

The public libraries



The public libraries are generally referred to as the 'people's university' and are considered as agents of social, political, educational, and cultural change in any society and provide a wide range of readership than any other type of library. As a rule they are usually established by law and supported with public funds. Public libraries are seen as essential to the individual as well as communities they serve in general. Without any argument, public library has become a learning centre where people can take part in learning activities, discuss and share knowledge and information.

The responsibility of the public library is to ensure access of information for "the community regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion, language, disability, economic, employment status and educational attainment" (IFLA/UNESCO, 2001, p. 1). Therefore, public library is meant to serve its users at no cost at any point in time and to do this effectively, there should be "quality information in terms of relevance, currency and accuracy that would meet and satisfy user's needs" (Ikenwe and Adegbilero-Iwari, 2014, p. 2).

"The main function of public library in Nigeria is the provision of information contained in books, newspapers, magazines, journals, audio-visual, and electronic resources to users according to their needs" (n. d, p. 6). In addition to provision of wide range of resources both physical and electronic, public libraries provide a variety of services that includes "digital lending material, reader development advice, internet access and support, information and reference resources and guidance, learning and eLearning activities, literacy support, cultural promotion and community development"

(Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government 2013, p. 4).

These services rendered are targeted towards satisfying users' expectations, and information need requirement of all types in order to encourage continual visit to the library. Consequently, user satisfaction is usually given priority by librarian, because it is a concept that has to do with how good users' feels after visiting and using the library and their likeness to return back to that library when next information is needed by them (Olayemi, Olayemi, and Abolarinwa, 2018).

Due to the recognition of the usefulness of public libraries resources and services, it is widely used because of its known ability to meet user's demands irrespective of their status. Unfortunately, public libraries in developed and developing countries are facing a period of declining in usage as a result of poor funding and wrong perception among its users (Hood and Henderson, 2005). It is regrettable, to note that in Nigeria of today, public libraries including local government and community-owned libraries are not usually well funded and manned by unqualified professionals (Onatola, 2004).

Another writer from the country succinctly asserted that there are " inadequate funding, poor staff development, illiteracy rate of the citizens' high, outdated and irrelevant collections of the public libraries and lack of recognition on the part of government to know the importance of libraries (n. d, p. 6). Hence, many users' have developed poor perception of public libraries. To better understand users' view about the public library, it is

necessary to study the utilization and user satisfaction of Herbert Macaulay public library, Lagos state, Nigeria.