be faced with the problem of translating information from English language to vernacular for better understanding by the community members. Also the library staff need to acquire the necessary skills needed for the recording and translation of oral traditions and important festivals of the communities to aid in the preservation and promotion of the history of the communities for community development.

Insufficient ICT Infrastructure & Staff with ICT Skills: to operate a mobile library services for community development the services must include online library services to attract youths and children. There should be adequate information Communication Technology appliances and the library staff should be literate in the management and operation of these devices to service the community well. But regrettably the majority of the public library staff lacks ICT skills as reported by Okafor (2020) as libraries move into the 21st century.

Insecurity in Nigeria: Information literacy for community development in Nigeria cannot be promoted with mobile libraries as a result of insecurity experienced presently in every part of the

country. The country has been seized by insecurity characterized by banditry, kidnapping and tribal unrest that moving from one community to another is now feared by many Nigerians. No library staff will like to expose his /her life to danger just to provide library services to rural dwellers and the nomadic. In such insecurity environment mobile library services will be hindered.

Negative attitude people towards information searching and use of library: There is a persistent neglect attitude of people towards reading and interest in accessing for information. Many people belief in getting oral information from friends and relations rather than searching for the information by themselves. This may be may cause by lack of information skills needed for the retrieval of information and the ability to evaluate the sources of information. In Nigeria problem is prevalent among adults and youths, they depend mostly on the social media for current information. In some Nigeria communities the Internet facilities and other access facilities are scarcely located and not available. This can hinder the provision of online library services to these communities using mobile libraries.

Strategies to Enhance the Use of Mobile Libraries for The Promotion of Information Literacy for Community Development in Nigeria

Information literacy is both human right itself and indispensable means of realizing other human rights. According to Jonas & Adizetu (2011) as an empowerment right, information is the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities. The roles of mobile libraries are highly relevant for community development and have powerful features that are transforming to information, mobile devices such as smartphones become ‘key information devices’ for users, right of access to information is essential for a civilized society, for a community to develop they must have access to political, social, scientific and economic information, if our culture is to grow people need access to the widest range of ideas, information and images and these leads to various degrees of information literacy and community development in Nigeria and this can be achieved through the following strategies:

Acquisition of Book Mobile: The federal government should invest in the procurement of vehicles for book mobile. A book mobile or mobile library is a vehicle designed for use as a library, they expand the reach of traditional libraries by transporting books to potential readers, providing library services to people in otherwise underserved locations such as remote areas, retirement homes. Bookmobile services materials include internet access, large print books, and audio books. Librarians who looks over the book mobile gets to teach young children and adults who are hungry to learn but are financially incapable, mobile library brings to them the benefits of library services, the use of books still plays an important role in our society that contributes much to our history these also create awareness and enhance information literacy and massive development in Nigeria. According to James and Emmanuel (2017) mobile libraries allows users more flexibility in their information behaviour and also provides new opportunities for library-based services.

Acquisition of Audio Visual Resources: The public libraries should be adequately funded to invest more in the acquisition of Audio Visual Resources which promotes learning through all the five senses. The Audio Visual Resources are sources of information not readily available or

communicated in print format and are recommended as good aids in information literacy instruction for the intended target groups, which helps to make learning process more effective and conceptual. Audio visual resources are important in enhancing information literacy for community development thereby encourages learning process and make it easier and interesting. Visual aids are the best tool for making teaching effective and the best dissemination of knowledge. Vinay (2020) opined that the use of audio visual resources is greatly helpful for information literacy and community development. Through the use of this resources information can be transferred from one group to another and this enhances information literacy and bring about community development in Nigeria

User Education: To enhance the use of mobile libraries for the promotion of information literacy for community development in Nigeria, the library should develop a mobile e-literacy plan for library and information skills training that is appropriate for both library staff and library user; these will also contribute immensely to creating proper awareness and utilization of the mobile library services. The librarians and library staff should be trained to teach the community members in their local dialects for easy understanding of the necessary skills needed for any member to identify when such member needs information, how to locate, evaluate, use and preserve information for decision making and solving life problem.

Development and Evaluation Strategy for mobile Services: The library should develop a marketing and promotional strategy for the new mobile services. Establish a programme of regular surveys of innovation, evaluation of the mobile libraries service. The strategic development should be guided by the following

- Assessment and evaluation of mobile library services
- Development and expansion of the services for promotion of information literacy for community development in Nigeria
- Listening to users
- Engagement with library staff
- Continual monitoring of mobile technological developments, which improve and enhance internal working process.

Provision of Mobile Technology: The use of mobile technology is also another strategy for successful implementation of mobile library services for community development. Mobile technology is platform that makes information and communication possible, information and communication are interloped and cannot function without the other, use of mobile devices like the computers laptops Palmtops an android phone offers flexibility, mobility, independence and convenience. These mobile technologies should be connected to internet to aid online access to information for community development. According to Abdullahi&Paraya (2019) application of mobile technologies in mobile libraries offers a lot of advantages such as improved user participation, preservation of original copies, increased collaboration, enhanced marketing effective competitive advantage and user friendly. Also Nalluri and Gadam (2016) cited by Abdullahi and Paraya (2019) gave advantages of mobile technologies as follow:

- User friendly
- Unlimited access
- Time saving

- Personalized services
- Location awareness
- User participation
- Individual based learning
- Direct communication with instructor
- Ability to access information anywhere, anytime

Mobile technology comes with a number of advanced features and inbuilt application, providing faster access to information and challenging the libraries to rethink and remodel their services by intelligently adopting to technological changes which enhances information literacy for community development in Nigeria. To adopt mobile libraries for the promotion of information literacy for community development in Nigeria the mobile libraries for rural community using vehicles much have spaces to accommodate all these mobile devices for accessing information online with sufficient internet bandwidth for easy access.

Conclusion

Promoting information literacy for community development using mobile libraries is highly relevant to libraries in Nigeria, especially for increased access to relevant information for personal and community development. Librarians should be very dynamic by embracing the trends of library and information services which include possessing quality information technology and information literacy skills in rendering mobile information services to various categories of users, information literacy has been very effective in solving problems, is also an essential tool in community development. Moreover, the roles of mobile libraries cannot be overemphasized in increasing literacy level of a community and promoting information literacy for community development in Nigeria. When members of the community are well informed and can access relevant information they need in taking decisions and solving life problems they will certainly contribute to the economic growth of the community and the nation in general. This is because mobile library services will provide access to health information resources, agriculture, employment, entrepreneurship, education for the community development of the members regardless of age, religion, disability, education status through the acquisition of information literacy.

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