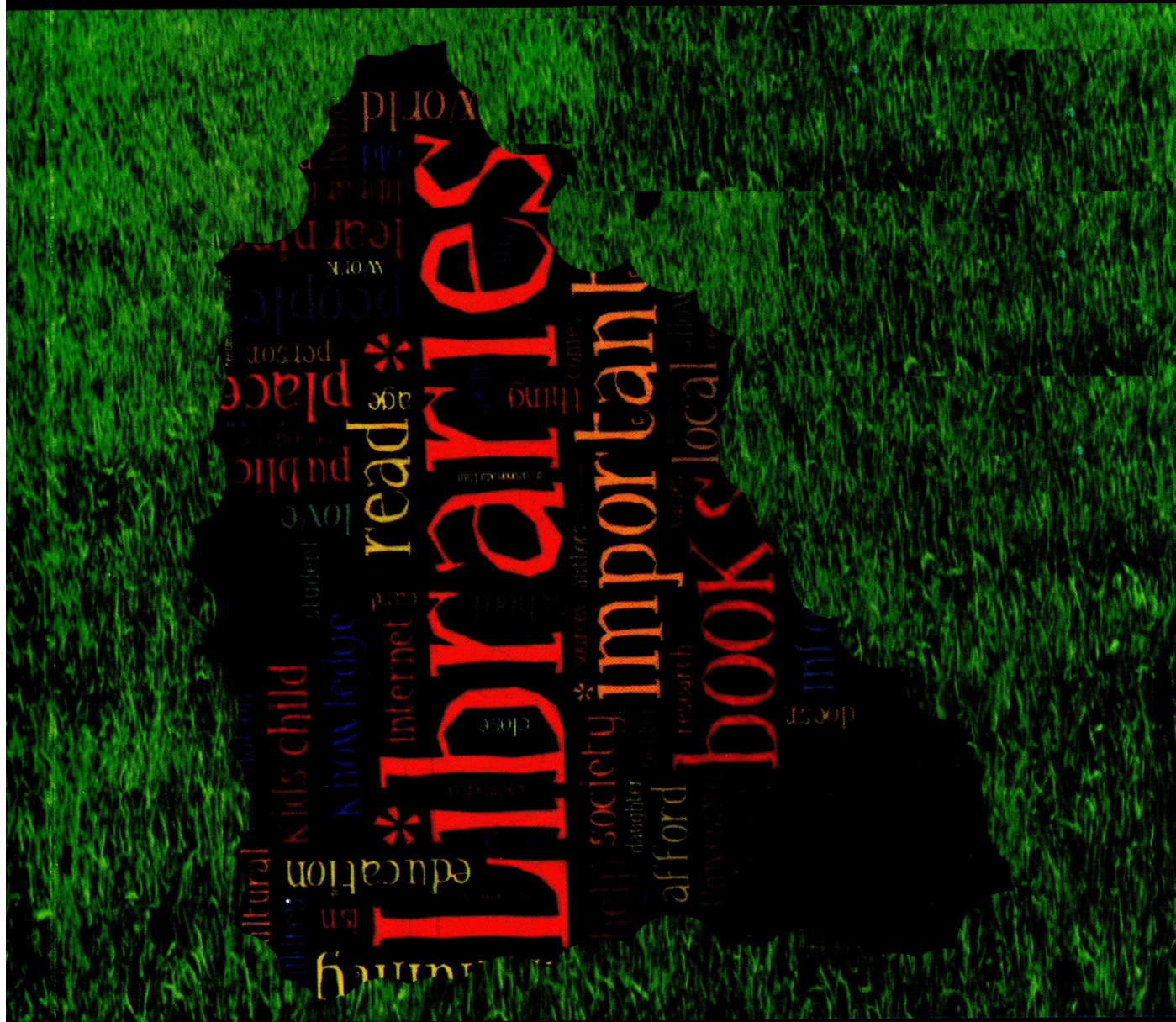


AKWA IBOM STATE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

• Antecedents • Perspectives • Prospects



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ANTECEDENTS, PERSPECTIVES PROSPECTS

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Chapter 16

Mobile Library Services: A Panacea for Grassroot Development in Akwa Ibom State.

Okon, Godswill Udoh and Usoro, Ima M.P

Introduction

The importance of education in our society and the world at large cannot be over emphasized. Education is seen as the bedrock of every nation and is required for consistent development in every sector of life. On the strength of this, government has done a lot to ensure that schools at all levels are established and also equipped with necessary requirements for smooth running in order to be able to achieve the various universal educational objectives. This has given rise to primary schools, secondary schools, and tertiary institutions like polytechnics, monotechnics and universities which are both government and private owned. To help compliment the teaching and learning activities of the schools are libraries established so as to assist learners carry out further research on their studies. These libraries render various services that can help one solve various educational problems or need ranging from informational services, educational services, recreational services, current awareness services and selective dissemination of information service to mention but a few. The libraries were also extended to other non educational organizations, private individuals, and independent libraries like public libraries and so on. That is why there are various types

of libraries like school libraries, academic libraries, special libraries, public libraries (state libraries, national libraries), private libraries etc. these libraries have been established to serve every one, whether you are schooling or not because everybody need information of all types which can solve his or her problem and the library has what it takes to solve one's informational or educational need. Now, how do people both old and young in remote villages, schooling without libraries, or having no means of learning access the library? Those fisher men, trader, mechanics etc that is far away from any available public library, how can they get further information to help them do better in their various fields of endeavor? What of those that don't have the habit of reading and can never go to a library? They have to be encouraged in order to have an enlightened society because readers are leaders. Library services have to be taken to these ones at every nook and cranny, hence the importance and need for development of mobile library services in Akwa Ibom state.

Library Services In Akwa Ibom State

Librarianship in Akwa Ibom state is receiving a lot of boost, following the development of various educational institutions in the state both government and privately owned, libraries have also been developed because the library forms a fundamental part of every sound institution. According to Okon (2014), a school without a library is likened to a body without a soul, which means such educational institution is dead and unproductive. Also there has been a good turn- out of librarians from the library school. As recorded in the University of Uyo Convocation Proceeding (2009-2015), an average of 13 librarians graduates every year from the degree programme. So there are enough hands to serve the teeming library patronage in the state. Also the state government has put in a lot in the development of libraries and encouragement of library services in Akwa Ibom state with specific emphasis on the Ibom e-library, which shows the government, is conscious on the importance of library services in development.

The state has a functional public library service with divisional libraries at most local government; there are also over 8 tertiary institutions with functional libraries along with the state electronic library. All these libraries render various services in the state which also go a long way to add to library services in the state. The libraries in the state have to also ensure that other services are carried out or improved upon in the libraries which include:

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Information Referral Services: This service, according to Ebiwolate (2010), guides people to source of information and to agencies capable of handling problems or questions

Outreach Programmes: Boyce and Boyce (1995) stated that library outreach programmes are a way to distribute library services across a large and sparsely populated rural area. So this is also another important service.

Current Awareness Programmes: This programme, according to Oghuwu (2007), is to keep users up to date on happenings around them about them and that can help them. This also saves their time, helps create new ideas, etc.

Selective Dissemination of Information: This is having a profile of the client being served after the information needs of the rural dwellers are identified. So the librarian will have to give them specific information that pertains to what they do for a living in such an area.

Library Services to Children: Children need library for lifelong education in consonance with the national education policy. According to Correa (1997), the library is the place where pupils and teachers come in contact with "the world", that is, where they get general knowledge which forms the basis of future learning.

Mobile Library Services In Akwa Ibom State

This service, also referred to as Bookmobile service, was introduced in Nigeria by the regional government in 1960's and 1970's, it was launched in order to extend library services to everyone in the then Bendel State irrespective of location (Okiy, 2004). By the end of 1977, this service had a fleet of five vans with a total book stock of 12,500 volumes. The van, according to Okiy, operated 220 service points in 140 towns and villages. As part of trying to let the impact of the e-library felt In Akwa Ibom State, mobile library vans were launched to take information resources closer to the users. These vans were equipped with shelves, books, display racks, seats and tables with librarians attached to it, but after a visit to the e-library recently, it was observed that the 2 truck vans have been parked for a long while now and its services temporarily on a halt. This service has to be reactivated and properly maintained in order for its impact to be felt at the grassroot. As posited by Friese (2008), bookmobile services have the potential for a greater variety and quality of service. Mobile services have reached segments of the rural population that would not otherwise have any library facilities at all (Kibat, 1990). The bookmobile has brought improvements to rural areas, stimulated

Reading interest, and has increased general awareness on health, nutrition, child care, family planning, business, etc. The mobile library service serves the rural communities that do not have access to library services. The mobile library carries a wide range of adult and children books, along with books on tape, free internet access and a free request service for books not in stock (Cork County Library, 2015). The mobile library brings the local authority services to the heart of the rural community. It is a service that places a high priority on answering the needs of the individual citizen in the rural community. According to Cork County Library (2015), the mobile library or books on wheel respond to the reading and information needs of the public since 1960's. Despite an expanding branch network, the mobile library service still plays a key role in delivering library service to isolated communities, those with limited access to transport, people with disabilities and young people in rural communities.

Services Provided In Mobile Library

In addition to the afore mentioned library service and others not mentioned, the following are considered services:

Books on tapes service: this is a service whereby books and other educational and informational materials are saved in both audio and video tapes in a situation where carrying of hard copies may be problematic by reason of lack of space and weight.

Free internet services: this is providing of internet services free of charge to the rural dwellers that may not have good access to World Wide Web.

Library services for the elderly: the aged may not be too strong to go a distance for library services, so this service is rendered to them so as to keep them abreast of information peculiar to them.

Mobile library stop point services: this is providing stops or calling points in every corner where the mobile library van stops at each point probably for close to 30 minutes each day, especially where there are huge populations of users.

Service for books not in stock: mobile library users are given opportunity to request for books not found in stock but needed by the users. Such books are possibly selected, acquired or borrowed and delivered to the user.

Library relations service: this is building up a cordial and friendly relationship as a helpful librarian by virtue of regular calls in order to encourage and promote readership.

Children library services: children are very delicate people and need to be handled with care. Readership has to be developed in them very early. Children whose parents don't have the ability to give them these exposure are specially given this service.

Mobile library book club services: this is organizing of reading clubs to make reading exciting, fun and meaningful.

Importance Of The Mobile Library Service

- ☐ It takes information resources closer to the users especially those in the rural areas
- ☐ It strategically selects and delivers information that is peculiar to the user and his or her environment, business, and way of life in order to solve specific informational and educational problem.
- ☐ It encourages and promotes readership among rural dwellers
- ☐ It keeps the rural community current and abreast of information
- ☐ It shows how important, dynamic, knowledgeable and thoughtful librarianship as a profession is
- ☐ It promotes economic development in the society
- ☐ It also gives a level of exposure to the users and of course rural dwellers

Factors Militating Against The Mobile Library Service

A number of issues most time work against the successful operation of mobile library service especially as it relates to our immediate environment here in Akwa Ibom state and Nigeria as a whole. Some of this issues are enumerated below:

1. Some schools of thought are of the notion that it is an outmoded service and as such does not require much attention
2. The cost of maintenance is considered to be high as a van would need to be purchased and running cost might shoot up.
3. Inadequate funding
4. Lack of space as the van may not be spacious to carry enough information resources
5. Inadequate human resources as most librarians are not employed, some do not possess the requisite training on mobile library management.
6. Lack of government interest in mobile library services
7. Maintenance and continuity problem of the service after kick starting
8. Lack of necessary infrastructure like computers, internet facilities and connectivity in remote rural areas.

Conclusion

Mobile library service is essential to the educational, informational, political, entertaining and social development of the rural populace. The information gap between the urban and rural dwellers can be bridged through the use of mobile library service. The federal, state and local government have the responsibility to better the lives of rural dwellers by reaching to them through effective mobile library service. This would further make the rural dwellers better citizens and to also contribute their quota to the development of the society.

Recommendation

- ☐ Government should take responsibility of development of the grass root economy through mobile library service, as an informed society cannot be deformed.
- ☐ Adequate funds should be made available for the equipment of mobile library service
- ☐ Information and communication infrastructure should be given urgent attention as communication mask should be placed at necessary points for ease of interconnectivity.
- ☐ Employment, training and retraining of librarians should be done in preparation for adaptability in mobile library service provision.
- ☐ Library associations like NLA, LRCN etc should ensure that mobile library service forms an integral part and important duty and responsibility of every public library, policies should be formulated to encourage this service, awareness and sensitization should be done to encourage librarians to see the need for it.

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