EFFECTIVE PUBLIC LIBRARIES SERVICES AND RESOURCES BASED ON LRCN STANDARD AND GUIDELINES

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Abstract: The study assessed the effective public libraries services and resources based on LRCN standard and guidelines. The researcher formulated two research questions and objectives each for the study. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The population comprises five public libraries in South-East Nigeria. The whole populations were used for the study. Thus, enumerative sampling technique was adopted for the study. The instruments structured interview were used for data collection. The data collected were analyzed using percentage. The findings of the study showed that most of the public libraries have services, and different formats of information resources were in line with the LRCN standards and guidelines. The study also revealed that collection management practices, did not meet the LRCN standards and guidelines. Based on the findings, recommendations were made that when there are clearly written collection management policy; it will help to render services effectively and efficiently in this 21st century digital era.

Keywords: LRCN standard and guidelines, PUBLIBSEBLRCN, IFLA, legislation and strategic plans.

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1.0 Introduction

Services in the public libraries are tasks and responsibilities that the public libraries carry out as part of their mandate. IFLA (2001) opines that the services provided by the public library include community information services, recreational activities, reference services, loan services, storytelling, reading, career information, customer care, adult literacy education etc. These services of the public library are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status (IFLA, 1995). To ensure that the public library meets up with its target, there must be a library coordination and cooperation, legislation and strategic plans towards promoting standards of in library service. In the public library, her services have to be physically accessible to all members of the community. This requires well situated library buildings, good reading and study facilities, as well as relevant technologies and sufficient opening hours convenient to the users. It equally implies out-reach services for those unable to visit the library. The library services must be adapted to the different needs of communities in rural and urban areas (IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto, 1994)

Customers ultimately have the choice of participating in public library service offered. Therefore, any limitation of access these services, whether deliberate or accidental, will reduce the ability of the public library to fully achieve its primary mission and role of meeting the library and information needs of the community served. The following according to IFLA Public Libraries Section (2008) are important elements in delivering an effective public library service:

identifying potential customers, analyzing customers' needs, developing services to groups and individuals, introducing customer care policies, promoting library use education, co-operating and sharing resources, developing electronic networks, ensuring access to services, and providing library buildings.

The public library must provide services based on an analysis of the library and information needs of the local community. In planning services, clear priorities must be established and a strategy be developed for service provision in the medium to long term. Services should be developed for identified target groups and only provided if such groups exist in the local community. The services of the library should not be subject to any form of ideological, political, religious or commercial pressure (IFLA Public Library Service Guidelines, 2010). Services

must be able to adjust and develop to reflect changes in society, for example, variations in family structures, employment patterns, demographic changes, cultural diversity and methods of communication. They should take account of traditional cultures as well as new technologies, for example, support for oral methods of communication as well as making use of information and communication technology. In some countries the services that the public library must provide are defined in library legislation.

Similarly, the Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria (2015) enacted certain stipulated standards and guidelines for the public library services to be provided as follows:

Loan of books and other media, Provision of books and other materials for use in the library, Library services to children including story hour, spelling and reading competitions and organizing other special events for them, Information services using print and other media, Reference services, Community information services, User education including support for literacy programmes (readership promotion campaign), Mobile library services, Collection of legal deposit materials and certification of documents, Library services to special groups including prisoners, market women, farmers etc, Library services to young adults, Library services to older users, Customer care services, Inter library lending, Resource sharing, Library orientation including guided tours for individuals and groups, Library services to schools, E-library services, Displays and exhibitions, Indexing and abstracting services, Reprographic services, Bibliographic services, Document delivery services, Consultancy services, Advisory services, Conservation and preservation, Bindery services

In line with these standards and guidelines, public libraries in recent times are making frantic efforts to provide effective services to its clientele. In other words, services expected to be provided by the public libraries have become a major concern of library and information science practitioners. According to Okiy cited in Anyalebechi and Udo-Anyanwu (2016), this was the reason why mobile library service was launched in order to extend library services to everyone in the state, irrespective of location. Other mobile services provided by the public library board include prison and hospital trolley services. These services provided by libraries have become the melting point of the present day librarianship and information science (Anyalebechi & Udo-Anyanwu, 2016).

Librarians registration council of Nigeria (LRCN) is a regulatory body for library and information science professionals. It was established by act 12 of 1995. It is a parastatal under the Federal Ministry of Education saddled with the responsibility gearing towards ensuring best professional practices and standardization and regulations of library and information profession. They perform among other functions the publication of standards and guidelines required for all types of libraries.

In 2015 the librarians registration council of Nigeria in collaboration with the federal ministry of Education published the standard and guidelines for public libraries in Nigeria, these standards and guidelines contain the minimum, intermediate and excellent requirements that every public library in Nigeria should use in acquiring and assessing resources both human and material resources so as to meet the needs of the users. (LRCN, 2015). The LRCN standards stated the minimum standards and guidelines acceptable for every public library system which are itemized as follows; public library building, information and communication technology, collection management. The paper focus on services, accommodation and collection development.

Staff as recommended by the LRCN for the public library should have a staff mix of relevant personnel which include librarians, library officer, library assistants and supporting staff. They should have competency with necessary skills, adequate qualification for efficient and effective information delivery of resources and services, these are the categories of staff they recommend for population by the area of service.

Collection management is the organization and use of all materials in various format and made accessible to users. It equally deals with the procurement, lending, evaluation, storage and weeding of the resources, planned resource sharing and electronic access to databases. Further application of preservation and conservation processes to these collections. The chief executive officer should ensure that material of various formats are stocked in the library so as to achieve the goals of the library which he is a member of the governing board.

2.0 Statement of problem

The public libraries being the library that provides unrestricted access to information resources and services free of charge to all residence of a given community,(Anyalebechi & Udoanyanwu, 2016), is an indispensable instrument for intellectual, cultural, educational, and informational development of an individual. A well-stocked and standard public library is a storehouse of information resources that users will go to for their quest for

information. Since it is meant to serve everybody, it is expected to be well equipped with personnel (professional, paraprofessional and specialist staff), in-depth collection of varied information resources with standard furniture and equipment and ICT gadgets to enable the users to develop and increase their knowledge. To establish a public library that may be empty and not measuring up to a standard is not convincing. Again, it is assumed that public libraries may be facing stunted growth because of lack of current information materials; most of these library may not have acquired new materials for the past years. From the researchers preliminary observation during visit to some of the public libraries in Nigeria, information materials seem to be very old and dusty, users were very few; inside the buildings, some of the ceilings seem to be dilapidating, and the lightings, seem not to be functioning. In some instances, there seem to be shortage of manpower or lack of funds and proper management of these funds when released, or difficulties inherent in processing it. It is the availability of recent or current information resources that motivate peoples interest to visit or use libraries.

 Presently there seem not to be uniformity in the availability of very necessary information that will result to proper functioning of a standard public library in the area of this study. For uniformity to be maintained across the public libraries, various standards have been published by LRCN to guide and regulate the activities of the public libraries in Nigeria. The question therefore is: It seems that the public libraries in southeast were not implementing services and resources the standards set by LRCN. There is also dearth of literatures in public libraries, most of the literatures were very old. Hence the study, to assess the implementation of LRCN standards and guidelines in public libraries in South-East Nigeria.

2.1 Purpose of the Study

Specifically, the research objectives assess the following;

1. Collection management practices in public libraries in south -East Nigeria based on LRCN standards and guidelines
2. Services provided in public libraries in South-East Nigeria based on LRCN standards and guidelines.

2.2 Research Questions

The following questions were formulated to guide the study.

1. Does the collection management practices in public libraries in south -East Nigeria based on LRCN standards and guidelines.
2. What are the services required to be provided in public libraries in South-East to measure up to the LRCN standards and guidelines?

3.0 Methodology

The study used descriptive survey research design. According to Nworgu (2015) descriptive survey design aim at collecting data on a giving population, with cognizance to its characteristics, features or facts and describing it in a systematic manner. This is appropriate since the study seeks to explore the assessment of the implementation of LRCN standard and guidelines in public library in south-east of Nigeria, and its result was interpreted as an accurate representation of the entire population under study. The study was conducted in public libraries in South–East Nigeria. South- East Nigeria consists of five states namely, Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo.

Each state has library board with headquarters at the state capital. The study focused on the public libraries headquarters, because the branch and divisional libraries are centrally controlled by the directors at different headquarters. The five library boards was used and no sampling done. Sample size is small and as such the entire population was used without sampling. Public library Assessment based on LRCN standards and guidelines (PUBLIBSEBLRCN) was the instrument used to collect data for the study. The instruments used was structured interview were adapted from the LRCN standard and guidelines in line with the objectives of the study. Data obtained from the study was analyzed using percentage. This was manually done by the researcher Decision Rule

For the information and infrastructural resources that are in the library, the researcher is taking 60% and above to be in line and 59% and below not to be in line.

60-100% is in line

0-59% is not in line

4.0 Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: Does the collection management practices in public library in South-East Nigeria based on LRCN standard?

Table 1: Directors' interview responses on the state of collection management practices in State Library Boards in South-East Nigeria and LRCN standards and guidelines

S/N	ITEMS	ABIA	ANAMBRA	EBONYI	ENUGU	IMO	YES		NO		REM
							N	%	N	%	
1	Does your library have collection mgt. policy			-	-	-	2	40	3	60	NL
2	Does the policy aim at ensuring the library collections grow steadily and accessible			-	-	-	2	40	3	60	NL
3	Are the policy expanded and reviewed between 3 to 5 years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	100	NL
4	Does the policy have guiding statement on the criteria for resources collections			-	-	-	2	40	3	60	NL
5	Does the policy have guiding statement for duplicate titles	-		-	-	-	1	20	4	80	NL
6	Are there guiding statement for accessing the resources outside the library walls			-	-	-	2	40	3	60	NL
7	Does your library have policy for weeding and discarding of library resources			-	-	-	2	40	3	60	NL
8	Does your library have policy on procurement and donations stated clearly			-	-	-	2	40	3	60	NL
9	Does your library have policy for resource sharing and inter library loan operations		-	-	-	-	1	20	4	80	NL
10	Are there policy on digitization	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	100	NL
11	Are the information resources in the library relevant to the needs of the library users community	-	-		-	-	1	20	4	80	NL
12	Are the information resources accessible and in good condition and contains up to date information				-	-	3	60	2	40	IL

KEYS: IL – In Line; NL- Not In Line.

The result in table 1 shows that Abia and Anambra state library boards have collection management policy and the policy ensures that the collections grow steadily. Abia and Anambra have guiding policy statement on the criteria for resources collections. Anambra has guiding policy statement on duplicate titles. Abia and Anambra have guiding statement for accessing the resources outside the library walls, policy for weeding and discarding of library resources and also have policy on procurement and donations stated clearly. Abia has policy on resource sharing and inter library loan operations. Ebonyi have information resources relevant to the needs of the users community. Abia, Anambra and Ebonyi have information resources accessible and in good condition and it contain up to date information.

Based on the findings from the results on the state of collection management practices in public libraries in South-East Nigeria based LRCN Standards and guidelines, it was evidenced that except for the fact that all the information resources were attested to be accessible and in good condition and contains up to date information in the State Library Boards in South-east Nigeria and by extension met with the recommended standards and guidelines of the Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria, the majority of the responses (11 out of 12) did not meet with the recommended standards and guidelines of the Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria. This connotes that the State Library Boards in South-east Nigeria do not have collection mgt. policy, the policy aim at ensuring the library collections did not grow steadily nor is it accessible, the policy were not expanded and reviewed between 3 to 5 years, the policy did not have guiding statement on the criteria for resources collections, the policy did not have guiding statement for duplicate titles, there are no guiding statement for accessing the resources outside the library walls, the library does not have policy for weeding and discarding of library resources, the library policy on procurement and donations were not stated clearly, library do not have policy for resource sharing and inter library loan operations, there were no policy on digitization, and that the information resources in the library were not relevant to the needs of the library users community. The implication of this finding is that the state of collection management practices in all the State Library Boards in South-East Nigeria did not in any way met with the recommended standards and guidelines of the Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria. This result is in consistency with the findings of Prabhjeet and Paramjeet (2015) whose study on collection development and management within public libraries in Delhi found that the state of collection management practices in the public libraries are not effective enough and lack effective policy on digitization to engender readership and satisfaction of the users from the collection. Supporting the findings of this study, Kelly (2015) did a qualitative content analysis on Collection Development Policies in Public Libraries in Australia and observed that of the 24 libraries identified, only seven of them that had published collection policies on their website when accessed which shows a poor state of collection management practices. Contributing to the findings, Stephen (2015) investigation on Strategic collection development and management for information services in the institutions of higher learning and found that the various strategies by which collection development and management at present were not observed in some libraries. Stephen recommended that librarians should be encouraged to attend professional programmes such as seminars, workshops, and conferences to increase their knowledge on collection development and management towards information resources delivery. Adding his view in support of the findings, Fadimu and Yaya (2016)'s study found that there is the general weaknesses in the selection process as many of the libraries were inadequately funded, late delivery of library materials, faculty delay and gift donation, biasness in book selection and lack of written collection development policy.

Research question 2: Are the services provided for State Library Boards in Southeast Nigeria in line with LRCN standards and guidelines?

Table 2: Directors' interview responses based on the services provided in State Library Boards in South-East Nigeria and LRCN standards and guidelines

S/N	ITEMS	ABIA	ANAMBRA	EBONYI	ENUGU	IMO	A		N/A		REM
							N	%	N	%	
1	Reference services						5	100	-	-	IL

S/N	Service						Freq	%	Freq	%	Status
2	Library service to children						5	100	-	-	IL
3	Information services using print and other media				-		4	80	1	20	IL
4	Community information service				-		4	80	1	20	IL
5	User education					-	4	80	1	20	IL
6	Readership promotion campaign				-	-	3	60	2	40	IL
7	Mobile library service	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	100	NL
8	Collection of legal deposit materials				-	-	3	60	2	40	IL
9	Library services to special group like prisoners, farmers				-	-	3	60	2	40	IL
10	Library services to adult						5	100	-	-	IL
11	Customer care service					-	4	80	1	20	IL
12	Inter library lending		-	-	-	-	1	20	4	80	NL
13	Resource sharing			-	-	-	2	40	3	60	NL
14	Library orientation				-	-	3	60	2	40	IL
15	Library services to schools				-	-	3	60	2	40	IL
16	e-library services	-			-	-	3	60	2	40	IL
17	Guide tours for individuals and groups				-	-	3	60	2	40	IL
18	Displays and exhibitions	-		-	-	-	1	20	4	80	NL
19	Indexing and abstracting						5	100	-	-	IL
20	Reprographic services				-	-	3	60	2	40	IL
21	Bibliographic services			-	-	-	2	40	3	60	NL
22	Document delivery services	-		-	-	-	1	20	4	80	NL
23	Consultancy services				-	-	3	60	2	40	IL
24	Advisory services				-		4	80	1	20	IL
25	Conservation and preservation				-		4	80	1	20	IL
26	Bindery services						5	100	-	-	IL
27	Loan of books and other media				-	-	3	60	2	40	IL
28	Display of new arrivals		-		-	-	2	40	3	60	NL

Key: A- Available; NA- Not Available; **IL – In Line; NL- Not In Line**

The result in table 2 shows that all the five State library boards in the southeast provides reference services and library services to children. Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi and Imo State Library Boards provide information services using print and other media and community information services. Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi and Enugu provide user education services. Abia, Anambra and Ebonyi provide readership promotion campaign services. None of the

State Library Boards in southeast provides mobile library services. Abia, Anambra and Imo provides collection of legal deposit materials services. Abia, Anambra and Ebonyi provide library services to a special groups like prisoners, farmers etc. All the State Library Boards provide library services to adults. Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi and Enugu provide customer care services. Abia provide inter-library lending. Abia and Anambra provide resource sharing services. Abia, Anambra and Ebonyi provide library orientation, library services to schools, E-library services, and guide tours for individuals and groups. Anambra has display and exhibition services. All the Library Boards provide indexing and abstracting services. Abia, Anambra and Ebonyi provide reprographic services. Abia and Anambra provide bibliographic services. Only Anambra provide document delivery services. Abia, Anambra and Ebonyi provide consultancy, advisory, and conservation and preservation services. All the library Boards provide bindery services. Abia, Anambra and Ebonyi provide loan of books and other media and display of new arrivals.

Discussing the findings from the results on if the services provided for State Library Boards in South-East Nigeria were in line with LRCN standards and guidelines, it was evidenced that majority of the services such as reference services, library service to children, information services using print and other media, community information service, user education, relationship promotion campaign, collection of legal deposit materials, library services to special group like prisoners, farmers, library services to adult, customer care service, library orientation, library services to schools, e-library services, guide tours for individuals and groups, indexing and abstracting, reprographic services, consultancy services, advisory services, conservation and preservation, bindery services, loan of books and other media, collection of legal deposit materials, library services to special group like prisoners, farmers, library services to adult, and customer care were provided for State Library Boards in South-East Nigeria in line with LRCN standards and guidelines. However, there were just few services provided for State Library Boards in South-East Nigeria that were not in line with LRCN standards and guidelines such as mobile library service, inter library lending, resource sharing, displays and exhibitions, bibliographic services, document delivery services, and display of new arrivals. This implies that in the State Library Boards in South-East Nigeria, their services provided met with the recommended standards and guidelines of the Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria. This result falls in line with the study of Nwabuaku (2012) who in his study found that many public libraries sponsor lectures, group discussions, musical, or film presentations, and exhibitions, service to children, provision of reading machine and audiotapes for blind people and large–print books for visually impaired people and these services were are found to be available and provided in public libraries. Materials in the public libraries are usually being borrowed without charges, although some charges may be made for film or CDs. Kumar (2012) revealed that majority of the users of public libraries attested that book lending services were the most often used services in public libraries

Disagreeing also with the findings of this study, Saleh and Lasisi (2011) in their study of Assessment of Public Library Services in North Eastern Nigeria found out that some basic public library services such as bibliographic services, indexing and abstracting, adult and continuing education are not provided by majority of the State Library Boards in Nigeria. Out of the seven services recommended by the IFLA/UNESCO in 2001, only three are offered by the libraries. Saleh and Lasisi's study disagrees with the fact that the services provided for State Library Boards were in line with LRCN standards and guidelines as they concluded that for public libraries to be relevant in the 21st century, they must provide a range of services to satisfy their user's needs as the provision of adequate services will increase the users' usage of the public library. Supporting the views of Saleh and Lasisi (2011), a study by Akinola, Apotiade, Ogunmodede and Oyetola (2013) revealed that internet access, computer and printing services of the public library were poor and at most instances, the services were not provided. Though there was a functional and effective photocopying service, it was found that the other services provided by most State Library Boards were not sufficient, making them going against the recommended standards and guidelines of the Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria. Also, Diyaolu, Joda and Amus (2018) in their study on Public Servants' Use and Evaluation of Public Library Resources and Services in Ogun State, Nigeria, found that with the exception of internet access, computer and printing, which services are relatively poor, other services were not available or adequately provided in public libraries.

Other scholars also disagreed with the findings of this study as Ezeabasili and Chibueze (2021) whose study investigated Public Library Services in Nigeria, found that there is a dissatisfaction by the youths with the 'books oriented library services' rendered at the state public library due to the fact that they are not aware that the public library has many other library services they can benefit from. The study posited that Public libraries offer services that benefit only the literates. Similarly, Salman, Mugwisi and Mostert (2017) also disagreed with this finding as their study revealed that awareness of the services was restricted to a few library services, and accessibility to the

major library services was found to be a challenge to many. Utilization patterns indicated infrequent use of only a few services, and very low satisfaction with what is being offered from the services of the public library. Also, Anyalebechi and Udo-Anyanwu (2016) in their study revealed that all the libraries studied do not provide mobile library service as the respondents are satisfied with only reprographic, reference and extensions services. Iwhiwhu and Okorodudu (2012) in their study on Public Library Information Resources, Facilities, and Services: User Satisfaction with the Edo State Central Library, Benin-City, revealed that the users in Edo state central library are not satisfied with majority of the services provided in the library which are community information services, recreation services, reference services, storytelling services, film show services, reading competition, customer care services among other services provided in the library. Basirat, Michael and Oyintola (2018) study on Public Servants' Use and Evaluation of Public Library resources and Services in Ogun State, also revealed that most of the public servants did not register with public library and also do not make use of the library services due to poor satisfaction with most of their services, with the exception of internet access, computer and printing, which services are relatively poor.

Similarly, opposing the finding of the result, Anyalebechi and Udo-Anyanwu (2016) found in their study that the type of services provided for the social well being of the users are mainly high on reprographic, reference services, extension service and lending services as they noted that majority of other services such as inter library loan services, internet services, user education and Selective Dissemination of Information and Current Awareness service were not adequately provided while mobile library services are not provided in the public library. Jimoh and Onaolapo (2015) also found that mass literacy campaigns, mobile library services, adult and continuing education programmes, seminars and workshops, interactive sessions and public enlightenment programmes and information repackaging and translation services were not available in many public libraries. These service deficiencies will bridge the gap between the effective library services and the users of which the availability of these services would have served as lubricants in ensuring good governance and effective library use.

5.0 Conclusion and recommendations

The results of the study show that some of the public libraries in South East Nigeria do not align with the various recommendations stipulated in the LRCN standards and guidelines in setting up public libraries. From the results, it can be concluded that the public libraries in South- East, some do not implement the recommended standards and guidelines in setting up the public libraries. Based on the findings of the study, the conclusions and implications of the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. The directors of the Public libraries should ensure that they make necessary plans to procure the needed book racks, seats and equipment in their libraries to be in line with the recommendations on standards and guidelines of the Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria.
2. The Directors of the Public Library Boards should reactivate all recommended library services to the users in line with the recommended standards and guidelines of the Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria. These services will serve as an avenue for them to raise additional fund to support the library functions.

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