Role of Public Library in Community Development in Kano State

[1]Emem Bassey Umoh, [2]Zainab Shehu Habib & [3]Amina Abdulrazak Yusuf

[1,2&3]*University Library Bayero University, Kano*

Keywords:
Community development, Public library, Roles of public library, Nigerian Community

Corresponding Author:
Emem Bassey Umoh

Abstract

This paper reviewed literature with the aim of highlighting the roles of public library in community development in Kano State. Information needed to actualize this paper was gathered from secondary sources of data which were obtained from textbooks, journal articles, conference papers, online sources and so on .This involves reading meaning into materials consulted for purpose of achieving a reliable conclusion. The development of a country depends greatly on how much information its citizens are exposed to Information is so crucial that it has been recognized as the fifth factor of production. Information has no substitute when it comes to the national development because it has been identified as the driver of economic growth and productivity. Public libraries provide information for planning, education, politics, researches, economic activities and enlightenment which are inevitable in community development. Public libraries as reservoirs of information provide such access through their various services and information resources, keeping the people well informed of developments and ensuring its sustainability. The roles of public library in community development is inevitable, hence the need for effective and efficient public library services for the development of the community in Kano State. This paper aims at examining the concept of community development and, public library and community development. It also examines the roles of public library in community development and problems militating against public library in community development in Kano State. Based on the paper, public library services towards community development are militated by poor infrastructure, lack of awareness of the roles played by public libraries, inadequate funding, and inadequate staffing. Therefore, the paper suggested the provision of adequate funds by government, provision of adequate and world class infrastructure, training and retraining of staff, enlightenment, sensitization and outreach services so as to promote patronage.

Background to the Study

The roles of public library in the provision of information for community development are intriguing. No community can be developed without relevant information to drive its developmental sustainability. The business of public libraries is the acquisition, selection, processing organization, preservation, conservation, and dissemination of information for sustainable development. Information is an indispensable factor for community development. For any community to develop, it needs to have and provide relevant and adequate information on every issue. Libraries particularly public libraries can provide access to information that would enable people enjoy gainful lives as they are skilled in disseminating information resources in diverse forms so that when they are required, they can be quickly located and utilized.

Public libraries have long been crowned as knowledge institution as they provide the public with resources for information and learning. These resources are accessible to all groups of community regardless of gender, age and ethnic affiliation (IFLA, 2003). This role of public library must be seen against the backdrop of the fact that the development of the community and individuals can only be attained through the ability of well-informed citizens to exercise their democratic rights and to play an active role in community (Davison, 2005). Public libraries have rightfully staked their claim as gateways to participation in community development through lifelong learning and information. While providing information access is still an important function of the public library, the past twenty years have brought a shift back to the roots of public libraries as community builders (Scott, 2011). There is agreement about the fact that public libraries in community building can help ameliorate some of today's social ills, including isolation, a lack of well-being, a lack of access, and the inability to engage (Scott, 2011). Hence, this paper aims at highlighting the roles of public library in community development in Kano State.

Concept of Community Development

The concept of "community development" derives strength from the two basic words "community" and "development". Hence in gaining proper and profound understanding of the concept we should rely on the explication of the terms community and development. In view of this, Hillary (2005) began what might be described as the most vital and challenging exploration in the definition of term "community". He analyzed ninety-four definitions of community, and came to the conclusion that most scholars in the area agreed that common ends, norms or means are its most remarkable features. A careful review of the literature on this subject would reveal that the term "community" is not static. It entails the interaction of several elements whose geographic boundaries are a clear function of time, place and context or issue under consideration (Osuji, 2004). According to Todaro (2009) community is an organic, natural set of relationships, a group in which membership is valued as an end in itself; which concerns itself with many significant aspects of the lives of members; which allows competing functions; whose members share commitment to a common purpose and to procedures for handling conflict in the group; whose members share responsibility for actions of the group; and whose members have an enduring and extensive personal contact with each other.

However, development as a term is perceived in different perspectives by different scholars in different field of knowledge. For instance, Todaro (2009) describes development as the multidimensional process involving changes in structures, attitudes and institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of poverty. This way, development implies remarkable and sustained improvement of the socio-economic welfare of the people.

Based on the above discussion, the compound word "community development" has undergone some form of semantic metamorphosis over the years and has, therefore, been used in distinct contexts to refer to mutually related development activities and situations. According to Sanders (2000) community development is viewed as a process, a method, a programme, or a movement. The International Co-operation Administration set up by the United States Government (1956) views community development as a process of social action in which the people of a community organize themselves for planning and action; define their common and individual needs and problems; make group and individual plans to meet their needs and solve their problems; execute these plans with a maximum reliance upon community resources; and supplement these resources when necessary with services and materials from government and non-governmental agencies outside the community. However, as a method, Mc Cluskey (2000) takes community as the induction and educational management of that kind of interaction between the community and its people which leads to the improvement of both. Also, when community development is viewed as a programme, emphasis is shifted to how such subject-matter specialty as health, welfare, agriculture, industries, recreation, librarianship, among others, could be integrated in an effort to promote the development of people and their communities (Sanders, 2000). The issue here is how the sets of activities can be accomplished. Community development as a movement according to Sanders (2000) tends to become institutionalized, building up its own organizational structure, accepted procedures, and professional practitioners. It stresses and promotes the idea of community development as interpreted by its devotees and has its charismatic leaders who can enunciate its ideology in forthright terms.

However, in whichever angle community development is viewed, the fact is that it has to aim at rapid development of community and people. In community development public library is pretty essential because it facilitates the provision of useful information for the development of the community. As such community cannot develop without the involvement of public library.

Public Library and Community Development

Public library is a social institution established to collect, organize, preserve and conserve information resources in a conducive atmosphere and disseminate them to the community within which the library is located. Similarly, public library can be described as the peoples' socio-educational centre where the recorded knowledge of the society is kept in various formats and in a systematic way for them to read or consult at their pleasure (Aguolu, 2004). However, public libraries function generally as: recreational centre for the people to refresh their memories; educational centre for self-education (that is people's University); training

centre for the inculcation of good reading habits; saloons for the people leisure time; avenues for information dissemination and centre for academic pursue. Public libraries play a leading role in the literacy programs of the community by supporting educational programs within the community. The educational development of the community cannot succeed without the aid of the public library which is regarded as vital to socio-educational establishment of the community.

In order to allow developments to take place within the community, its educational needs must be satisfied through the provision of public libraries. According to Nasri (2006) public libraries should serve as vehicles for furthering mass education, that is mass literacy, adult education and so on. Public libraries should be set up in strategic places, and where this is not possible, book boxes and mobile library services should be established. Hence, public library should provide the best means (i.e forum or avenue) for self-education and self-improvement (Nasri 2006). Farmers, traders, craftsmen, civil servants, law enforcement agents, politicians, lawyers, doctors, engineers, nurses, pupils, students, teachers, housewives, among others are expected to satisfy their various information needs within the public library. The implications of the educational needs of the community on the development of public library services are therefore quite enormous. It should be noted at this point that the educational needs of pupils, students and other groups within the community are catered for by the statutory provision of public libraries which serve them exclusively. The satisfaction of the educational needs of these people falls within the limits (i.e. services) of the public library within the community.

People need to have access to recorded knowledge and information. The provision of access to knowledge and information through the establishment of public libraries constitutes an educational process. According to Shera (2002), the education of the community is very essential in every nation for the following reasons: to enable the citizens share in the breadth of knowledge and information in order to function appropriately within the community and the world in general; to study the importance of good citizenship and to accept social and political responsibility; to be in a better position to contribute effectively to the creation, functioning and systemization of a modern technological advanced society; to preserve the cultural heritage of the nation and at the same time appreciate other cultures of the world; for effective and democratic governance of the people. Educated people are said to be pretty easy to govern; the transfer of knowledge and information leading to industrial development could only take place if the people are educated; education will make people to appreciate the value of a clean environment, which will lead to good health, long life and prosperity; it will also enable the people to drop their old ideas about farming which will lead to self-sufficiency in food production; through the education of the people, communication will be enhanced leading to progress; with education, the community and indeed the entire country will be in a better position to interact effectively and efficiently with other neighboring communities as well as the outside countries, in areas of mutual interest.

Public libraries are integral to community development as they provide access to information and works of imagination in a variety of formats (Angela, 2005). In a similar review, Zondi (2004) stresses that public libraries go beyond formal education; they encourage and sustain

literacy and support development. Joel, Ugah and Savic (2009) stated that the co-operation and assistance of public libraries is a basis for any community to gain development. By this co-operation and the provision of useful information in economic, cultural, social and political contexts, sustainable development becomes possible. Public library services can be harnessed to bring about unity that can promote community development (Sokari, Abdullahi and Umar, 2017). Roper (2005) highlights the dynamism of the role of librarianship when he posits that public libraries and librarians have evolved to become facilitators of information and lifelong learning opportunities with an emphasis on service, identifying users' needs and communicating solutions. Librarians as information carriers are identified with splendid qualities.

Qualities of a Public Librarian
As a public librarian, certain qualities are expected of him or her for high quality productivity. Learning various skills through class work is a must for entering a position as a public librarian and there are numerous core competencies worth taking a look at as enlisted by Robinson (2013):

(a) Ability to use technology and to use it to enhance the overall effectiveness of a library, including web based methods of improving technological access to information.
(b) Capable of evaluating information resources and finding the best ones for addressing difficult questions or issues.
(c) Ability to quickly and professionally search databases, internet resources, and catalogues to find needed information.
(d) Ability to communicate well with library staff as well as with all patrons and guests.
(e) Deep knowledge of books. Public librarians usually read a variety of genres and types of books so that they can help to advise readers as to good books for their reading level and their interest.
(f) Ability to promote reading.
(g) Ability to present information clearly and in an interesting manner.
(h) Ability to adapt to new tools, systems, and situations as they arise – public libraries and information technology is constantly evolving and shifting and public librarians must be able to evolve along with it.
(i) Ability to help overcome issues by focusing on solutions instead of on the problems.
(j) Organizational skills that are enhanced through regular additional efforts.
(k) Must maintain a solid overall understanding of different issues that confront public libraries of all sizes.

The field of librarianship is a rewarding one to enter, particular for those who love knowledge, learning and reading. It takes much more to thrive as a public librarian than many people realize, and the above list will help give one idea of just what it takes to succeed in this vital and constantly evolving field. Public libraries with good public librarians possessing these qualities stand a better chance of performing or playing their roles effectively and efficiently in the development of community.

Roles Played by Public Library in Community Development

Public libraries play significant roles in facilitating community development. Achitabwino (2007) emphasizes that public libraries contribute towards community development through the support they offer to the educational sector by supplying relevant information in multiple formats. Perhaps this is because the role of public libraries is to collect, repackage and disseminate information that will enhance community development. Uhegbu and Igwe (2006) assert that public libraries have greater responsibility in the development of community by acquiring, packaging, organizing and disseminating knowledge and experience to the people. The public library is essentially a means for promoting educational development in the community. The public libraries provide information for planning, education, politics, researches, economic activities and enlightenment which are inevitable and indispensible in community development.

Therefore, the public library is an information agency that assists and guides its clientele in their choice of reading information resources. It affords the community especially the students the opportunity to acquire learning experiences at little or no cost. Public library also links the immediate community to the outside world as regards acquisition of knowledge. It also enriches the educational development programs of the society by supporting continuous education program, such as adult education program. Therefore public libraries have helped develop society and its citizens by facilitating and planning implementation of learning programs to clients like farmers and market women which equip them with the necessary skills to enable them succeed in a changing society.

Similarly, community cannot develop without fair political participation. Doctor (1985) defines politics as listening to various groups, reconciling conflicting interests as far as possible, and thus creating a sense of security and participation among members of the society. The public library disseminates information on the various political programs in the society. It is regarded as a public relation institution. Political information is an essential component of community development. Public library is next to the radio and the television stations where government passes information to the general public in various forms. It also provides political orientation and culture through the provision of information on government's policies. It is generally accepted as a public good in terms of political information.

The development of community also lies on economic activities. Nwokocha (2002) defines economics as the science of the production and distribution of wealth, the condition of a country, community or individual, with regard to material prosperity. In economic classification, the establishment of a public library is regarded as a social service. This is an investment, which does not produce tangible goods but provides useful information. However, public libraries play important role in the economic well-being of the society as it provides information on goods and services. Also, it distributes books and film within the communities. Public library at this level is making its contributions to the economic development of the community. Public libraries could also develop local economic capabilities by making available necessary information on income generating projects, self-employment

activities, credit facilities, state assistance schemes and so on. Therefore public library closely identifies itself with the aspiration of economic development of a community.

Public libraries are not lacking in the area of research activities. Research is seen as a diligent and careful inquiry or investigation, systematic study of phenomena, and a scientific investigation (Nwokocha, 2002). It encourages the habit of personal and individual investigation and research, develops skills and resourcefulness in the use of books and other information resources. According to Dorothy (1977), public library facilitates scientific studies, teaching and self-learning process. It also acts as a repository of knowledge and thereby stores and disseminates information resources of research values in the modern community. Public library serves as a stock to the community and it compiles bibliographies, on various aspects such as subjects, authors, and title.

As reading culture is concern public libraries have been designed to hold the reading interest of the readers. This is done through special exhibition of information resources that serve as reading resources both print and non-print (Wali, 1991). Public library also serves as an avenue for in-house story telling hours and other extension services such as the establishment of book clubs, book services, organized debates, symposia, drama, and poetry. Public libraries are also established to improve literacy and enhance effective utilization of leisure by children and adults in the community and as such contribute vastly to the development of community in Kano State.

Public libraries provide training of citizens in information technology application and utilization as it relates to e-library, e-commerce, e-governance and e-health. Public libraries equally can play the role of combating HIV and AIDS, malaria and other communicable diseases. According to UNAIDS WHO (2008) Africa had the highest records of HIV/AIDS afflictions. This was as a result of ignorance and unbelief of the danger of the diseases and also the various myths associated with these diseases. These diseases can be avoided through the sensitization and provision of relevant information especially in their native language. This is supported by Heymann cited in Ugwuoke (2011) who asserts that illness and deaths from infectious diseases can generally be avoided at an affordable price through relevant information.

Problems militating against the effective roles played by Public Libraries in Community Development in Kano State
Public libraries in Nigeria are faced with a number of problems. These problems have affected the impact of public libraries in the development of communities in Kano state. Public libraries in Kano state have deteriorated drastically over the past years, reflecting the political and economic situation of the country. Public library services are militated by poor infrastructure, inadequate funding, and inadequate staffing, among others. This has direct impact on the delivery of outreach services to the community in which public libraries belong. Many of these are in relation to inadequate or limited resources. They include limited or inconsistent internet connectivity, lack of suitable venues to deliver programs, reduced budgets and staff shortages. Apotiade (2002) asserts that many public libraries are run by non-professional staff. We are at a

point of change in the information economy of which public libraries are part (Harris, 2009). Change is focused on innovation, technology, user experience, resource management, and service delivery. These changes call for education and training of librarians and other library staff. The shortage of adequately trained staff in public libraries in Kano state is obvious. Education and training for librarians in public libraries are inadequate as such there is the need for radical restructuring to produce librarians suited to service in a knowledge-based community. Prior to this research work,at present, many public libraries have inadequate number of staff, and are seriously undereducated. If public libraries in Kano state are to survive, they must invest in the intellectual capital of their employees.

Technology used to access information can be a way to educate library staff, to provide resources and services required in community development, and to bridge the information gap between urban and rural communities. Therefore it can be generalized that the major problems militating against public libraries systems is inadequate levels of ICT literacy, poor funding, ICT infrastructure development and poor ICT skills among staff as identified by (Oduwole, and Adedoyin, 2005). The culture of infrastructure development and maintenance is not widespread in Nigeria, though infrastructure is essential for delivery of public library services to communities. Kibat (1990) stated that the major obstacles inhibiting efficient information services in communities are poor communication infrastructure and widely-dispersed community population in developed nations. A majority of communities in Kano state lack awareness on the roles public libraries can play in meeting their goals of providing information for community development. Though, public libraries serve all sectors of the populace (urban and rural communities, literate and illiterate). It is the responsibility of all to address these and other problems militating against public libraries systems. Likewise lack of funds is the greatest problem public library is facing in Kano State. Inadequate funding is hindering the development of public library and its services in Kano communities (Nwokocha, 2002). Ajibero (2000) attributes this to economic conditions, government attitude, and particularly information infrastructure. Almost all public library information resources are purchased from outside Nigeria, especially from Europe and America, and due to high exchange rates, acquisition has dropped drastically. Public library in Kano State cannot afford to purchase and install computers and establish an Internet connection, especially in rural communities.

Conclusion
Conclusively if the library is to occupy its proper place in the community, government and non-governmental organizations must invest more in public libraries and ensure that competent hands are employed to manage public libraries. Thus, qualified librarians should be more involved in the planning and implementation of public library programs so that they would have input into the programs and ensure that public libraries are structured in a way that national development will be promoted. Public libraries and information services of the librarians are key actors in providing unhindered access to essential resources for social-economic, political and cultural advancement of the community. Invariably, they contribute effectively to the development and maintenance of intellectual freedom, safeguarding democratic values and universal civil rights in the community. They encourage social

inclusion by striving to serve all those in the communities regardless of age, gender, economic or employment status, literacy or technical skills, cultural or ethnic origin, religious or political beliefs, sexual orientation, and physical or mental ability. The communities they serve may be geographically based or increasingly linked only by technology and shared interests. Public librarians should also draw attention of the members of the community to the values of public library especially how it contributes to the wellbeing of the individuals and the enrichment of the quality of life through encouragement of self-education and assistance in formal education. They should educate people on the supportive roles of public libraries particularly to sectors such as education, information, economic, politics, and cultural practices. Public libraries have vital roles to play in ensuring national growth and development. They are not part of the state propaganda machines per se but national infrastructural institutions which are established to facilitate national development.

Suggestions
Based on the objective of this paper, it could be summarized that public libraries play a major role in providing firsthand information about community development in Kano State. The importance of public libraries in the developmental process of any community cannot be overemphasized. The development of community in this information age is depending on the ability of its members to gain access to relevant information that could be used to harness such development and public libraries are capable of providing these useful information. In view of the important role public libraries have to play in community development, this paper suggests that:
1. Public library should create awareness on the roles it can play in community development among the members of the community through sensitization, literacy and outreach programmes.
2. Provisions of adequate funds by the governments to the public libraries to enable them carry out their services effectively.
3. Employment of well-trained librarians to manage well-equipped public libraries.
4. Provision of adequate and world-class infrastructures (e.g buildings, ICT facilities, resources, etc) by the government to the public libraries.
5. Proper guidance of users in the usage of public libraries, exposing them to correct information, knowledge and facts, to be applied in their daily activities making them better people and building better community.

References

Achitabwino, P. (2007). *Libraries and national development*. Retrieved March, 2018 from http://pachitabwino.blogspot.com/2007/03/libraries-and-national-development.htm.

Adeyemi, N. M. (1991). The issue in the provision of information services to developing countries. *African Journal of Science, 1* (1), 1-8.

Aguolu, C. C. (2004). *The future of library and information service in Nigeria*, Nigerian libraries.

Ajibero, M. I. (2000*). Strategies and tools for information service delivery in the New Millennium*. A paper presented at the 2000 NLA Annual Conference.

Angela, E. (2005). Public and the millennium development goals. *IFLA Journal* 31: 4, 315-323. Retrieved February 5, 2018 from http://archive.ifla.org/V/iflaj/IFLA-Journal-4-2005.pdf.

Apotiade, J. (2002). *National, state and public libraries*. Ibadan: Distance Learning Centre.

David, M. (2015). *Right to information and role of libraries and information system in Nepal*. RetrievedFebruary29,2018from http://www.nepjol.info/index.php/tulssaa/article/viewFile/254/25.

Davison, K. (2005). Library innovation for the knowledge society. Scandinavians *Public Library quarterly, 33 (2)*.

Doctor, A. H. (1985). *Issues in political theory*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers. Cassel, Student English Dictionary. (1994).

Dorothy, S. O. (1977). *A manual for school libraries on small budgets*. Ibadan: Oxford University Press.

Harris, S. (2009). Library management systems embrace change: Integration, usability, and good discovery tools are some of the requirements of the modern library. *Research Information 39* 21 – 24.

Hillary, G. (2005). Definition of community: Areas of agreement. *Rural Sociology, 20.*

IFLA, (2003). Information for all: the key role of libraries in the information society. *Report Prepared for; libraries @ the heart of the information society*. Retrieved on February 25, 2018 from http://www.uniqe.ch/blbio/ses/IFLA/rol lib 030566.pdf.

Joel, F., Ugah, F. & Savic, A. (2009). *The role of library and information science education in national development*. Retrieved March 20, 2018 from http://digitalcommons. unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1262&context=libphilprac.

Kibat, K. K. (1990). Community information and referral services for rural areas of South East Asia: A conceptual framework. *World Libraries 1* (2). Available: http://www.worlib.org/Nigerian universities libraries. *The Electronic Library 23* (3), 289-291.

McCluskey, H. (200). Community development, in Knowles, M. S. (ed.): *Handbook of Adult Education in the United States.* Chicago*:*

Nasri, W. Z. (2006). Education in library and information science. In: *Encyclopaedia of Library and Information Science 7* (3).

Nwokocha, U. (2002). Public libraries in Nigeria: Decades of persisting. *International Information & Library Review 30* (2),97-104.

Oduwole, A. & Adedoyin, A. (2005). Information technology applications to cataloguing in Nigerian university libraries. *The Electronic Library 23* (3) 289-294.

Osuji, E. (2004). The University and Community Service in Nigeria, *Adult Education* 57, (3). (UK).

Robinson, A. (2013). *Development and roles of public library in Nigeria*. Retrieved February 24, 2018 from http://www.unilorin.edu.ng/journals/education/ije/june 1999/Vol.%2019%20June%01999.pdf.

Roper, L. (2005). *The role of libraries in the creation of literate environments*. Retrieved on February 12, 2018 from http://www.ifla.org/files/literacy-andreading/publications /krolak.pdf.

Sanders, I. T. (2000). The concept of community development, in Cary, L. J. (ed.). *Community Development as a Process.* Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press.

Scott, R. (2011). The role of public libraries in community building. *Public Library Quarterly, 30* (3), 191-227

Shera, J. H. (2002). *The foundations of education for librarianship*. New York: Becker Becker and Hayes, Inc.

Shera, J. H. (2006). *Introduction to library science*. Littleton, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited Inc.

Todaro, M. (2009). *Economies for a development world.* London: Longman.

Ugwoke, B. U. (2011). The role of the public libraries in achieving the millennium goals in Nigeria and the Need for Adequate Funding, *Journal of Applied Information Science and Technology, 5 (1), 80-84.*

Uhegbu, A. & Igwe, I. (2006). *Information and communication technology (I.C.T.).* Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press.

UNAIDS (2008). *Report on the global AIDS epidemic.* (Map)

United State Government (1956*). International cooperation administration: Community development guidelines.* Airgram Circular, Washington, D. C.

Wali, R. A. (1991). *Reading in education for all. edited by I. A. Kolo.* Kano: Text and Leisure Publishers, 116-123.

Zondo, R. (2004). *Sharing resources – how library networks can help reach education goals.* Retrieved March 20, 2018 from http://www.bookaid.org/resources/downloads/advocacy/sharing-resources-research-paper.pdf.