A Standard Public Information Center for Effective National Development: The Study of Local Communities in Kogi State of Nigeria

Bello, Stephen Adeyemi
Department of library and Information Science,University of Nigeria, Nsukka
dymbello@yahoo.com

Ekere, Felix C (Ph.D)
Department of library and Information Science,University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Abstract

The study was conducted by 700 communities' dwellers in Kogi-West Constituency. The sample was made up 100 accessible local communities' dwellers from each seven Local Government Area. They include Ijumu, Kabba-Bunu, Yagba-West, Yagba-East, Mopamuro, Kogi, Lokoja. All the accessible respondents from each Local Government were used to determine whether the communities' dwellers need public information center. The result revealed that, the dwellers need such center. Descriptive survey design were used, the instruments for data collection are questionnaire and interview to indicate the information needs and nature of information resources both print and electronic to be provided in the center after the establishment. Recommendations were provided to enhance the provision of the center and its effective management

Introduction

The level of development of every nation, solely depend on the level of having access to information. Information is life, light, and knowledge. In the absent of information people are deformed, blind, mislead, unexposed and even fall victim of avoidable mistakes. Hence, every society needs information and the information needs of every one vary; basically depend on the jobs or activities they engaged in. According to Aloli (2004) information is needed in all spheres of life to facilitate decision making and engender progress. So, people need information about new development and techniques in different fields.

Consequently, every information seekers also have different information seeking behaviors in acquiring their information need. This can be buttress by Bello (2007) point of view, when he stated that information seekers acquired their information needs strategically from different sources grouped into print and electronic. The sources can be made available even in the local communities for the dwellers to acquire their information needs. The questions in mind are – where we local dwellers acquire their information needs from? What are the local dwellers information needs, and what are the sources of their information? If all agreed with me that "No effective development" can arise without information. So, the local communities' in kogi State, the state that was created under the regime of Major General Ibrahim Badamasi Babagida in the year 1991 the state has 21 local government area. Hence, its local communities are not different from other ones in the country Nigeria and the world at large. Variables that might likely be different could be languages, culture, status, exposure to education and possibly the climatic changes. But their needs can still be group together under distinct names. Hence, the answers to the questions above shall be discussed in this paper.

Public Information center: How to achieve it?

Public information center is synonymous to public library. It is a general information center that makes information resources, services and opportunities readily available to both literate and non-literate members of community where such center is located. The centre are usually established by government of a particular area. That is; local, state or national. It stored both print and electronic information resource for the promotion of intellectual and recreational for the people in the community. In the same vein, Luckham (1981) noted that public information center is a place where people can go to talk, hear, listen to varieties of discussion, music and watch cinema shows. Yusuf (2002) asserted that the center, have both education and social roles to play in people's life. The center doors are widely opened to all people regardless of the race, religion, languages, racks or status and occupations.

Hence, Iwuji (1990) quoting UNESCO seminar on public information center, here, below functions of the centers was recommended.

To promote and stimulate reading for pleasure and recreation
To support and reinforce programmes such as adult and fundamental education
To provide education services for children
To provide service for special groups of people in the community, as disabilities and

To assist rural educational transformation measure

Consequently, to archive public information center and the recommendation from UNESCO there must be committee, physical building and staff. According to Krishan (2004) the public information center/ public library are essential bodies that are require for the governance of the library or information center. They are administrative in nature, interfering with day to day activities of the center, and appointment of qualified and efficient staff. More to this, the building according to Edwin (1980) is a not a thing apart, but three dimensional representation of service concept. Such as; site selection which should involve critical evaluation to avoid excessive slop, power drainage pattern and noise. Fund as the second dimension can be raise from local, state or federal government as the case may be and the basic design to consider are; form and function, style, space allotment, equipment and furniture.

Furthermore, Aina (2004) noted that staff for such library or information center should include both paraprofessional and professional who can manage effectively by using interpersonal skill, conceptual skill, analytical skill, and technical skills in their designated responsibility.

Information needs and information resources of local community dwellers.

Everyday people face challenges in life, which can occur through nature or circumstances. When it happened, individual seeks for solution in order to meet up their want. Hence, the solution is information while, the want is the need. A ina (1995) express that, information needs is a solution to deals with the following as the information needs of people- information on, agriculture, education, health, politics and business. Consequently, the information need gathered, preserved, and make available to the information seekers through- television, internet, radio, books and papers, and others. Furthermore, Whittaker (1993) group the users of public information center/ library as follows; children, pupils, student, adults, professionals, researchers and lecturers, policy makers and planners, artisans, and physically challenge people.

Objectives of the study

The following objectives guide the studies.
1. To identify the information needs of the communities' dwellers in local Government Area of Kogi West Constituency in kogi State
2. To identify the sources of information to the communities' dwellers in local Government Area of Kogi West Constituency in kogi State
3. To ascertain the best source of information to the communities' dwellers in local Government Area of Kogi West Constituency in kogi State

Study design and Methodology

The design of the study was a descriptive Survey and the population was made of 700 communities' dwellers in Kogi-West Constituency. The sample was made up 100 accessible local communities' dwellers from each seven Local Government Area. They include Ijumu, Kabba-Bunu, Yagba-West, Yagba-East, Mopamuro, Kogi, Lokoja. All the accessible respondents from each Local Government were used. The instruments for data collection are questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire contains three clusters and each cluster contains relevant question item that address each of the three research objectives. Data generated from questionnaire were analyzed using frequency table percentage while, information generated from the interview were used as part of the discussion of the finding.

Table 1: Personal data
Finding and discussion of personal data

Education qualification	Response rate	Percentage	Rank
Primary School graduate	367	52.4	3rd
Secondary School graduate	507	72.4	2nd
Tertiary institution graduate	339	48.4	4th
No education qualification (uneducated)	537	76.7	1st

From table 1 above, 537 respondents representing 76.7% were individuals without any educational certificates. 507 of the respondents representing 72.4% some has finished secondary school, while others are still in school. 367 of respondents representing 52.4% were those in primary schools and others could not continue. Lastly, 339 of the respondents representing 48.4% were those in tertiary institutions and others have finished schooling. Consequently, it was discovered that the community dwellers have high percentage of illiterate people, and they need information. It was also discovered that, other groups formed the literate/ enlightened individuals of the community also need information. Therefore, there is the need for befitting public information centers and as well as, information resources, to develop the populace educationally.
Objective 1: *To identify the information needs of the communities' dwellers in local Govt. Area of Kogi West*

Constituency in kogi State

Table 2: Information needs of the communities' dwellers

Needs	Numbers of respondents	Percentage	Rank	Remark
Health information needs	517	73.8	3rd	Agreed
Business information needs	583	83.2	2nd	Agreed
Political information needs	510	72.8	4th	Agreed
Agriculture information needs	655	93.5	1st	Agreed
Education information needs	485	69.0	5th	Agreed

From table 2 above, out of total respondents, 655 represent 93.5% were those that need information on agriculture. 583 or 83.2% were those that needs information on business, 517 of respondents representing 73.8% were those that need information on political situation, and 485 of respondents representing 69.2% were those that need information on education.

Hence, all the needs are considered by the communities' dwellers as their information needs/ though agriculture information needs ranked highest while, education information ranked least. However, all of the information needs are above 50% so they are considered acceptable.

Objective 2*: To identify the sources of information to the communities' dwellers in local Govt. Area of Kogi west Constituency in kogi State*

Table 3: Sources of information to the communities' dwellers

Source	Number of respondents	Percentage	Rank	Remark
Television	510	72.8	4th	Agreed
Internet	360	51.4	5th	Agreed
Radio	675	96.4	1st	Agreed
Books and Paper	580	82.8	2nd	Agreed
Others	522	74.5	3rd	Agreed

From table 3 above, 675 of respondents representing 96.4 % were those that used radio as their information sources. 580 respondents representing 82.8% were those that used books and papers as their sources of information. 310 of the respondents representing 18.4 were those that use individual contact as their sources of information. 160 of the respondents representing 72.8% were those that used television as their source of information. 522 of the respondents representing 74.5% were those that use individual contact as their source of information. While, 360 of respondents representing 51.4% were that use internet as their source of information.

Hence, all the information sources were considered acceptable information sources for the communities' dweller because they were all above 50%.

Objective 3: To ascertain the best source of information to the communities' dwellers in *local Govt. Area of Kogi West Constituency in kogi State*

Table 3: The best source of information to the communities' dwellers

Sources	Numbers of Respondents	Percentage	Rank	Remark
Television	540	77.1	2nd	Accepted
Internet	281	40.1	5th	Not Accepted
Radio	531	75.8	3rd	Accepted
Books and Papers	620	88.5	1st	Accepted
Others	390	55.7	4th	Aceepted

From table 3 above, 620 of the respondents represent 88.5%. This group chooses books and paper as their best sources of information. 540 of respondents representing 22.2% were those that choose television as their best sources of information. 531 of respondents representing 75.8% were group of individuals that choose radio as their best source of information. 390 of respondents representing 55.7% were those that prefer resource person as their best source of information. Lastly, 281 of the respondents representing 40.1% were those respondents that could have prefer internet as their best sources of information. They know the importance of internet as to provide information on general matters, it also provide quick and reliable information for self development.

Hence, from the interview, Books and Paper, which have the highest percentage were prefer the best source of information because they believes that information of many year ago can be packaged in print format which can be useful from generation to generation. Also, the least is internet because it percentage is less than 50%. Though the respondents know the importance of internet as to provide information on general matters and also to provide quick and reliable information for self development, but are not available in most of the communities.

Conclusion and summary to research findings

Based on the findings of the study and the interpretation of the data, the researcher discovered that the local communities' dwellers in communities' dwellers in local Govt. Area in Kogi west Constituency of kogi State delighted much on information related to agriculture, education, business, politics and health. On agricultural information, the study reveals that, there were literate farmer in the community areas. This categories need information on latest implements, seedlings, presented in a book form, magazine, journals, bulletins, CD- Rom, hand bills. To the other hand, the illiterate farmers need information on agriculture presented in pictorial form, audio visual, audio, etc. On business information, most of the community dwellers engaged in art of buy and sell of goods and services, when interviewing, some respondents showed interest on commercial related advertisement these would help them in obtaining information on sources and application of goods and services.

Furthermore, on health information, World Health Organization says "health is wealth". The service of the public health department in the state could not be over emphasized. This was demonstrated in the way the respondents appreciated the effort of the health department in the dissemination of health related information services. Nevertheless, in the public information system all the materials both print and electronic format that are related to health should be provided. On educational information, education is not receiving proper attention in the community. This could be further understood when none looked at the dilapidated school buildings, lack of books, teaching aids and inadequate infrastructures. All this culminates to a great number of school drop outs in the community. On politics, people need information on political issues in the country. From interviewed with the dwellers of the community, the way people are into politics is getting much both the literate and non-literate members of the community. Some people in the community have chosen politics as their occupation.

Consequently, it was discovered that information sources were not adequately available for most of the respondents to have their information needs on their own. Television, internet café, radio, books and paper serve as their major sources of information dissemination. Therefore, majority of the community dwellers want information from television but it's expensive to purchase and maintain. Moreover, outage of light does not allow those that have television set to use it effectively. Another substitute to this, is generator plants and with the economic turbulence of the country causing escalation of fuel price. Using of internet café, the respondents that uses this source complains on how expensive it is. Moreover, is not even available within the local communities, they have to travel to the neighboring town before acquiring their needed information.

Hence, facts generated through interview from the respondents, there is no good library in their school also they did not have public information centre. Not having public information center in the communities is pathetic issue because it could have been the store house to make information need of the communities' dwellers available in different sources and also present them in the best format needed by the dwellers. Finally greater percentage of the communities' dweller goes into farming as to complement others occupations or professions.

Recommendations

For effective national development information services must be duly felt every one. Precisely for communities' dweller, the following recommendations are provided

1. The community philanthropist, local and state government of Kogi State should endeavor to establish pubic information centre in the communities and site the centers where there is less noise and the area should have good drainage pattern.
2. Both paraprofessionals and professionals librarian should be employed in order to meet up the demands for efficient and effective of local community information dissemination.
3. The management should embark on mass enlightenment or mobilization programmes which aimed at sensitizing the general public on the existence and importance of the information centre materials and services available through bulletin, organizing public lecture, exhibition and film show. The display should be needs of the community dwellers.
4. The information resources to be provided in the system should include Books and Papers, Television, Radio, Internet, Resource person that will cover the populace information needs.
5. There should be provision for standby generator in case of power outage.
6. There should be human and electronic security system, and lastly
7. The management should work with local cultural institutions, ministries, such as Ministry of Education, Agriculture, Health and Commerce on domestic and international issues, in order to have up-to-date information in the centre.
8. The architectural design of the centre should be build on this skeletal platform
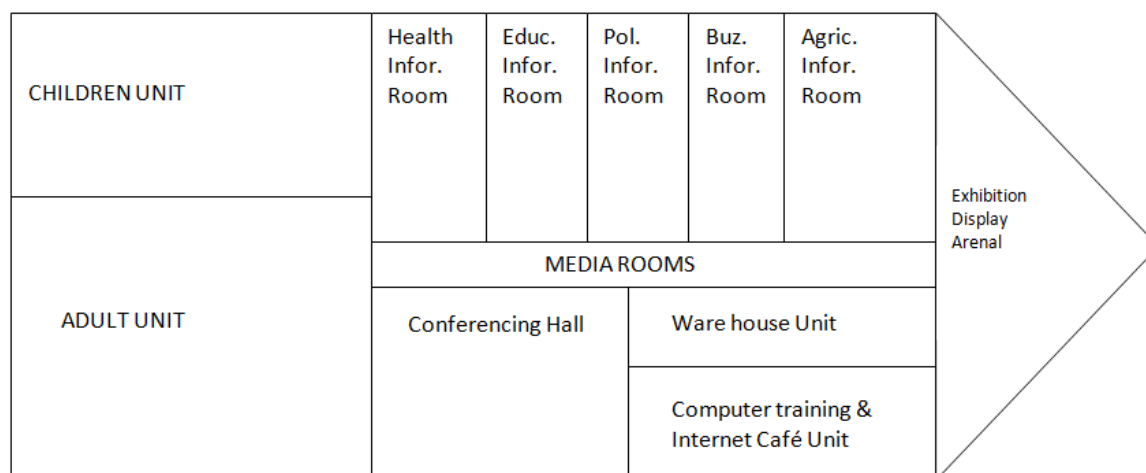
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